

Guidelines For Congregations, Pastors and Lay Ministers In Their Mutual Ministries

The leadership advancement process of the Northwest District is designed to increase the mission outreach of the church without additional funds. Lay assistants are to do pioneer social work, aid in special ministries, initiate programs of artistic abilities to help communicate the Gospel. Where the gifts of the lay minister are more fitting for congregational ministry, their work should free pastors to do such pioneering work and equip lay people to be active in a ministry to society.

Guidelines

The leadership advancement process is a missionary endeavor. These guidelines are intended to expand the church's outreach into its community and are designed to help congregations, pastors, and lay assistants function well in this new dimension of ministry.

Areas of Responsibility

Both during the training and upon certification, congregations, pastors, and lay assistant, with the approval of their congregations, should agree upon their areas of ministry and how they might be carried out.

1. Normally, before the lay assistant trainee begins the specialized part of their training, they should have a written agreement with the congregation and the pastor(s) concerning the mutually agreed upon areas of concentration or specialization.
2. Upon certification this agreement should be updated and should spell out in some detail the areas of responsibility for the lay minister. An effort should be made not merely to duplicate what is going on, but to increase the total ministry of the congregation. Thus, the lay assistant should be called to do some new pioneering work or else to take over an existing function of ministry to enable the pastor(s) to do such new work.
3. The lay assistant shall be directly responsible to the pastor as supervisor.
4. Such an agreement should also include the length of time for such ministry. The leadership advancement process suggests a one or two-year agreement subject to renewal after a mutual evaluation of the ministry.
5. Normally a lay assistant will want to work about 15 hours a week in their area of ministry. Provisions should be made for some type of accountability to be given to the congregation for the tasks under taken.
6. Regular meetings should be scheduled with the supervising pastor. At this time there can be a mutual review of the ministry. Such meetings can also provide time for the discussion of any new assignments that might need to be made.

Communications

It necessary that lay ministers, pastors, and relevant boards and committees of the congregation understand what is happening and have the opportunity to exchange information.

1. We recommend that lay ministers be normally ex-officio members. They would not vote and thus will not change the composition of these groups. Nevertheless, they will be invited to share their insights, experiences, and activities, and to learn what is going on.
2. Further, some regular meetings (scheduled or informal) should take place between the lay minister and the pastor(s) and staff.
3. Each congregation will have to decide for itself the role of the lay assistant within that congregation.

Mutual Support

Lay ministers are in an excellent position to support the congregation's pastor(s) and its total ministry. At the same time they will need encouragement and support from pastors. Lay assistants are expected to be part of a team ministry of pastors, lay assistants and the lay leadership of the congregation.

1. Pastors and lay assistants should publicly support one another's ministries and refrain from criticism before others.
2. It is necessary that pastors and lay assistants share devotional times on a regular basis.
3. Pastors and lay assistants should be invited to comment upon and commend one another for their respective ministries.
4. Pastors and lay assistants need to treat each other with mutual respect honoring the unique educational and experiential backgrounds they bring to ministry and the special talents that God has given to them.

Personal Appearance and Conduct

Lay ministers as well as pastors are ambassadors for Christ and the church in all they say and do. As a result,

1. They should act with sensitivity and decorum in all of their private and public functions.
2. Their appearance reflects a respect for their work and the people among whom they minister.
3. Confidentiality is absolutely necessary for those serving on parish's team ministry.

Conclusion

These guidelines are not intended to stifle initiative, creativity, or spontaneity on the part of lay assistants. The volunteer service of lay assistants rendered to their Lord is a precious gift to the church. Rather, these guidelines are intended to encourage the mutual support of ministries between pastors, lay assistants, and congregational leaders. It is our hope that the service of lay assistants will be carried out with a consistency which will bring strength to the church and glory to God.