

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations

Currently the church is experiencing something of a crisis in the pastorate system. Clergy morale is at an all-time low, with pastors under attack like never before. The net result is an increasing incidence of involuntary pastoral terminations, which leave a lasting legacy of pain in congregations. Such a trend can only be reversed if the church is willing to reexamine some of the ways that the pastorate system has functioned in recent years.

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center provides unique programs to churches concerned about the future health of congregations. The *Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations* workshop is intended to help congregations design systems for enhancing the relationship between churches and their pastoral leadership. It would be an appropriate workshop for pastors, lay leaders and other church members, or judicatory staff and committees.

Any of the topics listed below can also be presented within the context of a shorter training event.

- Friday: 7:00-9:30 – **Introduction: The Crisis in the PASTORATE System**
- Symptoms of the Crisis
 - Causes of the Crisis
- The Congregation as a Family System**
- An Overview of Family Systems Theory
 - Understanding How Churches Can Be Like Dysfunctional Families
- Saturday: 9:00-10:30 – **Managing Healthy Pastoral Transitions**
- Saying Goodbye
 - Churches Searching for Leaders
 - Pastors Searching for Healthy Churches
 - The Pastor's Entry
- 10:45-12:00 – **Strengthening Support Systems for Pastors**
- Negotiating Expectations
 - Sharing the Task of Ministry
 - Pastor-Congregation Relations Committees
 - Healthy Pastoral Evaluation Procedures
 - Fair Termination Procedures
- 12:00-1:00 – Lunch
- 1:00-2:30 – **Systems for Managing Conflict Constructively**
- Educating for Conflict Resolution
 - Establishing Healthy Conflict Norms
 - Congregation Mediation Teams
 - An Intervention Model for Outside Consultants
- 2:45-4:30 – **Promoting Healthy Church Systems**
- Understanding Poorly Differentiated Church Members and Pastors
 - Overcoming Sabotage
 - Leadership Through Self-Differentiation

The facilitator for such a program would be Richard Blackburn, LMPC Director Emeritus and Senior Consultant. In addition to Rev. Blackburn's long involvement in issues related to Christian peacemaking and conflict transformation, his training in family systems theory makes him uniquely qualified to lead this workshop, which looks at how congregational systems function. In order to continue the educational process after the workshop, books on promoting healthy congregational systems are available from LMPC to participants.

Groups interested in exploring the possibility of hosting a workshop can contact the peace center at the above address or phone number.