

Lancaster Mennonite Conference  
**GUIDELINES FOR WHEN THE FORMER PASTOR REMAINS IN THE CONGREGATION**

If a former pastor continues in the same congregation he/she should be in dialog with the conference overseer, conference minister and the current pastor. The former pastor should exercise great sensitivity to the current pastor. The continual reappearance of a former pastor at crisis points or life transition points interferes with the normal development of the relationships between the current pastor and members.

For clear lines of accountability and ethical responsibility of former pastors, the following guidelines are given:

- Pastoral care and crisis ministry is now the responsibility of the current pastor. Former pastors should not continue pastoral visits or respond in crisis ministry situations in place of the current pastor.
- Former pastors will decline invitations to perform baptisms, weddings and funerals and will defer these requests to the current pastor. The best pastoral care given by a former pastor is to attend the event rather than exercise public leadership.
- Former pastors should not accept any position in the congregation that by virtue of office puts them on the church council or the pastoral leadership group. Other assignments may be considered if approved by the pastor and congregational leadership persons.
- Former pastors should develop and maintain an open relationship with the current pastor. Do not rely on assumptions.
- Recognize and respect the fact that as former pastors you continue to have significant power. The issue is how that power is used or abused. Former pastors must never allow themselves to become the rallying point for discontent
- If the former pastor is not comfortable with new directions and efforts that may well come with a pastoral change, resist the temptation to protect or rescue a program or an idea. In such a case it is better to move on and entrust the congregation to God's grace.
- An accountability group of overseer, elders and current pastor will be formed to answer any questions former pastors may have about their role and to discuss any perceived inappropriate behavior in this regard. It is the responsibility of the overseer to see that this group is in place. *(see The Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership, page 118, #8)*

*Adapted from A Polity for Ministerial Leadership, (Faith and Life Press, 1996, pages 118 and 119 and "Is Retiring From the Pastorate Within One's Own Congregation An Option?" by Earnest D. Martin, Leadership Commission of Ohio Mennonite Conference, March 1992.*