

First Christian Church
Disciples of Christ
Sebring Florida

Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC)

The Pastoral Relations Committee is a standing committee, with the purpose of supporting a healthy relationship between the pastor and congregants in order to enhance the effectiveness of the church's ministry.

The committee serves in two primary ways:

as an advisory group to the pastor: sharing ideas, dreams, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor;

as a support group for the pastor's leadership: interpreting roles, functions, boundaries, opportunities, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

The goal of a Pastoral Relations Committee is to promote faithful, shared ministry between the pastor and the congregation.

The committee works in a context of confidentiality, support, care, and honesty with the pastor, while promoting healthy communication in the congregation as a whole.

A Pastoral Relations Committee is an appropriate and confidential place for the pastor to test possible goals for the congregation's life, to receive support for his/her professional development, to reflect on their overall well-being in ministry, to listen to feedback and strategize potential responses.

This committee also provides a means for the congregation to express its care for the pastor by advocating for appropriate compensation and encouraging times for relaxation, exercise, vacation, spiritual development, and personal relationships outside of the congregation. Particularly when the pastor serves in a part-time and/or bivocational capacity, this committee helps both the pastor and the congregation set and maintain appropriate expectations about the scope of work.

While the Pastoral Relations Committee encourages assessment of the shared ministry between the pastor and the congregation, they do not lead the process of pastoral evaluations.

Members of the PRC will maintain confidentiality. The members will covenant to hold all conversations, concerns and decisions as privileged communication until the PRC, with the consent of the pastor, agree to make public any proceedings which may directly affect the ongoing ministry of the local church.

Committee Membership: 3-5 members, carefully chosen by Pastor and Board. Committee must be able to build and maintain relationships of trust within itself, between committee and pastor and between committee and congregation. More important than committee size, however, is the composition and character of committee members so that the Pastoral Relations Committee is able to build and maintain relationships of trust within itself, between committee members and the pastor, and between the committee and the congregation. It is recommended that the search committee serve as the Pastoral Relations Committee for the first year of a new pastorate. When selecting persons to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee, the following skills and attributes should be considered:

Christian character that has earned the respect of the congregation and the pastor;
demonstrated discernment and prayerfulness;
Integrity and trustworthiness;
demonstrated maturity and patience;
vital interest in the life and mission of the church;
ability to maintain confidentiality;
ability to appreciate differing points of view and to reconcile differences;
ability to engage questions of authority, covenant, and accountability with wisdom and care;
willingness and availability to support both the congregation and the pastor through this committee role.

The PRC should meet at least quarterly, and more frequently if needed or requested. The pastor must be present for all meetings.

Meetings should include time for prayer and reflection, check-in on well-being, topics of pastoral concern or need, and “big picture” examination of patterns and habits across the church’s life.

In the absence of pressing topics, discussion might center around reevaluation of the pastor’s scope of work and adjusting the congregation’s expectations for the pastor’s reasonable set of responsibilities within their allotted hours (e.g. part-time or full-time); encouragement of the pastor’s participation in denominational and community activities; plans for pastoral coverage and worship leadership during a vacation or sabbatical; strategies to address conflict in the congregation; discussion of the pastor’s compensation and benefits for the committee to advocate to the governing body when annual budgets are developed. If the congregation uses a Behavioral Covenant, this is a place to remind participants of that covenant, too. The pastor may share updates on such personal or congregational concerns as appropriate. The rest of the committee may also share observations of concerns or needs of the congregation.

Moving Forward. Review any commitments made during the time together and outline any necessary next steps before the next meeting and end with closing prayer.

Conflict in a congregation is inevitable. Often that conflict focuses on a concern or a complaint that someone has involving the pastor. Matthew 18:15-20 provides a healthy format for addressing such concerns, encouraging direct communication between the complainant and the pastor (or the person at whom the complaint is directed), broadening the communication circle as needed to include more witnesses and wisdom in addressing the conflict. More detailed advice about healthy conflict resolution processes is available to the PRC.

Resource: [A Sure Foundation](#), Resources for the Relationship Between Pastors and Congregations, UCC MESA Team, 2018.