

Ainsworth United Church of Christ
Pastoral Relations Committee

Position Description

3 year term
(2013)

Role and Function

The primary function of the Pastoral relations Committee is to support and maintain an open relationship between the congregation and the ordained, called pastor. The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) focuses not so much on the “work” of the church as on the “workings” of it. In other words the relationships between congregants and pastor which enable the tasks of ministry to be carried out faithfully and joyfully with a minimum of friction and stress. As such the PRC should be composed of people who are willing to listen objectively to the hopes, dreams, and concerns of the congregation and to communicate those constructively to the pastor. Members of the committee are also the primary source of support for the pastor as she explores her concerns, hopes, dreams, and personal needs in her role as pastor. It is a confidential committee that requires a high degree of trust among members and pastor.

We learn by doing. In the past we have met on an “as needed” basis. It seems advisable that we meet on a regular basis. In a report to the Administrative Council on August 10, 1999, the PRC recommended that we hold a public twice a year when people are free to bring their concerns, pose questions, and express their joys, concerning the work of the pastor. In addition we will meet quarterly as a close committee and any other time there is a need. The pastor is always included in all meetings.

Responsibilities

- Act in an atmosphere of confidentiality.
- Define and agree on committee responsibilities.
- Establish clear and workable goals and plans of action.
- Keep minutes of meetings and periodically assess need for changes in priorities and function.
- Help the congregation understand the committee’s role and task.
- Work in cooperation with other appropriate entities in the church structure to clarify the pastor’s position description and mutual expectations of what the pastor is to do and what has priority. Periodically review and clarify expectations and renegotiate as needed.
- Work with the administrative committee responsible for pastoral evaluation to be sure it happens and is used to further the ministry of both pastor and congregation.
- Support the pastor’s ministry beyond the local church in the community and the denomination.
- Encourage the pastor to participate in continuing education programs and in planning a sabbatical that builds on strengths and deals with weaknesses.
- Understand the pastor’s financial needs and advocate as necessary.
- Demonstrate concern and support for the pastor’s family.

- Encourage the pastor to plan time for recreation, relaxation, family need, and solitude.
- Work for improved communication, interpretation and understanding between the congregation and the pastor.
- Conduct open forums with the congregation twice a year inviting members and friends to express concerns, voice questions, and celebrate joys in the ministry of the church and the pastor.
- Define areas of potential conflict between the pastor's ministry and that of the congregation and serve as mediators when conflict arises.
- Communicate openly and honestly feelings and reactions of church members to the pastor as they are shared privately. Encourage church members to share feelings directly with the pastor.
- Provide time and a space for the pastor to reflect in confidence about personal concerns, hopes, ambitions, and frustrations.
- Plan celebrations of personal and professional milestones in cooperation with other appropriate groups in the church structure.
- The Pastoral Relations committee attends the annual Leadership Retreat.