



PRESBYTERY PASTORAL CARE NETWORK

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

There is a growing concern throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to support the well-being of Ministers of Word and Sacrament with more personal and effective pastoral care.

Constitutionally, the role of pastor and counselor to ministers is given to the Committee on Ministry (G-11.0501). Yet many presbyteries have begun to wonder whether other approaches are not also needed.

Some have developed full or part-time staff positions dedicated to the pastoral care and spiritual formation of ministers. Others rely on volunteers – singly or in groups. Still others have experimented with creating entirely new divisions of the presbytery outside the Committee on Ministry structure. Increasingly, the pastoral care of ministers is included among the responsibilities given to executive and associate executive presbyters.

Whichever of these approaches may be taken, it is our conviction that the quality of pastoral care of ministers will be strengthened by a commitment to a common standard of “Best Practices.” The practices outlined in this brochure were identified first in conversations with colleagues at recent National Gatherings of the Presbytery Pastoral Care Network (PPCN). Later they were refined and edited by the PPCN board of directors. The practices and the values they represent arise out of real experience with each of the above-described models on the part of persons currently engaged in providing pastoral care to the ministers of their presbyteries.

We share this resource with you in hopes that it will strengthen your presbytery’s efforts to provide personal and effective pastoral care to its ministers.

Sincerely,

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BEST PRACTICES FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MINISTERS

A resource for presbyteries throughout
the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
developed by



PRESBYTERY
PASTORAL CARE
NETWORK

Providing Professional Development and Personal Support for
Pastors to Ministers throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MINISTERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

*Developed and Recommended
by the Presbytery Pastoral Care Network*

Whichever model or models may be adopted by a presbytery for providing pastoral care for ministers, the same standards of care should apply for those called or appointed to such a ministry. The board of directors of the Presbytery Pastoral Care Network (PPCN) has identified the following best practices for the pastoral care of ministers and commends them to presbyteries for consideration.

PASTORAL

- Understands distinctive role and resources of pastoral care
- Recognizes the limits of pastoral care
- Accurately represents and acts within one's own level of competence and expertise
- Cultivates and maintains a broad network of qualified, pastor-sensitive referral services
- Makes appropriate referrals and follow-ups whenever indicated

CONFIDENTIAL

- Adheres to the standard of confidentiality defined in the Form of Government (G-6.0204 and 14.0801 f), especially
 - Maintains relationships of trust and confidentiality
 - Holds in confidence all information revealed in the course of providing pastoral care
 - Reveals confidential information when one reasonably believes that there is a risk of imminent bodily harm to any person
- Knows and follows mandatory reporting laws of the state

- Refrains from providing references for any who have received one's pastoral care, except with that person's express consent to reveal confidential information (G-6.0204). Absent such consent, arranges for alternative means of providing a reference within the presbytery structures
- Educates the presbytery on the importance of confidentiality and builds trust and confidence among the ministers served

INCLUSIVE

- Offers pastoral care to *all* ministers of the presbytery without distinction
- Remains sensitive to the needs of the spouse and family members of ministers and offers pastoral care to them where appropriate, always in consultation and cooperation with the family members' own pastor if other than the minister

PROACTIVE

- Understands the vulnerabilities and risks of pastoral ministry
- Actively encourages healthy and balanced personal life
- Advocates for gracious and preventative benefits and insurance coverage for the mental and spiritual health of all ministers
- Commends programs and relationships aimed at reducing risk factors and encouraging positive practices (e.g., small groups, opportunities for spiritual formation and personal development and growth, spiritual direction, etc.)

HOLISTIC

- Provides pastoral care for the whole person – spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially
- Remains sensitive to the entire context of a minister's life, especially to the dynamics of the congregation or other place of ministry

ACCOUNTABLE

- Appreciates the inherent tension between confidentiality and accountability, especially with regard to supervision at the presbytery level
- Arranges for and relies upon competent peer supervision outside the official presbytery structures for regular consultation and guidance. Where a fee is involved for such consultation, the presbytery should bear the cost.
- Consults with competent peer supervisors in all difficult cases

INFORMED

- Participates in programs of continuing education and professional development in this area of pastoral care, with the presbytery bearing the cost
- Forms supporting partnerships with others throughout the church who are engaged in such ministry
- Is aware of the resources and support available through PPCN and considers active membership in the network

ETHICAL

Follows an appropriate standard of professional ethical conduct, such as "Life, Together in the Community of Faith: Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)."

GENUINE

- Seeks to live and model a balanced life in ministry.
- Engages regularly in healthy practices to promote one's own spiritual formation and personal growth