

A SURE FOUNDATION

resources for the relationship between pastors and congregations

Discussion Guide written by Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel



starting the conversation

After your group has read “A Sure Foundation,” use these questions to get the conversation going.

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEES

Pastoral Relations Committees (pg. 13-21) come highly recommended in this resource yet some churches say they do not need a PRC because another existing board or group already plays that role. On pg. 14-16, a PRC is defined as being its own standing committee that keeps confidentiality, does not meet without the pastor, does not discuss anonymous feedback and does not play any role in the evaluation or compensation of the pastor. Given that definition, does your church have a PRC? Have you ever? Why or why not?

ASSESSMENT OF MINISTRY

The section on Assessment of Ministry suggests that it is not enough to simply “evaluate the job performance” of the pastor (pg. 22) but recommends assessing the ministry of the pastor and congregation together. On pg. 25, you can find examples of the type of feedback and questions that are most helpful. Notice that anonymous feedback does not appear on the list (pg. 26). Do you agree? How does your church currently assess or evaluate the ministry and which group is responsible for it?

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Does it surprise you to see that there is a full section on Social Media Guidelines for pastors and church members? Take a moment to review the Guidance for Pastors section on pg. 29-30 and read out loud the Boundaries for Departure on pg. 32. Have any of these issues ever come up in your church life?

UCC MINISTERIAL CODE

Our pastors are expected to hold to the UCC Ministerial Code, which you can find in “Ethical Codes” on pg. 4-6. It’s a long list! Was there anything there that surprised you? Anything you were surprised to see left out?

BEHAVIORAL COVENANTS FOR CONGREGATIONS

Behavioral Covenants for Congregations (pg. 9-12) are like “rules for the road” as we go about church life. They are guidelines for how to treat each other in gatherings like the one we are having right now. Has your church ever had a behavior covenant? Looking back, are there times when it could have helped?



process

BEFORE YOUR MEET:

- Send everyone the document.
- At the meeting, bring extra copies or have a digital copy to share by email or zoom if you are meeting remotely.

AT THE MEETING:

- Choose a Facilitator to ask the discussion questions and call on people
- Choose a Next Steps Notetaker to write down next steps as they come up.
- Check in to see if everyone in the group has read the document and offer extra copies to any who need them.

AT THE END OF THE MEETING:

- Ask the notetaker to read out loud the list of next steps and who will do them.