



Lancaster Mennonite Conference

When Your Church Seeks New Pastoral Leadership

Work with Conference Minister or Bishop

Your pastor has just resigned or retired. What do you do?

- Contact your conference minister to determine future actions and responsibilities.
- The church board/council/elders/deacons (hereafter referred to as *governing body*) takes official action to accept the resignation after agreeing on a date for termination.
- Inform the congregation if the resignation was not publicly presented.
- Make plans for a transition/interim pastor if needed or appropriate. The responsibility for arranging for the transitional interim leadership should remain with the governing body and should not be assigned to the pastoral search committee.
- Plan for a congregational event of thanksgiving and appreciation for the departing pastor.

Selecting the search committee

- The search committee should be persons highly trusted in the congregation and who are committed to its future.
- Serving on a pastoral search committee is a unique and special responsibility, for many a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Training and support will be important.
- The search committee should represent the broadest diversity of the congregation. It is important to include different age groups, both genders, new and long-term members, various interests or points of view.
- Generally it is not wise to appoint a standing committee or board as the search committee. However, a small pastor-congregational relations committee might form the nucleus with other representative persons added for the search process.
- The search committee is responsible to the body which appointed it, most often that being the governing body. The search committee should report to them and bring them the committee's recommendation regarding the candidate. Together they may make a recommendation to the congregation.
- The search committee should be provided with sufficient finances to carry out their responsibilities, including travel costs of candidates or of the committee to interview and moving costs of the new pastor.
- A chairperson and a secretary should be designated or selected.

The search committee has been formed. How does it begin?

- Meet with your conference minister to discuss basic understandings regarding processes and initial responsibilities.

- Plan a regular meeting schedule to keep the process moving.
- Prepare a **Congregational Information Form** which may be shared with potential candidates. (Included in this packet.)
- Assess both the statistical data as well as the spiritual-emotional health of the congregation, and then evaluate the implications of your assessment in light of your need for pastoral leadership.
- Request current area conference and/or denominational salary guidelines from conference minister or denominational ministry office.
- Keep the congregation informed of the work and activities of the search committee. Involve the congregation as appropriate. (Timeline poster included.)

The search committee is ready to consider candidates. How does it proceed with the "stage of exploration?"

- Request suggestions and candidate profiles from your conference minister.
- Invite members of the congregation to suggest names to the search committee.
- Identify the primary candidates you wish to consider as a search committee after reading candidate profiles.

Note: During this exploration stage, it is acceptable, though sometimes hazardous, for the search committee to be in contact with several candidates. Proceed with openness in communication and with caution!

- Call or have your conference minister contact those candidate(s) to determine their interest and availability. Send candidate(s) your congregational profile.
- Seek adequate references regarding the qualifications of the candidate(s). If the candidate does not have a Credentialing Leadership Information file completed, request they do so. A candidate packet similar to this one is available at the denominational ministry office. Consult with present conference minister of the candidate(s) and others who can give trusted evaluations. It is recommended that you make personal calls to the references listed, in addition to reading the summary of references.
- Determine which candidate(s) the search committee wishes to interview and invite such candidate(s) at the committee's expense. This first interview is not the time to introduce candidate(s) to the congregation.
- In cases where geographical distance may limit the candidate to one visit to your community or where additional contact is desirable, an extended conference call between your committee and candidate(s) is another option.
- Carefully plan the interview process and agenda remembering that this is still the exploration stage. This is a key time to discuss job expectations and to assess the personal qualities which the candidate(s) would bring to this leadership role. **(Note: the Interview question guide in this packet.) Ask Dale**
- Continue to stay in touch with your conference minister as you proceed, requesting help, counsel, and suggestions.
- Keep the congregation informed of the committee's activity though not yet of a specific candidate's name. Even if the committee is not making good progress, it is important that the congregation know the search committee is working.

- After the exploration interviews have taken place, the search committee should act unanimously, as much as possible in assessing the suitability of the candidates and in the selection of the primary candidate.
- Keep candidate(s) informed about your processes and their current status.

The search committee has selected one candidate. How does it proceed through the "stage of negotiation"?

- Assemble all the available data and reports concerning the candidate. The search committee may wish to contact several references by phone regarding the candidate and qualifications/suitability for ministry if it hasn't already done so.
- Provide adequate written and verbal information to the church governing body regarding the candidate.
- The governing body and the search committee jointly arrange for the candidate (and spouse) to visit and meet the congregation during which the following should occur:
 - Meet with the governing body of the congregation and other key groups in the congregation.
 - Provide opportunity for the candidate to make some public presentation, such as a sermon.
 - Provide opportunity for all members of the congregation to personally meet the candidate informally.
 - Provide opportunity for the candidate to raise questions regarding the church and whatever other concerns the candidate may have.
 - Provide the candidate opportunity to assess the larger community and its assets.
 - During this visit, the search committee must enter into specific negotiations regarding salary, benefits, reimbursements, housing, sabbatical policy, beginning date, length of initial term, moving expenses and anticipated procedures for decision. (It might help to follow the suggested covenant of understanding.) This is also the time for further clarification of job descriptions and role expectations.
 - When the search committee has reached a decision on a candidate to recommend to the congregation, the bishop shall request a meeting with the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Credentialing Commission. Please give sufficient time (at least 3-4 weeks) to schedule the interview, as slots tend to fill up quickly.
- The church governing body and the search committee jointly recommend the candidate to the congregation, both by a letter to all members and by public announcement with notification of a congregational meeting for decision.
- Continue to keep the conference minister informed of your progress and anticipated action.
- The congregation votes to accept or reject the recommendation for pastoral leadership following congregational bylaws and procedures.
- The candidate is informed promptly concerning the outcome of the vote. If the vote is positive, a formal written call to ministry will be sent to the candidate with specific details of the negotiated agreement or the proposed covenant of understanding.
- The candidate responds in writing with a decision accepting or rejecting the call of the congregation.

Your candidate has accepted the call. Now what?

- Notify the congregation that the pastor-elect has accepted the call.
- Notify the conference minister that the call has been accepted.
- Notify any other candidates you interviewed that the congregation has called a new pastor.
- Offer appropriate assistance to the candidate-elect and family in the moving process.
- Prepare church office and parsonage for the arrival of the new pastor and family, checking with them regarding preferences in decorating.
- Plan a joyful welcoming event for pastor and family.
Introduce the new pastor to the community and leadership persons within it.
- Form a pastor-congregation relations committee to maintain ongoing and regular communication between the pastor and the congregation.
- Make plans for a formal installation event, in consultation with the new pastor and the conference minister.
- Pray for welfare of this unique relationship and work positively to make it go well.



Lancaster Mennonite Conference

Congregation Information Form

To be completed by congregations seeking new pastoral leadership

Purpose of this form

This form is to assist a congregation to present information concerning itself to prospective candidates for a pastoral leadership position. Completing the form will also assist the pastoral search committee in self-understanding as they assess the strengths and weaknesses which may exist at the time of pastoral transition.

I. Information

A. BASIC INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

1. Name of church

Address

Church telephone

Email

Website

2. Chairperson of search committee

Address

Telephone

Email

3. Area church/conference

Name of area church/conference minister assisting your church's search committee

Address

Telephone

E-mail

4. Year in which the congregation first began meeting or was organized

B. MEMBERSHIP

1. Average Sunday worship attendance during the last 12 months:

Highest attendance during that time

Lowest attendance during that time

2. Total current members

Non-resident members

Resident members

Children (not members)

3. Age of members and children. Give totals and percentage.

0-12	%	31-45	%
13-18	%	46-64	%
19-30	%	65+	%

4. Occupational profile: (ages 19 to 70). Give totals.

Business/manager/proprietor	Homemaker
Education/administration/teacher	Clerical/sales
Craftsman/laborer/operative	Student/VS
Medical: doctor/nurse/administration	Farmer/rancher
Church institution/administration/minister	Other professional

5. Educational level of adults:

Up to and including high school	%
Some college or college graduate	%
Graduate school	%

6. Describe the racial or ethnic composition of the congregation.

C. LEADERSHIP

1. Identify the present staff position for which you are seeking a candidate.

2. Two previous persons in the above position:

Name	Dates of service
Name	Dates of service

Comment on the transitions experienced by the above staff persons. What were the reasons for their assignments ending? How were the transitions handled?

3. Did your congregation follow the Pastor Salary Guidelines recommended by the denomination for the previous pastor? If not, describe how you varied from the Guidelines

4. Identify other staff: (assistant/associate minister, lay ministers, administrative assistant, custodian, musicians, youth)

Title	% of full time	Specific responsibilities	Years served
Title	% of full time	Specific responsibilities	Years served
Title	% of full time	Specific responsibilities	Years served
Title	% of full time	Specific responsibilities	Years served
Title	% of full time	Specific responsibilities	Years served

5. Describe housing options for the above position: Is there a parsonage or a housing allowance (US) or housing credit (Canada)?
Is the person free to choose between these options?

II. Interpretation

The answers to the questions in this section are more difficult but probably more important in determining the qualifications needed by pastoral leadership. Use a small group to test for consensus on the answers given in this section. (Would recommend that the governing board of the congregation review and sign off on this section)

- A. Describe the commitment of your church to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith. How does this contribute to strengthening your ability to join God's mission in the world?
- B. What is the vision for your church? What are your priorities that shape the church's ministry?
- C. What is your view of the pastor's role in the church? Are there special gifts in ministry which you hope will be fulfilled? How do you expect the pastor to be a representative of the congregation beyond the congregation?
- D. Recognizing our differing theological orientations as persons and as congregations, make a brief statement about your congregation and the overarching theological commitments important to you.
- E. Church morale: Assess the spiritual and emotional health of the congregation. Are relationships among members wholesome and harmonious? Is there openness to new ideas and ways of doing things? Would everyone agree with your answers?
- F. What changes or trends do you envision for the congregation over the next five years? Do you have any other comments significant in the process for looking for new pastoral leadership?

III. Organization/Ministry

A. CHURCH STRUCTURE

1. Identify the primary governing body (council, board, elders) which represents the church.

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly # of avg. age M – F

2. Identify five other significant leadership/programming bodies: e.g. trustees, deacons, elders, commissions, councils, boards, committees.

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly # of avg. age M – F

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly # of avg. age M – F

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly # of avg. age M – F

Name meets weekly , monthly , quarterly # of avg. age M – F

B. Worship AND MUSIC

1. Describe your worship service
2. What role does music play in your congregation?
3. What song books/collections of music does your congregation use?
4. Name the musical instruments used in worship and other events (piano, keyboard, organ, guitar organ, drums, handbells, violin, etc.)

5. Identify choirs and/or music groups

Name	Age range	Number of participants
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Name	Age range	Number of participants
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Name	Age range	Number of participants
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Name	Age range	Number of participants
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C. CHRISTIAN FORMATION- Describe your approach to Christian Formation

1. Number of children's classes _____ Total Sunday school enrollment _____

Number of youth classes _____ Average total attendance _____

Number of adult classes _____

What curriculum resources are used by these classes?

2. How does the congregation attend to the formation needs of persons of all ages?

3. What other opportunities are there for growth and transformation?

4. Describe the involvement of youth in the life of the congregation.

Does your church support and send young people to Mennonite camps, area church/conference and colleges?

5. Does your congregation have active small groups? If so, describe the number of groups, focus of the groups and how often they meet.

6. What men's/women's groups are active?

7. What ministries do you have for children, youth and young adults over 18, etc.?)

8. In the next five years, do you anticipate a membership:

increase stability decrease?

Why?

D. OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM

1. Describe how you cultivate the visibility of your church in the community.
2. Describe how you connect to seekers and make new disciples.
3. Describe your congregation's ministry in and with the community.

E. HOW DOES THE CHURCH UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY IN WORSHIP, IN TEACHING, AND IN OUTREACH IN THE COMMUNITY?

F. CHURCH BUILDING AND PROPERTY

1. Do you own or rent your facility? If rent, describe the type of space.
2. Seating capacity of sanctuary or worship area
3. Date of construction of church building
4. Date of last renovation. Describe what was done

What if any building/renovation program is needed or projected?
5. Describe the educational facilities.
6. Describe the fellowship and/or recreational facilities.
7. Describe the church office location and equipment: Computers, phones, other.
8. Are building and equipment adequate for the needs of the congregation? Describe any special assets or liabilities of the building.
9. Name the insurance company and describe the coverage for church liability, property, pastor's liability, etc., for the church.
10. Are there community programs or groups who also utilize your church facilities? Who are they and how often do they use the building?

What interaction do you have with them?

G. CHURCH STEWARSHIP/FINANCES

1. Based upon your last report, identify the previous year's giving of your church.

Local Church

Expenses

Local needs and outreach

Buildings and facilities

TOTAL LOCAL CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Non Local Contributions

Area church/conference

Denominational total

Mennonite institutions and agencies

Mennonite Central Committee

Other Mennonite causes

Non-Mennonite causes

TOTAL NON LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS

2. Church budget

Who makes recommendation regarding pastoral and staff salaries?

Who determines church budget or makes recommendation to the church?

What plan is used to challenge the church to Christian stewardship

Current total budget \$

3. Is there church indebtedness? Yes No Amount \$

How is it being reduced?

IV. Relationships

A. COMMUNITY

1. Character of community your congregation serves or in which it is located:
Rural Village (under 2500) Town (under 10,000) City (over 10,000)
 Large city (over 100,000) Metropolitan area (over 1,000,000)
2. Which best describes this community?
Growing Stable Declining
3. Describe racial or ethnic composition of the community.
4. List two or three primary business/industries in the community.
5. Identify other Mennonite/Anabaptist churches in the community, if any.

What other churches and faith groups are in the community?

6. Name of nearest college or university

In what way does your church relate to this academic community?

7. Identify significant issues confronting your community.
8. Describe what you believe to be distinctive assets of your community.
9. Describe your congregation's ministry in the community.
10. How does your congregation work with ecumenical and interfaith efforts?

B. AREA CHURCH/CONFERENCE

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in the area church/conference.

C. CHURCH WIDE AGENCIES

1. Describe your relationship with and your participation in global missions and mission agencies.

V. Conclusion

- A. Send a copy of this form to your area church/conference minister. You may also use copies to send to prospective candidates whom you may wish to interview.

Name of group or persons responsible for completion of this form:

Date of completion:

COVENANT OF UNDERSTANDING

Between a Congregation and its Pastor

A covenant between _____ [name of pastor] and _____
[name of congregation], _____ [city and state]:

1. **Position and period of effectiveness.** This position carries the title of _____ [pastor or other title] of the _____ [name of congregation] and is a _____ [full or a percentage] time position. The specific conditions of this Covenant of Understanding shall be effective for a period of one year, beginning _____ [date] and ending _____ [date].

2. **Term.** (Pick one of the following two options.)

Set Term. The pastor's term shall be _____ [3 or more] years with the initial term beginning _____ [date] and ending on _____ [date]. The current term shall be reviewed by the _____ [governing body] or its designated representatives at least six months prior to the ending date and is subject to renewal for another term by _____ [at least 67] percent vote for approval of the congregation [at least ninety days before the ending date].

Open-ended term. The pastor's term shall be open-ended with regular annual reviews by the _____ [governing body] or its designated representatives. A vote by the congregation on the pastor's continuing ministry can be taken only after a resolution to that effect has been approved by a simple majority of the votes cast by the _____ [governing body]. The following vote on the pastor's continuing employment by the congregation shall receive _____ [at least 67] percent of the vote cast for approval.

3. **Salary.** The congregation will provide the pastor with an annual total cash salary of \$_____. Of this amount, \$_____ shall be designated as a housing allowance, which includes housing costs, utilities, furnishings, and appurtenances as defined by the Internal Revenue Service.

4. **Housing Adjustments for Parsonage.** (Include this section if there is a parsonage and such items are not included in item #3.) The congregation will provide the pastor and family with a parsonage, and agrees to keep the same in good repair, paying for such items as improvements, repairs, and redecorating.

(Note: Some congregations also provide the following items along with a parsonage.)

- The congregation [will directly pay for all or will not pay for] utilities of the parsonage.
- The congregation will provide \$_____ as an annual discretionary fund to the pastor for improvements and redecorating (not repairs or maintenance). The discretionary fund will be held by the congregation and may be allowed to accumulate up to three years for more substantial improvements.
- In order to partially compensate the pastor for inability to gain some capital resources for long term housing needs, the congregation agrees to establish a housing equity fund equal to [three to five percent of the cash salary or two percent of assessed parsonage value] which is \$_____ this year. This fund will be held by the congregation until employment is terminated. This may be considered taxable income at that time.

5. **Pension Plan/Retirement Fund.** The congregation agrees to participate in the [Mennonite Retirement Trust administered by Everence or other retirement investment options] at the rate of

_____ [usually 8 – 10] percent of annual cash salary. The amount for this year will be \$ _____.

6. **Health plan.** (Choose one of the following options.)

[The congregation will provide the pastor [and family (children included in the basic family coverage through eligible age limits)] with [The Corinthian Plan or other medical insurance plans]. Payment will be made directly by the congregation.]

[Instead of providing a group insurance plan the congregation has provided additional compensation which is taxable and the pastor may use these funds to pay for health insurance premiums.]

7. **Sick and family leave.** The congregation will grant one day per month for sick leave which may accumulate up to a total of ninety days. Arrangements for long term illness beyond accumulated sick days will be reviewed by _____ [governing body].

The congregation will also make provision for family leave. It is understood that the pastor will assist the congregation in planning for the needed interim ministry required during that time.

8. **Travel and auto expenses.** The congregation agrees to reimburse the pastor for church-related travel at the rate of _____ [IRS rate suggested] cents per mile based upon report of a regular travel log.

9. **Vacation, holidays and personal days.** The pastor will be granted _____ [2 – 4 suggested based on tenure—see guidelines] weeks of vacation annually. Unused vacation may not be used in subsequent years without permission of the _____ [governing body]. Upon termination of services, the last vacation period will be prorated in proportion to the time served that year.

Holidays normally observed by society will be time off with compensatory days for those religious holidays which call for pastoral duty. The pastor is regularly given one and one half days off each week from pastoral responsibilities.

[Some congregations provide one weekend each quarter as time off from pastoral responsibilities in addition to the above in recognition of the fact that the normal pastoral schedule calls for extra and unusual hours.]

The pastor is allowed _____ [3 recommended] personal days per year for special situations not covered by other guidelines.

10. **Continuing education.** The church supports various types of continuing education which will encourage the professional growth of the pastor including the purchase of books and subscriptions related to professional responsibilities. A maximum of ten working days and \$_____ will be provided annually for such activities. These may be accumulated over three years within the congregation being served to permit participation in something such as the seminary interterm or summer school.

11. **Office expense.** The church will provide adequate office equipment and furniture and pay for expenses of operating the church office such as stationery, postage, telephone, copying, computer, internet connection and other supplies.

12. **Conference and community.** The congregation encourages and supports the pastor's participation in area conference activities as a part of our congregation's sharing in the larger church, as well as in local community projects. The church will pay for the normal transportation cost (the lesser of auto mileage, car rental or air fare), registration, lodging, and meals.

13. **Social Security.** By law the licensed or ordained minister must make Social Security payments as if self-employed. [Some congregations choose to assist by paying one half of the Social Security as would the normal employer, recognizing that this is taxable income.]
14. **Sabbatical leave.** In order to encourage significant growth in ministry and to increase the likelihood of longer pastoral tenure, the congregation agrees to the following sabbatical policy. For each year of completed service to this congregation (other than the year in which a sabbatical leave is received), one month of sabbatical leave may be granted, not to be used until the fourth year of ministry here, with subsequent three month sabbatical leaves during the eighth and twelfth years of ministry. During the sabbatical, the pastor will receive full salary and benefits as exist in the then current covenant of understanding. Sabbatical plans submitted by the pastor shall be approved by the _____ [governing body], normally three months prior to the sabbatical. Following a sabbatical, the pastor agrees to provide a minimum of one year of service to the congregation, with the understanding that repayment of sabbatical salary and benefits will be made for failure to do so. Accumulated sabbatical time is not transferable from prior congregational locations, nor is a terminal sabbatical acceptable.
15. **Insurance.** [If the congregation does not participate in The Corinthian Plan which includes life and disability insurance, it should provide life insurance, survivors aid, and disability insurance for the pastor. These benefits can provide significant protection to both the pastor's family and to the congregation. Disability insurance should provide two thirds annual salary including Social Security disability payments. A life insurance policy should provide coverage approximately equal to annual salary.]
16. **Resignation and termination.** In the event the pastor chooses to resign this position, the _____ [governing body] shall be given a minimum notice of ninety days prior to the effective date of resignation. Should the church choose to terminate the pastor in this position, they likewise will give a minimum of ninety days' notice prior to the effective date of termination. If immediate dismissal occurs, for reasons other than ethical violations for which ministerial credentials have been terminated by the area conference, severance pay and benefits equal to ninety days shall be given.
17. **Review.** All the terms of the covenant of understanding shall be reviewed annually by the _____ [governing body or its designated representatives] meeting with the pastor, and in time for the preparation of the annual budget of the congregation.
18. **Signatures with a copy to each.**

_____	_____
Official congregational representative, position or office	date
_____	_____
Pastor	date
_____	_____
Conference Minister or overseer	date

REPORTING PROGRESS TO THE CONGREGATION CONCERNING OUR SEARCH FOR A NEW PASTOR

- 1. We have appointed a search committee. They are:

- 2. The search committee has met with our conference minister/overseer.
- 3. We are gathering information and developing a description of our congregation.
- 4. The search committee is considering potential candidates.
- 5. The search committee has identified possible candidates and will conduct interviews.
- 6. One candidate is being selected to recommend to the congregation for our pastoral opening.
- 7. The candidate will be interviewed by the Lancaster Conference Credentialing Commission on_____.
- 8. This candidate, _____, will visit the congregation and community on_____.
- 9. The congregation will vote on the recommended candidate on:_____.
- 10. We will celebrate the installation of our new pastor on _____.