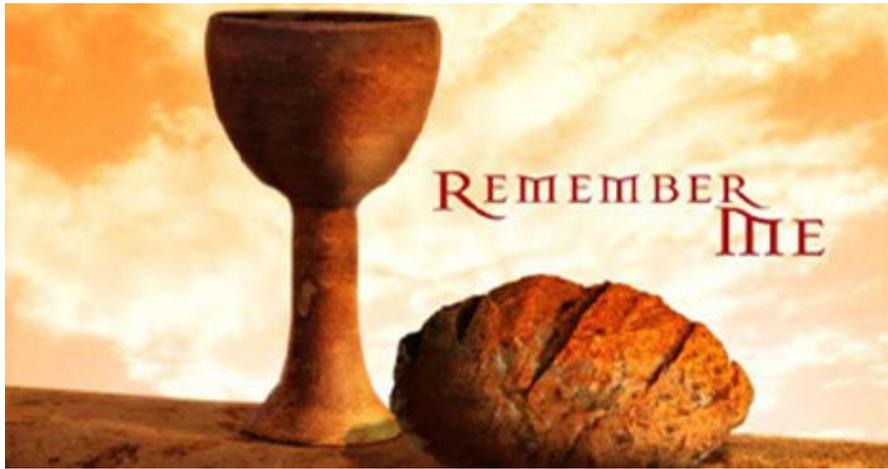


COMMUNICATION AND CARE

A Resource for

PASTORAL RELATIONS AND MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEES



Prepared for the Central Conference of The Evangelical Covenant Church
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Biblical Perspective - The Table	2
Structure of The Committee - Who's at the Table?	3
Clarity and Purpose of the Committee - What Happens at the Table?	4
Plans for Meeting One: Learning About Those Gathered at the Table	4
Plans for Meeting Two: Creating Clear Understanding at the Table	5
Plans for Meeting Three: Receiving and Giving Love, Truth and Support at the Table	7
Plans for Meeting Four: Honoring the Gifts of Those Gathered at the Table	8
Call To Communion	10
Resources : Possible Food for the Table	11

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A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE: Luke 22:14-20

The Table

Luke reports in chapter 22 that at the last supper, Jesus took a cup and after giving thanks he said *"Take this and divide it among yourselves...and then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* And he did the same with the cup after supper saying, *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."*

This simple time with Jesus and his followers shapes a theology of all gatherings around Christian tables whether Holy Communion is shared, a potluck meal is celebrating a special occasion, or members are conducting the business of the church. The table is sacred space where we gather to be with Jesus as we worship, celebrate, or do business together.

The business of caring for the pastor, family, staff and each other is a sacred duty of the Body of Christ. How this is done or not done sets the tone for the way the Body functions on every level. The following materials are an invitation to the Body of Christ to enter into healthy relationships between the pastor, staff and congregation that will allow the ministry of the church to be honest, authentic, supportive and focus on the work of Christ with each other and to our hungry world.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE: Who's at the Table?

Customary composition: three elected officers and leaders and two members elected at large from the congregation. The vice chair of the congregation is often designated the chair of this committee. Five to seven members are an ideal number. The committee needs to mirror the congregation to include gender, ethnicity, age and any other demographics. The pastor is often asked to suggest a name or two she or he would like for the committee.

When there is a pastoral change, it is recommended that a member of the Search Committee be on the committee for the first two years after the arrival of the pastor. This is to assure continuity of initial expectations of both pastor and congregation.

Besides the committee meetings, it is recommended that the chair and the pastor meet monthly for prayer and to check in. The purpose of this is to catch concerns before they become a crisis. It is to promote open communication and a safe place for the pastor and the chair. It helps to prevent festering issues that can easily grow into open, bleeding wounds.

Alongside all, the congregation is to commit to daily prayer for the pastor, family and staff through the calendar year. For example:

January - February: Names beginning with A-C are to pray daily

March-April: Names beginning with D-F are to pray daily.

Divide the congregation in whatever creative ways you choose and always include the children.

The pastor also forms his or her own daily patterns of prayer for the congregation.

CLARITY AND PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE: What Happens at the Table?

The committee is to be a model for the church on healthy ways to communicate and care for the pastor and staff. It will meet four times per year and will always be committed to confidentiality.

The committee has two basic responsibilities: *Communication* with and in support of the pastor, and *Care* for the pastor and family in all aspects of his or her working relationships, congregational and personal expectations and effectiveness. The committee does not establish salary packages, or determine other processes or procedures but can make recommendations regarding such to the leadership and financial committees.

If there is not a personnel committee for staff care, the committee, in conversation with other congregational policies, may determine how the staff will be involved with the PRC/MM committee.

The four meetings per year may be staggered according to the needs of a particular congregation. The following guidelines are suggested for the meetings:

Meeting One: Learning About Those Gathered at The Table

Scripture

Suggested Reading: Matthew 22: 34-40 (let the Spirit lead your selection)

Prayer

Meeting Focus

1. Building rapport among the committee members is important. Trust can begin to grow if the members learn about each other. One helpful way to do this is to have each member share his or her spiritual life story.
2. Review and study the purpose of the committee.
3. Look at the communication patterns in the church. How do we communicate? What do we communicate? The purpose of this time is to talk honestly about patterns of official and “unofficial” ways people in the church talk to, with, and about each other. In the process, you are attempting to discover what healthy communications habits are present and what unhealthy patterns persist. All ways of communicating that are present will affect the work of the committee so it is vital to spend adequate time naming honestly how communication happens.

4. Ask if the congregation's initial expectations and priorities are clearly communicated to the pastor. Ask if the pastor's initial expectations of the congregation are communicated to the leadership. (This conversation leads into the following meeting.)

Meeting Two: Creating Clear Understanding at the Table

Scripture

Suggested Reading: Proverbs 3: 13-14 (let the Spirit lead your selection)

Prayer

Meeting Focus

1. Meet with the pastor to review his or her desires and expectations.
2. The congregation and leadership are asked: What do we expect of our pastor? What do we think our pastor expects of us?
3. Explore compatibility of expectations of congregation and pastor.

Discussion Questions to Gather Information

The following questions are suggested for use by the pastor and congregation for identifying and communicating expectations. Make this your own. Add other ministries, delete ministries, categorize ministries, just be wise and give notice to what might be included or excluded that needs to be there for the health of the congregation and the pastor.

Pastor:

1. What do I expect of myself?
2. What do I think the congregation expects of me in the following areas of ministry?
3. *(A suggestion: have conversation with a ministry colleague to check your expectations.)*

Congregation:

1. What do we expect of our pastor?
2. What do we think our pastor expects of us in the following ministry areas?
(Resource #1 - Sample congregational survey)

Our Pastor's Public Ministry of:

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Casting Vision
- Worship
- Evangelism

Our Pastor's Ministry to the Congregation:

- Administration
- Discipleship of leaders/congregation
- Pastoral Care
- Developing and training lay leaders
- Providing helpful resources

Our Pastor's Commitment to Self and Family Care:

- Time for prayer/meditation
- Time for continuing education
- Time with family and friends
- Time for retreats
- Time for attending district clergy gatherings
- Utilizing spiritual direction/mentoring

Our Pastor's Commitment to Community, Conference, Denominational and Global Ministries:

- Justice ministries
- Community outreach
- Global Mission
- Conference and denominational gatherings and responsibilities

Discussion Questions to Evaluate the Gathered Information

After gathering information from the congregation and the pastor, explore the compatibility of expectations using the following or creating similar questions:

Pastor:

1. In what ways are the expectations I have of myself helping build fruitful ministry? In what ways are my expectations hindering fruitful ministry?
2. In what ways do I see the congregation engaged in fruitful ministry? Where do I think growth needs to happen? What needs to be released and or pruned?

Congregation:

1. In what ways are the expectations we have of our pastor helping build fruitful ministries? In what ways are our expectations hindering fruitful ministries?
2. In what ways are we as a congregation engaged in fruitful ministry? Where do we need to grow? What needs to be released and or pruned? *This may lead into a discussion of what both pastor and congregation understand as "fruitful" ministry. If this needs to happen it is time well spent.*

Pastor: What do I need to do to match my expectations with the congregation's expectations?

Congregation: What do we need to do to match the congregation's expectations with our pastor's?

Meeting Three: Receiving and Giving Love, Truth and Support at The Table

Scripture

Suggested Reading: Ephesians 4: 15-16(let the Spirit lead your selection)

Prayer

Meeting Focus

1. Focus on pastor's self-care and nuclear and or extended family care.
2. Invite the pastor's spouse to meet alone with the committee for support and open communication.
3. Make recommendations to the financial or appropriate committee regarding salary.

Discussion Questions

Pastor:

1. In what ways am I balancing self-care, family care and ministry responsibilities?
2. In addition to my regular pastoral duties am I satisfied with the amount of time I spend in the following areas?
 - Play
 - Prayer, spiritual direction and meditation
 - Study and continuing education
 - Dates with my spouse or significant other
 - Time with each child
 - Retreats
 - Days off
 - Vacation
 - Relationship with district and other pastoral colleagues
 - Relationship with conference and denomination
3. What do I need from the congregation to keep me honest and focused on my self-care?
4. What have I learned from the Self-Awareness Tool that helps me understand my leadership gifts and myself? (Resource # 2 Self-leader awareness)
5. Who do I have, besides my spouse, that I'm accountable to? A Mentor? A Spiritual Director? A counselor?

(You may use these questions or develop with the committee questions that are a better fit for your particular situation.)

Congregation:

1. How do we encourage our pastor to have healthy self and family care?
2. What more do we need to do?
3. In what ways do we communicate our appreciation of our pastor?

4. How do we model this as leaders?
5. What expectations do we have of our congregants?

(Congregants taking the survey and members of the PRC/MM committee may find the tools in Resource # 2 helpful for their use as well.)

Meeting Four: Honoring the Gifts of Those Gathered at the Table

Scripture

Suggested Reading: Romans 12: 3-10 (let the Spirit lead your selection)

Prayer

Meeting Focus

1. If we need improvement in our communication, how do we address our need for healthier communication?
2. As a committee, how have we done with communicating with each other? Have we kept complete confidentiality?
3. What do we still need to learn? What resources do we need to learn healthier communication?
4. How might we model our healthy communication patterns to other leaders and groups in the congregation?

It is recommended that the following leadership and personality tools be used for this meeting if they have not already been included prior to this time.

1. Disc leadership test: TheDiSCPersonalityTest.com
2. MBTI, (Free test: www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html)

Each of these can also be goggled for further information. These tools help determine each person's normal and natural way of "being" which can lead to understanding and healthier communication.

Learn and practice basic principles of healthy communication:

1. I-Statements (Taking ownership of my information, ideas and feelings...see example in Resources)
2. Reflective, Active and Redemptive Listening (Letting others know you have heard them...see example Resource # 3)
3. Descriptive and evaluative statements (keeping looking at the issue as the focus...see example Resource# 3)
4. Communication that leads to cooperation
 - Instead of accusations...Describe the problem
 - Instead of accusations...Give information
 - Instead of orders...Look at choices
 - Instead of threats, sarcasm, name calling, shaming...Describe feelings

How does our committee and or church handle conflict?

Delete space

1. What does the constitution say about conflict?
2. Do we have a solid functioning behavioral covenant? (Resource # 4)
3. How do we as a committee and or congregation handle conflict? What might we need to change in this regard? (Resource # 5)

There may be times or places that require changes to this resource. Please know that the deepest hope is that it will facilitate healthy relationships; so this is yours to make your own as is best for you and your church.

Also, note that as the years progress with the pastor and congregation's relationship maturing and growing, including some other areas that are pertinent to a particular congregation and situation may be helpful. However, expectations and communication patterns usually need to be reviewed frequently.

Call to Communion

As we are working together and caring for pastors and congregations, may we always remember the call to the communion table which sets the tone for all our tables:

“It is now our sacred privilege to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. All who humbly put their trust in Christ and desire his help that they may lead a holy life; all who are truly sorry for their sins and would be delivered from them; all who would walk in love with their neighbors and intend to live a new life, following the commandments of God and walking from now on in God’s holy ways, are invited to draw near with faith and receive this holy sacrament.”

When the Body of Christ begins all work and relationships in the sacred space of the Holy Communion Table, all other tables are invited too and have a better chance to be inclusive and welcoming to solid care for pastor, family and staff and thus the whole congregation. May God Bless your care and communication process.

SOME POSSIBLE RESOURCES: “Food for the Table”

Resource # 1

Sample Congregational Survey

This may be used as tool to gather information regarding the congregation’s expectations of the pastor. It is wise to have a sampling of different members of the congregation according to gender, age, ethnicity or any other important demographics. This tool may be amended according to the needs of a particular congregation.

Please answer honestly and with clarity.

Question: In what ways have I experienced God’s presence in our Pastor’s public ministries of:

- Preaching
- Teaching
- Casting Vision
- Worship

Question: In what ways have I experienced God’s presence in our Pastor’s ministries to and with the congregation in:

- Administration
- Discipleship of leaders and congregation
- Pastoral care
- Developing and training leaders
- Providing helpful resources

Question: In what ways do I know and or have seen our Pastor’s commitment to self and family care in the following areas:

- Time for prayer and meditation
- Time for continuing education
- Time for play and relax with family and friends
- Time for retreats
- Meeting with district clergy group
- Utilizing spiritual direction and or mentoring

Question: In what ways do I know and or have seen our Pastor's commitment to community, conference, denominational and global ministries in the following areas:

- Justice and compassion ministries
- Community outreach
- Global Missions
- Conference and denomination meetings and responsibilities

Question: What do I think our pastor expects of the congregation?

Resource # 2

Self/Leader Awareness

Emotional Intelligence Domains and Associate Competencies

PERSONAL COMPETENCE: These capabilities determine how we manage ourselves.

1. Self Awareness
 - Emotional self-awareness: Reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact; using "gut sense" to guide decisions
 - Accurate self-assessment: Knowing one's strengths and limits
 - Self-confidence: A sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities
2. Self Management
 - Emotional self-control: Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control
 - Transparency: Displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness
 - Adaptability: Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles
 - Achievement: The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence
 - Initiative: Readiness to act and seize opportunities
 - Optimism: Seeing the upside in events

SOCIAL COMPETENCE: These capabilities determine how we manage relationships.

1. Social Awareness
 - Empathy: Sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns
 - Organizational Awareness: Reading the currents, decision networks, and "politics" at the organizational level
 - Service: Recognizing and meeting follower, client, customer needs
2. Relationship Management
 - Inspirational leadership: Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision
 - Influence: persuasion

- Developing others: Bolstering others' abilities through feedback and guidance
- Change catalyst: Initiating, managing, and leading in a new direction
- Conflict management: Resolving disagreements
- Building bonds: Cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships
- Teamwork and Collaboration: Cooperation and team building

Please make this resource your own. Obviously, it is written for business, but has some healthy areas for all leaders to observe in themselves and their environments. It was taken from *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goldman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee. It is written for organizations in general and not specifically The Church, but it includes helpful areas for all leaders to observe in themselves and their environments. If you choose, further descriptions of these competencies can be found in Appendix B of the book.

The following tools help determine each person's normal and natural way of "being" which can lead to understanding, healthy self-awareness and communication.

- Disc Leadership tool: It is free on line at www.TheDiSCPersonalityTool.com
- MBTI Personality Inventory: It is free online at WWW.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html

These are commonly used in many churches and situations. They can be Googled for further information.

Resource # 3

Basic Characteristics of Healthy Communication

Example # 1: I-Statements. ...You-Statements

The situation: The greeters and pastor ignored your friend when she came to church with you.

- I-Statement: (Owning feelings, ideas/information)
I am concerned that my friend did not receive a welcome when she came to church last Sunday.
- You-Statement: (Blaming the other)
You were irresponsible when you didn't greet my friend. You caused her to never want to come back.

I-statements open a chance for a dialogue between the participants. You-statements breed defensive responses and can cut off communication.

Example # 2: Reflective/Active/Redemptive Listening

Listening this way lets another know he or she has been heard and opens the door to further information that can get to the real issues. It also lets the other feel valued and respected.

The Situation: Dialogue between a pastor and a member of the congregation.

Member: Pastor, I'm struggling with my sister who doesn't think she needs to go to church any more.

Pastor: You are concerned that your sister isn't going to church.

Member: Yes, I'm afraid for her spiritual health.

Pastor: Your sister's spiritual life is important to you.

Member: Yes, when she stops going to church, she stops praying and gets in trouble in her marriage.

Pastor: Her marriage will suffer and that concerns you.

Member: Yes, she did this a year ago and almost got a divorce and her kids really suffered (the speaker most often goes on with important information).

This may take a bit longer, but it usually uncovers the real issues inside the person. Listen for where the "energy" in the others' statements is moving and follow it.

Example # 3: Descriptive...Evaluative Statements (focuses on the issues at hand)

The Situation: An exchange between a committee chairperson (who describes) and a committee member (who evaluates).

Chair: We have several items to get resolved tonight so let's get started.

Member: All we ever do is talk. We never get anything done. I don't believe that we will actually get anything resolved.

Chair: It is frustrating when we have to take time to discuss and issues don't get resolved quickly. Let's look at all the issues we have for tonight. Maybe we can find ones that will resolve more quickly than others.

Member: We never do anything quickly.

Chair: Let's begin by deciding who is going to be the committee representative to the PRC/MM committee.

Because the committee chair kept pulling the committee back to the issues, there is a chance that the work will get completed at the meeting.

Resource # 4

Behavioral Covenants – Holy Manners for a Faith Community

A behavioral covenant (often called a Relational Covenant) is a written document developed by leaders, agreed to and owned by its creators and practiced on a daily basis as a spiritual discipline. The covenant answers the question, “How will we behave, how will we live together when we don’t understand each other and when we don’t agree?” (Gil Rendle, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations*)

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL COVENANT FROM THE ECC

Guidelines for Loving Relationships and Values to Guide our Interaction

Colossians 3: 12-17, I Thessalonians 5: 12-26

- We seek to build each other up and not tear down.
- We respect and honor the office of pastor and other lay leaders.
- We seek to communicate clearly, completely, and directly.
- We offer our opinions with charity and humility.
- We make positive investments in each other's lives.
- We seek to discover what is best for our church as a whole, not what may be best for us or for some small group in the church.
- We accept disagreements, conflict and evaluation as normal and natural.
- We believe the best of each other and give each other the benefit of the doubt.
- We are committed to being inconvenienced for the gospel.

(<http://www.covchurch.org/vitality/downloads>)

Resource # 5

Suggestions for Further Reading on Communication and Conflict

One of the best resources on healthy communication and managing conflict comes from Marshall B. Rosenberg, and his work on nonviolent communication. He has several books.

- Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. This is the most commonly used of his books.
- On-line Google: Center for Nonviolent Communication.
- We Can Work it Out: Resolving Conflicts Peacefully and Powerfully. This booklet reframes the common approaches to conflict management.

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish have written the classic books on listening and communication. They are written for parents and teachers but the message translates for all generations and situations.

- How to Talk so Kids Can Learn
- How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk

There are hundreds of resources on these areas. These few are mentioned because they are solid sources that set the tone and provide a foundation that invites the learners into life-long authentic relationships.