



*"I read this material with growing interest. You have come up with splendid advice and material, laid out very professionally. I could have used it myself in my time in many situations. I could readily see how many pastors and office bearers could benefit tremendously from this pastoral evaluation. Your materials deserve to be used on a broader scale."*

**Rev. Louis M. Tamminga**  
Director, Pastor-Church Relations  
CRCNA (1983-1995)

# A Pastoral Evaluation Manual

## Mutual Accountability through Transparency

**Walt Brouwer**  
PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONS

Classis Alberta North  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

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Step 1: [www.ClassisAlbertaNorth.org](http://www.ClassisAlbertaNorth.org);

Step 2: go to Documents;

Step 3: go to Session #148 (March 2011);

Step 4: open *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual – Walt Brouwer*

Please note that while this pastoral evaluation process is quite straight forward, there are sensitive details that need to be recognized, understood and observed. Therefore, do not use this process without qualified and trained consultants (cf. p. 71).

Those who want to use *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*; for inquiries about being trained in its use; or for further information, please contact:

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For further contact information, see page 71.

November 2011

## What Others Are Saying

*“I believe your work in helping churches evaluate the work of their pastor is a huge stride forward in the right direction. ... **The experience at [our church] was the best I’ve had in terms of an evaluation of my work – and I’m talking about the process here more than the results.**”* – PASTOR

*“We were pleased with the process, mostly because **it was done in a positive spirit which is uplifting to the pastor and the congregation.**”* – ELDER and PET MEMBER

*“**The process was open, honest, and cordial.** Members of the Pastoral Evaluation Team [PET] initially wondered about the lack of anonymity – they thought that participants might feel inhibited. When the process was completed though, they felt that their concern was unnecessary.”* – PASTOR

*“**As a result of this process, we are now re-vamping our Pastor’s Job Description with our Pastor’s full participation.** The ‘proof is in the pudding’. We fully plan to utilize this protocol again this year for our Pastoral evaluation.”* – ELDER and PET MEMBER

*“The pastoral evaluation was **an effective tool for taking the temperature of my ministry** and allowing me as pastor an insight into the thinking of twenty-six members of the congregation.”* – PASTOR

*“For years I’ve felt that the preferred pastor nowadays is one with an intense, ‘entrepreneurial’ style. In other words, many churches (and denominational officials) prefer a pastor with the skill set of a strong, natural business leader. I’m afraid that that’s not me – and it’s not going to become me any time soon. **After the pastoral evaluation process I feel more confident that pastors with my temperament and gifts have a place.** It seems that there are a variety of gifts, a variety of pastors and a variety of churches where pastors can be effective.”* – PASTOR

*I believe that the pastoral evaluation was helpful and effective. This particular model of pastoral evaluations is a successful way to provide a pastor with feedback regarding his ministry. Although some comments may have been difficult to receive, our pastor with Pastor Walt’s guidance, chose to respond in a positive manner. **Our pastor has already made some positive changes, and he has incorporated suggestions made in the evaluation in his ongoing ministry to our congregation.**”* – ELDER and PET MEMBER

*“The pastoral evaluation process was certainly very helpful for me and my leadership/congregation. **It got some things out into the open that needed to get discussed** and it eventually led to the Elders suggesting and supporting the idea of me going on a sabbatical which would not have happened without the evaluation so I am thankful for this evaluation process.”* – PASTOR

*“The pastoral evaluation process was very helpful. **I would be one who would whole-heartedly encourage all pastors and churches to take part in this process as it will bring benefit to the ministry of the pastor and the church together.** I believe that it can take a tenuous relationship and build it into a positive and supportive relationship.”* – PASTOR

## Contents

Introduction . . . . .	5
Briefly . . . . .	7
<b>Part I: The Process . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
The Steps of the Pastoral Evaluation . . . . .	11
Step 1: The Pastor Requests the Pastoral Evaluation . . . . .	13
Step 2: The Elders and Pastor Meet with the Consultant . . . . .	14
Step 3: The Elders and Pastor Choose the PET . . . . .	15
Step 4: The PET Meets with the Consultant . . . . .	17
Step 5: The PET Makes a List of Pastoral Evaluators . . . . .	19
Step 6: The PET Issues the Pastoral Evaluation Materials . . . . .	21
Step 7: The PET Meets with the Consultant . . . . .	24
Step 8: The PET Submits the Feedback to the Pastor . . . . .	26
Step 9: The PET and Pastor's Reports . . . . .	27
Step 10: The PET Completes Its Work . . . . .	29
Step 11: The Elders and Pastor Continue the Conversation . . . . .	30
Step 12: The Pastor Meets with the Consultant . . . . .	31
<b>Part II: The Resources . . . . .</b>	<b>33</b>
Resource A: Choosing the PET . . . . .	35
Resource B: The Proposed Schedule for the Pastoral Evaluation . . . . .	36
Resource C: Choosing the Pastoral Evaluators . . . . .	38
Resource D: The Cover Memo to Pastoral Evaluators . . . . .	39
Resource E: Questions for the Pastoral Evaluators . . . . .	40
1. Feedback Questions for Office Bearers . . . . .	40
2. Feedback Questions for Staff . . . . .	41
3. Feedback Questions for Members . . . . .	42
Resource F: Form for the Ordination of Ministers (1986) . . . . .	43
Resource G: Insights into Writing a Pastoral Job Description . . . . .	46
Resource H: Writing the PET Report . . . . .	48
Resource I: The PET Review Questions . . . . .	50
Resource J: Writing the Pastor's Report . . . . .	51
Resource K: Continuing the Conversation: Instructions for the Elders . . . . .	52

<b>Part III: The Rationale</b>	<b>55</b>
Introduction	57
The Need for a Biblically Sound Pastoral Evaluation	58
The Problem	59
The Biblical Answer	62
The Seven Benefits	63
1. The Benefit of Truth Spoken in Love	64
2. The Benefit of Encouragement	64
3. The Benefit of Follow-Up	64
4. The Benefit of Authentic Community	64
5. The Benefit of Pastoral Job-Descriptions	64
6. The Benefit of Enhanced Pastor-Church Relations	64
7. The Benefit of Mutual Accountability	65
The Open-Ended Questions	65
The Role of the Consultant	67
The Challenges	67
1. Transparency	68
2. Pastoral Authority	69
Postscript	71
Selected Bibliography	73

An effective pastoral evaluation is  
a truthful, grace-filled, transparent conversation  
about things that matter  
so that the pastor-church relationship is enhanced  
and the Pastor and the Elders are encouraged  
to continue the conversation  
after the formal pastoral evaluation process has ended  
in order to celebrate the strengths  
and collaborate on addressing growth areas.

## Introduction

This manual is a hands-on, how-to tool for conducting an effective pastoral evaluation. *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency* is the fruition of a proposal approved by Classis Alberta North in March 2010 upon recommendation by the classis Pastor-Church Relations Committee. The subsequent field test found this pastoral evaluation to be a reliable, helpful, and effective instrument to assess the ministries entrusted to Pastors. This manual can be put to ready use so that Pastors and churches do not have to design their own version or make significant amendments to one to make it suit their situation. For example, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America recently published *Evaluation Essentials for Congregational Leaders*. This is a fine document as one would expect to come from this office. The important difference between *Evaluation Essentials* and this manual is that the former document leaves readers and leaders the difficult task to design their own evaluation based on its “evaluation essentials.” *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*, on the other hand, offers a practical, fully-developed, field-tested pastoral evaluation process from start to finish.

This is a manual to conduct a pastoral evaluation. It is a hands-on, how-to tool that offers a specific, field-tested pastoral evaluation process.

In this manual an effective pastoral evaluation is defined as a truthful, grace-filled, transparent conversation about things that matter so that the Pastor-church relationship is enhanced and the Pastor and the Elders are encouraged to continue the conversation after the formal pastoral evaluation process has ended in order to celebrate strengths and collaborate on addressing growth areas.

Whether you are a Pastor, office bearer or simply an interested reader, this manual explains everything you need to know to successfully conduct this pastoral evaluation. It guides you through the evaluation step-by-step from the beginning to end, and points out what you need to know and what you need to do at each step. The resources for each step along the way are made available in The Resources section.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Pastor-Church Relations Committee of Classis Alberta North, and in particular Melle Pool, my predecessor, for his encouragement and wisdom along the way. Also, I would be remiss if I did not thank Janet Greidanus for proof-reading this manual. *Thank you.*

I also want to thank those Pastors and churches who have participated in the pilot project to field test this pastoral evaluation. I was pleasantly surprised by the ready reception I received – from Councils, Pastoral Evaluation Teams and Pastors alike. I want to acknowledge my gratitude especially to the Pastors. They welcomed me to join their very personal conversations with their congregations. Without exception, these Pastors have allowed me to sit in and be privy to what their own office bearers, staff and members think about their ministries – the heartfelt, grace-filled, truthful, generous love and appreciation, and sometimes the tough and critical comments. My inclusion in these conversations has given me unique insight in Pastor-church relationships of these congregations and filled me with deep gratitude.

An effective pastoral evaluation is defined as a truthful, grace-filled, transparent conversation about things that matter so that the Pastor-church relationship is enhanced and the Pastor and the Elders are encouraged to continue further transparent conversations after the formal pastoral evaluation process has ended in order to celebrate strengths and collaborate on addressing growth areas.

Here are some editorial notes: first, Pastors are referred to with the masculine pronoun. Since English is gender-specific in the third person singular, the consistent reference to masculine pronouns is simply to avoid awkward repetitions of he/she, his/her(s), and him/her; it is not meant to convey that pastoral ministry is the exclusive domain of males. Second, this evaluation process speaks only of the Elders' participation. However, some smaller churches simply have Councils that consist of both Elders and Deacons. If this is the case, then Council may be substituted for Elders. Finally, abbreviations are kept to a minimum, but one is used throughout: PET stands for *Pastoral Evaluation Team*.

I am indebted to Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations*, (especially p. 63) for insights into **Resources A** and **C**.

Finally, in offering *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*, my singular desire is to love Christ by serving him in helping our churches become the healthy, authentic communities of joy which he prays for us to be (JOHN 17:11, 21-23; ROMANS 8:34). And to that end, I offer this manual.

## Briefly

Once the Pastor requests the Elders to conduct a pastoral evaluation, they meet together with the Consultant and choose a three-member **Pastoral Evaluation Team (PET)**. This team serves approximately two months, normally meeting two or three times, including twice with the Consultant. The PET chooses pastoral evaluators from among the congregation who meet a set of criteria. These evaluators provide feedback to the Pastor on his ministry performance by answering two or three – depending on their role in the church – open-ended questions and sign their names to their feedback. Along with the Consultant, the PET reviews this feedback and submits the originals to the Pastor. The PET and Pastor each write a report to the Elders that reflects the feedback and make recommendations. While the work of the PET is now done, the Elders and the Pastor continue the conversation based on the reports in order to enhance pastor-church relations and increase ministry effectiveness.

Notes:

# Part I: The Process

Notes:

## *The Steps of the Pastoral Evaluation*

**Step 1: The Pastor Requests the Pastoral Evaluation**

The Pastor makes a request to the Elders for an evaluation of his ministry.

**Step 2: The Elders and Pastor meet with the Consultant**

The Elders and Pastor request a meeting with the Consultant to get acquainted with the pastoral evaluation process and to be coached on how to choose a three-member PET.

**Step 3: The Elders and Pastor choose the PET**

The Elders prayerfully suggest three members to serve on the PET using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, run these names by the Pastor for approval, and recruit them to the PET.

**Step 4: The PET Meets with the Consultant**

The Pastoral Evaluation Team meets with the Consultant for the first of normally two times. During this first meeting the Consultant coaches the PET through the pastoral evaluation process.

**Step 5: The PET Makes a List of Pastoral Evaluators**

The PET prayerfully gathers names of potential evaluators using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, runs the list by the Pastor for approval, and recruits them.

**Step 6: The PET Issues the Pastoral Evaluation Materials**

The PET sends the evaluation materials with to the evaluators, and gathers these materials from the evaluators at a determined deadline.

**Step 7: The PET Meets with the Consultant**

The PET meets with the Consultant to review the feedback from the pastoral evaluators.

**Step 8: The PET Submits the Feedback to the Pastor**

The PET briefly meets with the Pastor and gives him the original feedback.

**Step 9: The Reports**

The PET writes a confidential report for the Elders based on the evaluation and runs the report by the Pastor for approval before sending it on to the Elders; the Pastor too writes a confidential report for the Elders. Both reports are also sent to the Consultant.

**Step 10: The Work of the PET Is Ended**

Once the PET submits their confidential report to the Elders and communicates with the congregation, their work is done and the team disbands.

**Step 11: The Elders and Pastor Continue the Conversation**

The Elders and the Pastor meet to review the confidential reports by the PET and the Pastor and to follow-up on the findings contained in the reports.

**Step 12: The Pastor Meets with the Consultant**

The Pastor meets with the Consultant to debrief on the evaluation.

For a schedule these steps, see **Resource B**.

## Step 1: The Pastor Requests the Pastoral Evaluation

In Step 1, the Pastor requests the Elders for an evaluation of his ministry.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. While a pastoral evaluation can be initiated by either Pastor or Elders, it is generally best for the Pastor to request one. By taking the initiative for his evaluation the Pastor shows a willingness to be held accountable which sends a wholesome message to the Elders. The Pastor conveys that he is willing to be vulnerable by having others critique his ministry; that he is willing to learn how his ministry is received; and that he is willing to grow in ministry competencies where needed.
- B. The Pastor may contact the Consultant before he makes his request to the Elders in order to fully understand what the pastoral evaluation process involves. It is important that the Pastor understands and appreciates the process and feels comfortable with it.
- C. Elders should welcome a request by their Pastor for an evaluation of his ministry and do everything possible to heed it. The exception for conducting a pastoral evaluation is when significant conflict is present in the congregation that involves the Pastor. Conducting a Pastoral evaluation during such a time of conflict can do more harm than good. In such a case, the conflict itself first needs to be addressed.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> The Pastor explores the need for a pastoral evaluation by considering when the last one was done and the results it produced, and how he feels about his ministry today.
- 2> The Pastor makes a request to the Elders to conduct the pastoral evaluation.
- 3> The Elders support the Pastor in his request for the evaluation.

## Step 2: The Elders and Pastor Meet with the Consultant

In Step 2, The Elders and Pastor request a meeting with the Consultant to get acquainted with the pastoral evaluation process and to be coached on how to choose a three-member PET.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. Like the Pastor, the Elders too must have a grasp of the key principles and layout of the pastoral evaluation process. This is the only time the Consultant will meet with the Elders during the normal course of the pastoral evaluation.
- B. During this meeting with the Elders, the Consultant leads the Elders into an exercise on how to choose the PET. This exercise can be found in **Resource A**.
- C. The PET consists of three members, one of whom must be an Elder who meets the criteria laid down in the exercise.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> Once the Pastor and Elders have agreed to conduct the pastoral evaluation, the Consultant is called upon to teach and coach them through the process.
- 2> During this meeting, the Pastor, Elders and the Consultant make a commitment to use *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*, seeing the process through to its conclusion.
- 3> The Elders communicate with the congregation that a pastoral evaluation will be conducted. This communication includes informing the congregation that some of its members will be called upon to participate in the evaluation.

### Step 3: The Elders and Pastor Choose the PET

In Step 3, the Elders prayerfully suggest three members to serve on the PET using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, run these names by the Pastor for approval, and recruit them to the Pastoral Evaluation Team.

#### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. Members of the PET should be carefully and prayerfully chosen. They will be in a privileged position since they will be privy to the very personal feedback the congregation will give their Pastor. The exercise for helping to select the PET is found in **Resource A**.
- B. The Pastor approves those chosen to serve on the PET. The Pastor's approval is important because he needs to have confidence that all three members of the PET can ably handle the process and maintain strict confidentiality.
- C. The Elders must be sensitive to their Pastor if he has any misgivings about including one or more suggested names for membership on the PET, and allow the Pastor to suggest alternate names.
- D. Once the Elders and Pastors have agreed to the three members of the PET, these members are recruited. This recruitment is not done by the Pastor. The Elder-member of the PET, along with the help of the rest of the Elders as necessary, is in the best position to recruit the two lay members
- E. Recruiting the other two members requires: explaining the pastoral evaluation process; the need for confidentiality; the approximate timeline; two perhaps three meetings over about two months, including two with the Consultant. It is important that during their recruitment the two potential members are made aware that they have the confidence of the Elders and the Pastor to serve on the PET, and that serving on the PET is in its own way a privileged and significant way to serve Christ by serving His body.
- F. It is important to note that during the pilot project, members of the PET have said at the end of the process that the work was not onerous and less work than they anticipated.

**II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> Using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, the Elders and the Pastor prayerfully gather a list of names of those they deem qualified to serve on the PET.
- 2> The list of names is narrowed down to three. The Pastor is specifically asked if he is comfortable with the three final names and is allowed to suggest (a) substitution(s).
- 3> The Elder-member of the PET, along with the help of other Elders as necessary, recruits the two additional lay members from among the final three who have received the Pastor's approval.
- 4> The Elders again communicate with the congregation that the pastoral evaluation process has begun and who is serving on the PET. This communication repeats the earlier announcement that members of the congregation may be asked to participate in the evaluation.

## Step 4: *The PET Meets with the Consultant*

The Pastoral Evaluation Team meets with the Consultant for the first of normally two times. During this first meeting the Consultant coaches the PET through the pastoral evaluation process.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. A member of the PET contacts the Consultant for the first of two meetings. This first meeting may last from one hour to two-and-a-half hours, depending on the readiness and preparation by the PET.
- B. The Consultant leads this meeting and systematically reviews the pastoral evaluation process, ensuring the members of the PET understand their responsibilities.
- C. The Consultant emphasizes that the primary qualification for prospective pastoral evaluators is for the PET to have a reasonable assurance that these prospective pastoral evaluators have the maturity to speak the truth in love. In other words, on the one hand, evaluators are not given to mere flattery about their Pastor since it has no real value; on the other hand, they are able to speak truthfully and honestly yet with love and grace. This maturity is the primary qualification for pastoral evaluators and this confidence is expressly stated in the materials which will be supplied to the evaluators.
- D. The Consultant will lead the PET through an exercise on how to choose pastoral evaluators using secondary qualifications.
- E. Normally, all pastoral evaluators should be confessing members in good standing. Exceptions to this rule are mature teenagers who have the respect of their peers and meet the other qualifications for pastoral evaluators.
- F. There have been situations where regular attendees who are non-members but who faithfully support the church would like to participate or may be asked to participate. While this is the exception, their participation will be at the discretion of the PET (and Pastor) and they should meet the other qualifications for pastoral evaluators.

- G. The *Proposed Schedule for the Pastoral Evaluation* is found in **Resource B**. The ideal time of year is during the spring season as already noted. The reasons this is the ideal time for the pastoral evaluation are several. First, a ministry year is coming to an end which makes an evaluation timely. Second, the longer, sunnier days of spring are a time of renewal that lend themselves to fresh initiatives. And third, the evaluation concludes shortly before Pastors take their summer vacations during which they have unhurried time to reflect on their evaluation before they respond to it. Having said this, this evaluation has been conducted over Christmas and even though the timing was not ideal and the process was prolonged, it worked out in the end. However, the spring season is the ideal time.
- II. What You Need to Do**
- 1> The PET contacts the Consultant and schedules the first of two meetings.
- 2> The PET communicates with the congregation that the process for the pastoral evaluation has begun and that members of the congregation might be called upon to participate.

## Step 5: The PET Makes a List of Pastoral Evaluators

In Step 5, the Pastoral Evaluation Team prayerfully gathers names of potential evaluators using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, runs the list by the Pastor for approval, and recruits them.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. The PET prays together and gathers names of potential evaluators using the exercise suggested by the Consultant in Step 4 and runs the list by the Pastor for approval. Usually the Pastor is fine with the proposed list. However, the Pastor might suggest that one or more names be removed and others added. The PET needs to negotiate this with the Pastor until the list is agreed upon. All pastoral evaluators on the list should meet the qualifications set out in Step 4.
- B. The list of evaluators should include at least 2 or 3 Elders depending on the size of the church; it should also include at least 1 or 2 Deacons; staff too may be included; the rest of the evaluators are from among the members of the congregation.
- C. The list of evaluators from among member of the congregation should be representative of the membership.
- D. When the congregation is informed by the Elders that a pastoral evaluation will be conducted and that members of the congregational will be invited to participate, it might happen that a member comes forward and asks to participate in the evaluation. The PET may accede to the request provided that this person meets the qualifications for pastoral evaluators.
- E. The total number of pastoral evaluators should be about 10% of the average Sunday attendance, but no fewer than seven and no more than 25. Since there might be some attrition from among those who are asked to serve as pastoral evaluators, it is wise to add two or three additional names.
- F. When recruiting prospective members for the evaluations, the PET needs to make clear to them the following key principles of the pastoral evaluation:

1. The feedback to the open-ended questions must be done honestly and truthfully, yet with grace and in love.
  2. The feedback has to be signed by the evaluator.
  3. The Pastor will be given all the feedback in its entirety.
  3. The Pastor will know the name of the person who wrote the feedback.
- G. The members of the PET may participate in the pastoral evaluation if they wish, but do not have to.

## **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> Using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, the PET prays together and draws up a list of prospective pastoral evaluators.
- 2> This list is run by the Pastor for approval, and names are added or deleted as necessary.
- 3> When the list of pastoral evaluators is finalized, the PET divides the list among themselves. Each member of the PET then contacts the assigned pastoral evaluator by phone or in person (preferably not by email) and tells him or her that they have been chosen to help evaluate the Pastor, and explains the key principles of the evaluation:
  - 4> The feedback to the open-ended questions must be done honestly and truthfully, yet with grace and in love.
  - 5> The feedback has to be signed by the evaluator.
  - 6> The Pastor will be given all the feedback in its entirety.
  - 7> The Pastor will know the name of the person who wrote the feedback.

## Step 6: The PET Issues the Pastoral Evaluation Materials

In Step 6, The PET sends the evaluation materials with to the evaluators, and gathers these materials from the evaluators at a determined deadline.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

A. The materials that are provided for each pastoral evaluator are as follows:

1. *The cover memo.* The memo explains that the person has been chosen and explains the confidence that the Pastor and the PET express in them to be evaluators. The memo also explains what they need to do. This memo is found in **Resource D** and should be used without substantial changes.
2. *The pastoral evaluation forms.* Note that there are three different though similar evaluation forms: 1. for office bearers; 2. for staff; 3. for members. Select the right evaluation form for each pastoral evaluator. These three forms, *Questions for the Pastoral Evaluation*, are found in **Resource E**. Note that these forms have to be customized to each church. This means that the following need to be inserted: the Pastor's and the church's names; the deadline for return of the evaluations; to whom the feedback is to be returned, including an email address.
3. *The pastoral ordination vows.* These vows are contained in the *Form for Ordination of Ministers (1986)* in **Resource F**. The reason these vows are included is because they are taken by all Pastors and they reflect the heart of pastoral ministry. The vows, the biblical teaching concerning pastoral ministry, and the charge to the Pastor are **bold-faced** in this Resource to identify them as the critical parts. Pastoral evaluators should consider these bold-faced sections when they provide their feedback.
4. *The Pastor's job description* (if there is one). If the Pastor has a current job description, it is to be included with the materials provided for the pastoral evaluators. Pastoral job descriptions are becoming increasingly common. They are also difficult to write well. Do not

write a job description for the purpose of the evaluation, and do not use an existing job description if it is not current. In fact, the outcome of the pastoral evaluation might lend itself well to the writing or rewriting of a pastoral job description. See **Resource G** for *Insights for Writing a Pastoral Job Description*.

- B. The PET should consider setting up a special email account (e.g. with gmail or hotmail) if there is no secure email account for the feedback to be sent. For example, spouses often share an email account. It is essential that emailed feedback is and remains confidential.
- C. The PET needs to be clear about the deadline by which the feedback is to be returned. This means that a few days before the deadline the members of the PET may have to see, phone or email those who have yet to return their feedback.
- D. It is important to note that lay-members may opt out of participating in the pastoral evaluation for no reason. However, if Elders want to opt out, they should give a reason. Elders have the responsibility and are expected to have the maturity to evaluate the Pastor effectively, honestly and graciously, and should therefore have a legitimate reason if they do not want to or cannot participate in the evaluation.

## II. What You Need to Do

The PET makes ensures that:

- 1> The pastoral evaluation forms are customized for the names of their Pastor and church.
- 2> The deadline is clearly stated.
- 3> The titles are clear: instead of Office Bearer you want to use Elders or some churches use Ministry Team Leaders.
- 4> Adjust the last question in the pastoral evaluation form in case the Pastor's job description is not included.

5> The person to whom the feedback is to be returned is clearly identified.

6> The email address to which the feedback can be sent electronically is also clearly identified.

The PET provides each prospective pastoral evaluator with the following:

7> The cover memo.

8> The pastoral evaluation forms.

9> The pastoral ordination vows.

10> The Pastor's job description (if a current one exists).

11> The PET makes sure that each prospective pastoral evaluator personally receives the evaluation materials.

12> A few days before the deadline, the PET reminds those who have not yet returned their feedback that the deadline is coming.

13> The PET permits lay-members who indicate they want to opt out of participating in the evaluation to do so. However, if an Elders wants to opt out the PET should ask for the reason.

14> The PET gathers all the feedback by the deadline.

## Step 7: The PET Meets with the Consultant

In Step 7, the PET meets with the Consultant (normally for the second and last time) to review the feedback from the pastoral evaluators.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. This second (and normally last) meeting with the Consultant is an important one. This ensures an orderly review of the feedback received from the pastoral evaluators. See **Resource I** for review questions that will be asked by the Consultant.
- B. Another reason why the Consultant should be present is that the Consultant by virtue of his own pastoral experience and training is able to provide insights into the feedback that the PET might otherwise overlook. It has happened that the Consultant noted an important red flag that the PET was about to gloss over.
- C. All feedback has to be personally signed off by the authors. No unsigned feedback will be accepted. It could be that the feedback was returned unsigned by accident. The PET will use its own wisdom to determine whether to pursue the matter of whether the unsigned feedback was deliberate or an accident. If it was an accident, the name will be added. If the feedback was returned unsigned deliberately, it will be discarded and not considered.
- D. During this meeting with the Consultant observations are made for the report which the PET is to write for the Elders.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1 >  Make sure that all the feedback from pastoral evaluators is received by the deadline.
- 2 >  If some evaluators who have not requested to opt out still have not returned their feedback by the deadline, have the PET member assigned to them give them a call and ask about the delay. Whether to extend the deadline for these evaluators is at the discretion of the PET.

- 3>  The PET ensures that all the feedback has been signed by the authors.
  
- 4>  If there is any unsigned feedback, the PET may want to determine whether this was an oversight or done deliberately. If the feedback has been returned anonymously on purpose, it will be discarded and not considered.
  
- 5>  Once all the feedback has been received, the PET sets up a meeting with the Consultant.
  
- 6>  The PET and Consultant meet to review all of the feedback.

## Step 8: The PET Submits the Feedback to the Pastor

In Step 8, the PET briefly meets with the Pastor and gives him the original feedback.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. All the original feedback is to be given to the Pastor since it is his evaluation.
- B. A member of the PET should make an effort to give the original feedback to the Pastor in a personalized way. Do not put it in an envelope in the Pastor's mail slot or send it to him by mail. This personal encounter does not have to be long, but make it personal. Thank the Pastor for going through the process and in a sentence or two summarize the feedback. Do not get into a detailed conversation about the evaluation results. Encourage the Pastor to read the feedback at a time and place of his choosing, and that there is no hurry. Some Pastors read their evaluation as soon as possible. Others wait for some time.
- C. The PET may make a copy of all the feedback in order to write its report to the Elders. However, once the report is submitted to the Elders, the PET must destroy all copies so that the only feedback that still remains are the originals in the possession of the Pastor.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> If necessary, the PET makes a copy of the feedback for its own use in writing their pastoral evaluation report to the Elders.
- 2> A member of the PET contacts the Pastor and finds a meaningful, personal way to give the Pastor all the original feedback.

## Step 9: The PET and Pastor's Reports

In Step 9, The PET writes a confidential report for the Elders based on the evaluation and runs the report by the Pastor for approval before sending it on to the Elders; the Pastor too writes a confidential report for the Elders. Both reports are also sent to the Consultant.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. The purpose of the PET and Pastor's reports is to encourage an informed and meaningful conversation between the Elders and the Pastor after the formal evaluation process has come to an end.
- B. The confidential summary report by the PET for the Elders needs to reflect the feedback received in a accurate, fair, balanced way. Guidelines for writing the PET report are found in **Resource H**.
- C. The Pastor needs to sign off on the PET's report to ensure that he has confidence that it is accurate, fair and balanced. Of course, the Pastor can only give his judgment on the PET report after he has had a chance to digest the original feedback himself. Allow the Pastor to make any editorial changes. In the rare case when the Pastor suggests changes of substance, the PET needs to negotiate these with the Pastor. Remember that an Elder also serves on the PET so that checks and balances are in place. His presence on the PET will ensure accurate feedback to the Elders.
- D. The Pastor also writes his own report for the Elders based on the feedback received. Guidelines for writing the Pastor's report are found in **Resource J**. The Pastor may take his time in submitting his report. He needs to adequately digest the feedback before he writes his report. If the spring timeline is adopted, then the Pastor has until the end of August to submit his report even though he received the feedback in early summer at the latest. This allows the Pastor time over his summer break to reflect on his evaluation.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1 >  The PET writes a confidential draft report for the Elders.

- 2> The PET sends the Pastor a copy of the confidential draft report for his approval.
- 3> After agreeing to any suggested changes, the Pastor signs off on the confidential PET report.
- 4> The Pastor writes his confidential report to the Elders.
- 5> The PET destroys all remaining copies of the pastoral feedback in their possession.
- 6> The PET and Pastor send a copy of their confidential reports to the Consultant.

## Step 10: The PET Completes Its Work

In Step 10, when the PET submits their confidential report to the Elders and communicates with the congregation, their work is done and the team disbands.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. Once the PET is approved by the Pastor and sent to the Elders, the work of the PET is almost done.
- B. Along with the report to the Elders, the PET should thank the Elders and Pastor for allow them to serve on the PET. After all, members of the PET have received the confidence of the Pastor and Elders for this important and confidential work.
- C. The PET's final job is to communicate with the congregation the completion of their work and to thank those who participated in the pastoral evaluation. The timing of this communication should coincide with the submission of the PET report to the Elders.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> The PET submits its confidential report to the chairperson of the Elders.
- 2> The PET includes **Resource K** with its report to the Elders and reminds them to continue an informed and meaningful conversation between them and the Pastor based on their and the Pastor's reports after the formal evaluation process has come to an end
- 3> Along with its report, the PET thanks the Pastor and Elders for the confidence they expressed in choosing them for the PET and allowing them to serve in that capacity of trust.
- 4> The PET communicates with the congregation that their work is done and thanks those that participated in the pastoral evaluation.

## Step 11: The Elders and Pastor Continue the Conversation

In Step 11, the Elders and the Pastor meet to review the reports written by the PET and the Pastor and to follow-up on the findings contained in the reports

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. When the PET has done its work and disbands, the formal part of the pastoral evaluation is over. The feedback has been returned, digested and conveyed to the Elders by means of the reports by the PET and the Pastor.
- B. This step when the Elders and the Pastor continue the conversation based on the reports by the PET and the Pastor is critical. While there is much value for the Pastor to have gone through the evaluation thus far, the greatest fruit is borne when the Pastor and Elders act on the substance and recommendations that are contained in the reports.
- C. Guidelines for the Elders to continue the conversation with their Pastor is found in **Resource K**. These guidelines will help the Elders understand the process that has been undertaken and how to act on the findings and recommendations found in the reports by the PET and the Pastor.
- D. The conversation that ensues between the Elders and the Pastor might take only one meeting. When the pastoral evaluation is very positive, this is usually the case. However, if significant growth areas have been identified in the ministry of the Pastor, the conversation may take place over several meetings as part of the regular monthly Elders' meetings to make sure that the recommendation and growth areas are addressed in a collaborative and constructive way. The Consultant may be asked for help if this is the case.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> The Elders carefully review the guidelines for continuing the conversation found in **Resource K**.
- 2> The Pastor and the Elders meet to review the reports and act on the findings and recommendations.

## Step 12: The Pastor Meets with the Consultant

In the final Step 12, the Pastor meets with the Consultant to debrief on the evaluation.

### **I. What You Need to Know**

- A. The reason for the Pastor to meet with the Consultant is so that the Consultant knows that the process of the pastoral evaluation has been successfully completed.
- B. The Pastor also needs to meet with the Consultant to have a neutral, experienced person with whom he can express his thoughts about the evaluation – both the process and the outcome thus far – and to ask questions. If the evaluation has been positive, there is time to celebrate this. If some of the feedback has been painful, the Consultant can help the Pastor process this pain and suggest ways to help. Sometimes, the Consultant meets with the Pastor a number of times in order to process and help address areas of growth.

### **II. What You Need to Do**

- 1> Once the Pastor has sent his report to the Elders and the Consultant, the Pastor and Consultant meet together to debrief on the process and outcome of the evaluation.
- 2> The Pastor and Consultant come to an understanding about their future relationship relative to the Pastor's evaluation.

Notes:

## Part II: The Resources

Notes:

## Resource A: Choosing the Pastoral Evaluation Team

See Step 3

1. Membership: Three members: one Elder and two confessing members in good standing.
2. The PET facilitates a conversation between the congregation and the Pastor, using the pastoral evaluation process contained in this manual. The Consultant will likely meet twice with the PET; the PET may meet an additional time. The work of the PET can be completed within two months.
3. **Qualifications:** Skills and attitudes for the members of the PET
  - a. **Who should we *not* invite** (skills and attitudes we do *not* want)?
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
  - b. **Who *should* we invite** (skills and attitudes we *do* want)?
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
4. **The Pastoral Evaluation Team:**

The Elders PET Member: \_\_\_\_\_

The 1<sup>st</sup> Lay PET Member: \_\_\_\_\_

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lay PET Member: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Be sure to have the Pastor sign off on these three PET members. Allow the Pastor to suggest (an) alternate(s). Send the PET members names and contact information to the Consultant.

## **Resource B: *The Proposed Schedule for the Pastoral Evaluation***

See Step 3

**Note:** At face value this schedule looks rather long – 24 weeks. However, the PET which facilitates the pastoral evaluation, serves over about two months by meeting normally two or three times. Different PETs have indicated that their work was not as onerous or as long as they initially thought. Also, this schedule covers the entire process from inception to the post-process conversation with the Elders.

**Step 1: By the end of March (Week 1), Step 1**, the Pastor makes a requests to the Elders for an evaluation of his ministry.

**Step 2: By the second week of April (Week 3)**, the Elders and Pastor request to meet with the Consultant to get acquainted with the pastoral evaluation and be coached on how to choose a three-member PET.

**Step 3: By the end of the first week of May (Week 5)**, the Elders and Pastor prayerfully suggest three members to serve on the PET using the exercise suggested by the Consultant. Once these names are approved by the Pastor, they are recruited to the PET.

**Step 4: By the end of the third week of May (Week 7)**, the PET meets with the Consultant to plan the pastoral evaluation process, and goes through an exercise on how to choose pastoral evaluators.

**Step 5: By the last week of May (Week 8)**, the PET prayerfully gathers names of potential evaluators using the exercise suggested by the Consultant, runs the list by the Pastor for approval, and recruits them.

**Step 6: By the end of the second week of June (Week 10)** the PET sends the evaluation materials and questions with the deadline to the evaluators, and gathers these materials from the evaluators by the deadline.

**Step 7: By fourth week of June (Week 13)**, the PET meets with the Consultant to review the feedback from the pastoral evaluators.

**Step 8: By the first week of July (Week 14)**, the PET briefly meets with the Pastor and gives him the original feedback.

**Step 9: By the third week of July (Week 15),** the PET writes a confidential report for the Elders based on the evaluation and runs the report by the Pastor for approval; the Pastor too writes a confidential report for the Elders. Both reports are also sent to the Consultant.

**Step 10: By the end of August (Week 20, but may be sooner),** the PET submits their confidential report to the Elders and communicates with the congregation that their work is done and the team disbands.

**Step 11: By the end of September (Week 24, but may be sooner),** the Elders and the Pastor meet to review the confidential reports by the PET and the Pastor and to follow-up on the findings contained in the reports.

**Step 12: By the end of September (Week 24, but may be sooner),** the Pastor meets with the Consultant to debrief on the evaluation.

## Resource C: Choosing the Pastoral Evaluators

See Step 5

1. The number of pastoral evaluators should be approximately 10% of the average Sunday morning attendance at worship. However, the number should be no fewer than seven and no more than 25.
2. The primary qualification for pastoral evaluators should be that the PET has a reasonable degree of confidence that the prospective pastoral evaluators have *the maturity to speak the truth in love*. This qualification of maturity is key and should not be compromised. The exercise below will help further select suitable pastoral evaluators.
3. Secondary qualifications for prospective pastoral evaluators
  - a. Who should we **not** invite (skills and attitudes we do **not** want)? For example:
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
  - b. Who **should** we invite (skills and attitudes we **do** want)? For example:
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
    - ◆
4. Draw up the list of prospective pastoral evaluators
5. Be sure to have the Pastor sign off on these prospective pastoral evaluators. Allow the Pastor to suggest (an) alternate(s).

## Resource D: The Cover Memo to Pastoral Evaluators

See Step 6

Pastoral Evaluation Team  
[NAME] Church  
[PLACE]

**To:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Re:** Participation in Pastor [NAME] evaluation

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Along with Pastor [NAME], we have chosen you along with others to participate in the evaluation of Pastor [NAME]'s pastoral ministry. We ask that you accept this invitation and see it as an opportunity to enhance our Pastor's ministry and pastor-church relations here at [NAME] Church.

Based on the biblical principle of mutual accountability through transparency, please provide your feedback with your name attached.

We are asking participants in the evaluation to give *honest, thoughtful feedback prayerfully*. By participating, give evidence of your maturity in Christ by prayerfully communicating your comments honestly and truthfully, yet with love and grace (EPHESIANS 4:15, 29, COLOSSIAN 4:6). Take care to observe these words of Scripture: "*Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other*" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23, NLT). And remember: "*In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery*" (PROVERBS 28:23, NLT).

You may answer the evaluation questions by long-hand or electronically. If you use long-hand and need more space, feel free to use the back of the page or an extra sheet. If you return the forms electronically, please note that the form expands by simply pressing the return key beneath each question. Please send your electronic version in confidence to this email address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a question, please let us know. With thanks to God for your participation,

[NAME]  
For the Pastoral Evaluation Team

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## Resource E: Questions for the Pastoral Evaluators

See Step 6

### 1. Feedback Questions for Office bearers

#### **Pastoral Feedback from Office bearers**

As an office bearer at **church** Christian Reformed Church, you are requested to provide feedback for Pastor **name** to read about his pastoral ministry. Based on the biblical principle of mutual accountability through transparency, please provide your feedback with your name attached.

We are asking participants in the evaluation to give *honest, thoughtful feedback prayerfully*. By participating, give evidence of your maturity in Christ by prayerfully communicating your comments honestly and truthfully, yet with love and grace ((EPHESIANS 4:15, 29, COLOSSIAN 4:6). Take care to observe these words of Scripture: *“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other”* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23, NLT). And remember: *“In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery”* (PROVERBS 28:23, NLT).

**1. Dear Pastor name, as a member here at church Christian Reformed Church, when I think of you as my Pastor, this is what I want to tell you ...**

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

**2. Also Pastor name, as an office bearer, when I think of you as Pastor here at church Christian Reformed Church, this is what I want to say ...**

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

**3. Finally Pastor name, when I review your ordination vows [Psalter Hymnal, CRC Publications, 1987, pp. 992-997] and read your job description, I think that one particular area where I want to encourage your growth as Pastor is ...**

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

\_\_\_\_\_  
My name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return your feedback to **[name of person]** by **[date]**.

Please remember to sign your name.

2. **Feedback Questions for Staff**

***Pastoral Feedback from Staff***

As a staff member at **church** Christian Reformed Church, you are requested to provide feedback for Pastor **name** to read about his pastoral ministry. Based on the biblical principle of mutual accountability through transparency, please provide your feedback with your name attached.

We are asking participants in the evaluation to give *honest, thoughtful feedback prayerfully*. By participating, give evidence of your maturity in Christ by prayerfully communicating your comments honestly and truthfully, yet with love and grace ((EPHESIANS 4:15, 29, COLOSSIAN 4:6). Take care to observe these words of Scripture: *“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other”* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23, NLT). And remember: *“In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery”* (PROVERBS 28:23, NLT).

1. ***Dear Pastor name, as a member here at church Christian Reformed Church, when I think of you as my Pastor, this is what I want to tell you ...***

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

2. ***Also Pastor name, as a staff member, when I think of you as Pastor here at church Christian Reformed Church, this is what I want to say ...***

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

3. ***Finally Pastor name, when I review your ordination vows [Psalter Hymnal, CRC Publications, 1987, pp. 992-997] and read your job description, I think that one particular area where I want to encourage your growth as Pastor is ...***

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

\_\_\_\_\_  
**My name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Please return your feedback to ***[name of person]*** by ***[date]***.

Please remember to sign your name.

3. **Feedback Questions for Members**

***Pastoral Feedback from Members***

As a member at **church** Christian Reformed Church, you are requested to provide feedback for Pastor **name** to read about his pastoral ministry. Based on the biblical principle of mutual accountability through transparency, please provide your feedback with your name attached.

We are asking participants in the evaluation to give *honest, thoughtful feedback prayerfully*. By participating, give evidence of your maturity in Christ by prayerfully communicating your comments honestly and truthfully, yet with love and grace ((EPHESIANS 4:15, 29, COLOSSIAN 4:6). Take care to observe these words of Scripture: *“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other”* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23, NLT). And remember: *“In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery”* (PROVERBS 28:23, NLT).

**1. Dear name, when as a member of church Christian Reformed Church I think of you as my Pastor, this is what I want to tell you ...**

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

**2. And name, when I review your ordination vows [Psalter Hymnal, CRC Publications, 1987, pp. 992-997] and read your job description, I think that one particular area where I want to encourage your growth as Pastor is ...**

[SPACE FOR COMMENTS]

\_\_\_\_\_ **My name**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**

Please return your to **[name of person]** by **[date]**.

Please remember to sign your name.

## Resource F: Form for the Ordination of Ministers (1986)

See Step 6

**Note to pastoral evaluators:** before you provide your evaluation of the Pastor, you are asked to review the important **vows** all Pastors make upon their ordination. Please review these **vows**, especially in the context of the **“Biblical teaching on Pastors”** and the **“Charge to the Pastor.”**

Congregation of Jesus Christ: For some time you have known that (name) is to be ordained to the Ministry of the Word [*or: installed in the ministry to which he has been called*]. No one has alleged anything against his person or teaching. We shall therefore proceed, in the name of the Lord, to his ordination.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that God, our heavenly Father, intends to gather his church out of the corrupt human race to life eternal, and to give to his church such teaching and care that it may grow in faith and love and service. Thus God, by a particular grace, appoints his people to preach the gospel and to build up the body of Christ. The apostle Paul solemnly charged Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2), and our Lord Jesus charged his disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). The apostle Paul declares that the Lord Jesus Christ intended "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be Pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11-12).

**[Biblical teaching on Pastors:]** *Let us now hear what the Scriptures say concerning the office of minister of the Word: The minister of the Word is called by the command of God to preach the gospel of his kingdom. This preaching has the twofold object of calling sinners to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ and nurturing believers in the faith and life of the kingdom of God. Ministers are called "Christ's ambassadors," as though God were pleading by them, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). This preaching must be addressed to all people. The preaching of the gospel must also be addressed to the gathered congregation for the nurturing of Christian faith and life and for strengthening them against the ploys of the devil. Paul charged Timothy, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Tim. 4:1-2), and he charged Titus that a minister "must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9). The minister of the Word is called to administer the sacraments which the Lord has instituted as signs and seals of his grace. Christ gave this charge to his apostles, and through them to all ministers of the Word, when he commanded them, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the*

***Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); and when he said of the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25).***

*The minister of the Word is called to the service of prayer. In speaking of their calling, the apostles said: "We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). So, too, it is the calling of all God's ministers to lead the people of God in "requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgivings . . . for everyone--for kings and all those in authority" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).*

*The minister of the Word is called, together with the Elders, to shepherd the people of God in the Christian life, guiding and counseling, exhorting them to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and keeping the church of God in good order and discipline. They are Pastors, appointed to shepherd the church of Christ which he purchased with his own blood, in keeping with the Lord's command: "Feed my sheep!" "Feed my lambs!" They, together with the Elders, watch over the house of God for the right and fruitful ordering of the faith, life, and worship of the people of God. In their exercise of the keys of the kingdom, what they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18).*

We will now ordain a minister of the Word in this congregation. We rejoice that in his faithful love the Lord Jesus has provided a minister to serve as Pastor and teacher to this people, and also as their leader in the missionary calling of this church. We receive this servant of our Lord from the hand and heart of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We thank our Savior for committing preaching, teaching, and pastoral care to the office of the ministry, and we pray that he will continue to use sinful people for such high and holy purposes until the day of his return.

We are not equal to this holy ministry in our own strength. We put our hope in Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has said: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Now, to show that you, (name), intend to accept this office, you are requested to stand and, in the presence of God and his church, answer the following questions:

***Do you believe that in the call of this congregation, God himself calls you to this holy ministry?***

***Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life; and do you subscribe to the doctrinal standards of this church, rejecting all teachings which contradict them?***

***Do you promise to do the work of your office faithfully, in a way worthy of your calling and in submission to the government and discipline of the church?***

***Answer: I do so believe and promise, God helping me.***

God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this sacred office, guide you by his Word, equip you with his Spirit, and so prosper your ministry that his church may increase and his name be praised. Amen.

Dear people of God and members of this church:

Since this solemn act obligates you also, I ask you before God: Do you in the name of the Lord welcome this brother as your Pastor? Do you promise to receive the Word of God proclaimed by him and to encourage him in the discharge of his duty? Will you pray that he may, in the power of the Spirit, equip you to build up the church, so that God's children may

be saved and his kingdom advanced for the honor of Christ our Lord? To these questions, what is your answer?

*Answer:* We do, God helping us.

**[Charge to the Pastor:] *Beloved brother and fellow-servant in Christ, keep watch over yourself and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you an overseer. Shepherd the church of God which he bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Love Christ and feed his sheep, serving as an overseer not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly. Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect your gifts. Be patient in all trials. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will be given the unfading crown of glory.***

[Charge to the congregation:] And you, brothers and sisters, joyfully receive your minister in the Lord and honor him. Remember that through him God himself speaks to you. Receive the Word which he, according to the Scripture, shall preach to you, not as the word of human beings but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. Let the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace and bring the good news be beautiful and pleasant to you. Submit to those whom God has placed over you, for they care for you as those who will give account. If you do these things, the God of peace will enter your homes. You who receive this person in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward and, through faith in Jesus Christ, the inheritance of eternal life.

We cannot do these things on our own. Let us call upon the name of God: Merciful Father, we thank you that it pleases you by the ministry of your people to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the gift of your servant, sent to this people as a messenger of your peace. Send now your Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him speech to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. Endow him with wisdom to care for and guide the people over whom he is placed. Through his ministry preserve your church in peace and grant that it increase in number and in virtue. Give to your servant courage to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and power through your Spirit to be steadfast to the end.

Help these people receive him as your servant. May they receive his teaching and exhortation reverently, and believing in Christ through his Word, become partakers of eternal life.

Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.  
For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen

## Resource G: Insights into Writing a Pastoral Job Description

See Step 11

Effective pastoral job descriptions are difficult to write well. For one, a pastor is a "professional" in the sense that the pastor has and must be given much discretion in where and how he spends his time. This judgment is a competency expected of pastors. There is no time clock, and there are no supervisors on hand to track his work and work habits. Yet the pastor is expected not just to meet the core needs of the congregation in his role as minister; the unique goals and aspirations of the congregation are also woven into the work of the pastor. Add to this mix the observation that "90% of what pastors do is invisible to 90% of the congregation 90% of the time" (Lyle Schaller), and you realize that pastoral job descriptions are hard to write well. Matters such as the number of hours a week the Pastor should work, where and how those hours are spent, and finding meaningful benchmarks for successful pastoral ministry contribute to the complexity of writing a good pastoral job description. Many job descriptions are so broad that anything the Pastor does can be justified based on it. Others might be too restrictive for the Pastor to deploy the full range of his gifts and competencies, or leave legitimate needs unmet. Since no one pastoral job description fits all, here are some insights that might be helpful to consider:

1. Hours of work per week. A suggested line: *The Pastor will devote a minimum of 40 hours and a maximum of 48 hours a week to the ministry of the church. These hours include classical and denominational work, but not volunteer activities. Should any week fall outside this 40-48-hour window, the Pastor will account for this to the Elders – either in anticipation of such a week or afterward. The Pastor will take off one full, consistent day of a week.*
2. The strengths, passions, and weaknesses of the Pastor, and to match these with the needs of the congregation and the community.
3. Allocation of approximate guidelines for time devoted to the various pastoral tasks.  
For example:
  - ◆ Pulpit ministry, 30%
  - ◆ Congregational care ministry, 20%
  - ◆ Teaching, training, mentoring, coaching, 20%
  - ◆ Self-care: Professional and personal development, 10%
  - ◆ Classical, denominational and community ministry, 10%
  - ◆ Administration, 10%

4. Tasks unique to the Pastor. For example: preaching, the sacraments, teaching, crisis care, counseling, etc.
5. Task performed in collaboration with others. For example, congregational care, administration, teaching, strategic planning, etc. These tasks will be described in the Pastor's job description in a collaborative way. For example, *The Pastor will work together with the Elders to provide prompt, consistent, and genuine care in cases of congregational need. The Pastor will delegate as much administrative work as possible to office staff and clerk of council, except those administrative tasks that uniquely belong to the Pastor's ministry.*
6. Elders are encouraged to collaborate with the Pastor to have someone other than the Pastor in the pulpit every 5-to-8 weeks. The reason for this is not just to give the Pastor discretionary time for ministry development; it is good for the congregational to hear a different voice in the pulpit occasionally. This could be done through pulpit exchanges or by inviting special speakers.

The results of the pastoral evaluation may lend themselves well to writing a new job description or rewriting an existing one.

Here are two additional insights on writing an effective pastor job description:

First, the process of writing a new pastoral job description needs to be done collaboratively and transparently with the pastor. He needs to be part of the process and know what the entire process entails.

Second, whoever has been entrusted with spearheading the writing of a new job description will need to know where the church has been, where it is at and where it is headed. In other words, creating an inspirational pastoral job description that does not honour the past or present but only focuses on a compelling picture of a desirable future (vision), will not work. The pastoral job description will need to reflect the needs and aspirations of where the church believes Christ is calling them, while the job description needs to be based on a realistic picture of what one can expect a pastor to do, who your pastor is, what other staff the church has and the culture of the church itself.

## Resource H: Writing the Pastoral Evaluation Team Report

See Step 9

After all the feedback has been received and reviewed, the PET writes a summary report for the Elders. Make sure that the report is labeled “Confidential.” While every report is unique, here is a basic outline.

1. **Introduction:** The introduction covers the framework of the evaluation. While you should seek to be brief, the introduction should include:
  - ◆ The date at which the formal approval was given to conduct the pastoral evaluation.
  - ◆ The membership of the PET.
  - ◆ The pastoral evaluation that has been used. A suggested line: *“The evaluation that was used is called A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency, by Walt Brouwer, Consultant in Pastor-Church Relations for Classis Alberta North.”*
  - ◆ A note of thanks to the Pastor for his willingness to engage the pastoral evaluation.
  - ◆ Mention any changes you made to the pastoral evaluation. For example, if a pastoral job description or a pastoral support team does not exist, mention this.
  - ◆ The number of people requested to participate in the pastoral evaluation, and the number who actually did. Mention the names of those who participated
  - ◆ You might want to add a timeline of events: when the PET was chosen; when you met with the Consultant; when the invitations to evaluators went out; the deadline for their feedback
  
2. **The Body:** This will be the bulk and essential part of the report. This is to be an accurate, balanced, and fair digest of the feedback received from the evaluators.

The following outline might help:

- ◆ Write a sentence or two that conveys a general impression of total feedback.
- ◆ Convey strengths of the Pastor's ministry.
- ◆ Identify growth area(s).
- ◆ Note themes that emerged.
- ◆ Use direct quotes from the feedback received if you think this is helpful, but do not use the authors' names. Should personal names or other personal identifiers be mentioned in the quotes, they should be eliminated in order to protect the identity of the author.
- ◆ Make specific recommendations as appropriate.

3. **Conclusion:** This includes:

- ◆ A general summary statement.
- ◆ A reminder to the Pastor and Elders to continue the conversation based on the evaluation after the formal process has ended.
- ◆ Notes of thanks as appropriate – to the Elders/Council for entrusting this task to you as the PET; for the participants in the pastoral evaluation; the Pastor, and to Christ for His church.
- ◆ Mention and include **Resource K**.

Finally, before sending your report off to the Elders, be sure to have the Pastor approve of your report and negotiate any edits the Pastor suggests.

## Resource I: *The Pastoral Evaluation Team Review Questions*

See Step 7

The following review questions are for the PET after they have received all the feedback from participants. The meeting with the Consultant will cover these items before the feedback is reviewed. Check them off  as you go along to make your review complete.

- 1> How was the exercise for you personally?
- 2> How was the exercise for you as the PET?
- 3> Was the congregation informed of the evaluation?
- 4> How many people were asked to participate in the evaluation? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5> How many people ended up participating? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6> How many Elders participated? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7> How many Deacons participated? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8> Did any Elders ask not to participate? What reasons? Yes / No
- 9> Did any others asked not to participate? Yes / No
- 10> Was staff asked to participate? Yes / No
- 11> Did anyone ask to participate before being asked to? Yes / No
- 12> Did any members of the PET participate? Yes / No
- 13> Were evaluators representative of the congregation? Yes / No
- 14> Were all evaluators confessing members? Yes / No
- 15> Has the list been vetted by the Pastor? Yes / No
- 16> Has all the feedback been signed by the authors? Yes / No

## Resource J: *Writing the Pastor's Report*

See Step 9

Once you, the Pastor, have received and digested the feedback, including the PET report to the Elders, you also write an evaluation report to the Elders. While every report is unique, here is a basic outline.

1. **Introduction:** The introduction acknowledges the process has run its course. Acknowledge that you have received all the feedback as well as the report to the Elders from the PET. A note of thanks to the PET and participants is appropriate.
2. **The Body:** This will be the bulk and essential part of your report. The following outline might help:
  - ◆ Write a sentence or two that conveys your general impression of total feedback.
  - ◆ Convey positive aspects of the evaluation.
  - ◆ Acknowledge any growth area.
  - ◆ Note themes that emerged.
  - ◆ You may use direct quotes from the feedback received, but do not use the authors' names. And should personal names or other personal identifiers be mentioned in the quotes, they should be eliminated in order to protect the identity of the author. You may also quote directly from the PET report to the Elders.
  - ◆ Note any recommendations from the PET report and your response to these recommendations.
  - ◆ Make any specific recommendations you think might be helpful to enhance not only your ministry, but the ministry of the Elders.
3. **Conclusion:** This includes a general conclusion statement and a reminder to the Elders to continue conversations with you based on the evaluation after the formal process has come to an end. Mention and include **Resource K**.

## ***Resource K: The Elders and Pastor Continue the Conversation***

See Step 11

### **I. Thank you!**

Thank you for partnering with your Pastor in his ministry evaluation using *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*. The formal part of the evaluation is over when the PET and your Pastor have submitted their reports to you. However, the process continues by means of an honest, transparent conversation between the Pastor and the Elders based on the two reports. The continued conversation is just as important as the evaluation itself. Here are some guidelines on how to best continue the conversation.

### **II. The Pastoral Evaluation Questions**

Participants in the pastoral evaluation were asked three questions (if they were either an office bearer or a staff member) or two (if they were members – questions 1 and 3 below). These were the questions:

1. *Dear Pastor name, as a member at name Christian Reformed Church, when I think of you as my Pastor, this is what I want to tell you ...*
2. *Also Pastor name, as an office bearer/staff, when I think of you as Pastor here at church Christian Reformed Church, this is what I want to say ...*
3. *Finally Pastor name, when I review your ordination vows [Psalter Hymnal, CRC Publications, 1987, pp. 992-997] and read your job description (if a current one exists), I think that one particular area where I want to encourage your growth as Pastor is ...*

### **III. The Expectations of Participants in the Pastoral Evaluation**

Participants in the pastoral evaluation were asked to give their *honest, thoughtful feedback prayerfully and graciously*. They were also required to sign their names to their evaluation. By participating, they were expected to give evidence of their maturity in Christ by prayerfully communicating their feedback honestly and truthfully, yet with love and grace (EPHESIANS 4:15, 29, COLOSSIAN 4:6). They were asked to observe these words of Scripture: *“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are*

*your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other" (1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23, NLT). And also to remember: "In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery" (PROVERBS 28:23, NLT).*

#### **IV. Reviewing the Results of the Evaluation**

1. Have you as Elders received and read the two reports from the PET and your Pastor about the pastoral evaluation?
2. Have you understood the fundamentals of the pastoral evaluation process: mutual accountability and transparency? As the Pastor is held accountable, so the pastoral evaluators are held accountable for their evaluations by signing their names to their evaluations.
3. What is your general impression in reading the two reports?

#### **V. Responding to the Evaluation**

4. Are any commendable aspects of the Pastor's ministry noted?
  - 4.1 What are the commendable aspects?
  - 4.2 Is there anything particular worth celebrating?
  - 4.3 Is there a surprise among commendable things that are mentioned?
5. Have any growth areas been identified?
  - 5.1 If there are growth areas, what are they?
  - 5.2 Which growth area is largely the responsibility of the Pastor to address?
  - 5.3 Which growth area is the responsibility of the Pastor along with the Elders or other leaders to address?

- 5.4 Is there a surprise among the growth areas that are mentioned?
6. Does either report of the PET or of the Pastor make any recommendations or requests?
7. Has the Pastor been given adequate opportunity to discuss his evaluation in one or more meeting with the Elders? (Do not assume this is the case; ask the Pastor.)
8. Have the Elders been given adequate opportunity to discuss his evaluation in one or more meetings with the Pastor? (Do not assume this is the case; ask each Elder.)
9. Are the results of the pastoral evaluation helpful to edit a current pastoral job description or in the writing of a new one (see **Resource G**)?

## **VI. Acting upon the Evaluation**

10. What are the desirable outcomes of the pastoral evaluation?
  - 10.1 How do the Elders give appropriate acknowledgment of the commendable aspects of the Pastor's ministry?
  - 10.2 How can the Pastor and the Elders collaborate in addressing the growth areas?
11. Which recommendations and requests made in the reports by the PET and the Pastor do the Elders act on? When? How? By whom?
12. Is follow-up with the Consultant needed?

## Part III: The Rationale

Notes:

## *Introduction*

I remember the time and place of my eureka moment that unlocked the key to this pastoral evaluation. It happened on an early mid-August evening under a cloudless sky in 2009, when I was driving north on Highway 2 just north of Leduc, Alberta. My wife Grace was with me. At the last annual Pastors and Spouses Conference of Classis Alberta North in Jasper earlier that spring, I announced that Grace, a medical doctor and gifted therapist, would be available together with me to counsel Pastors and spouses. We were driving home from just such a session with a hurting Pastor and his wife. As I was mulling over the time we spent with this couple in pain my mind shifted to the need for better pastoral evaluations. I knew churches needed to find a better way to meaningfully assess the performance of their Pastors. I had learned that our denomination considered this a matter of urgency. But up to that time, all I had was two convictions about how *not* to do pastoral evaluations. First, importing evaluations from the corporate world don't work in the church. The process for corporate evaluations often look impressive which lends an air of legitimacy, but too often they end up with needless hurt for the Pastor with the unwholesome consequences of greater pastoral isolation and growing lack of confidence in lay leadership. Second, anonymity is anathema to pastoral evaluations. I felt strongly that anonymity violated the culture of the church which Christ seeks to establish among the community of his followers. Anonymity lacks accountability which tends to encourage tactlessness and insensitivity that would likely not be offered if the evaluators were held personally accountable for their feedback. Anonymity also prevents opportunities for further constructive dialogue with the evaluators. The eureka moment came in the form of one word: transparency. This unexpected discovery immediately latched onto me with such conviction that I made an important decision.

I was fairly confident that this evaluation process would work well in those Pastor-church relationships that were on the whole good and healthy.

Grace and I were only weeks away from a three-and-half months' leave of absence. We were headed for Amsterdam where she would study tropical medicine at the Royal Tropical Institute. My plan for these months was to turn my D.Min. dissertation, *Spiritually Unhealthy Believers and the Cultivation of Healthy Spiritual Families*, into a book. However, by the time we got home from our visit with the hurting pastoral couple, I had made the decision to put these plans aside and work on designing a new pastoral evaluation based on the key principle of transparency. Before we left I put together a team of four experienced Pastor-leaders who were willing to serve as a sounding board as my ideas developed. The result was the proposal *Pastoral Evaluations: Mutual Accountability through Transparency* which I submitted to the Pastor-Church Relations Committee of Classis Alberta North. The

committee in turn sent it on to classis for approval. At its March 2010 meeting, Classis approved *Pastoral Evaluations: Mutual Accountability through Transparency* for field testing among the churches that were willing to participate in this pilot project.

The results of this pilot project have been more encouraging than I expected or even dared hope. I was fairly confident that this evaluation process would work well in those Pastor-church relationships that were on the whole good and healthy. However, what I didn't expect was that this evaluation proved to be *especially* helpful in Pastor-church relationships that I would characterize as tenuous. What this means is that I have sat in on pastoral evaluations that were very good and affirming; indeed, they were a delight to sit in on. It also means that there were some evaluations that were very tough and where themes emerged of perceived pastoral deficiencies in important areas of competence. What was good about these tough pastoral evaluations were the results: the Pastor and Elders together decided to collaborate and constructively address the identified deficiencies which bore positive fruit by infusing the ministry with new hope, leading to new ministry initiatives that led to greater congregational health, helping Pastors grow in the areas of identified weakness, and enhancing Pastor-church relationships. Without wanting to sound melodramatic, I remember tears of joy blinding my eyes when I learned of the positive, collaborative, ministry-enhancing conversations the Elders were having with their Pastor after a very difficult pastoral evaluation.

What was good about these tough pastoral evaluations were the results: the Pastor and Council together decided to collaborate and constructively address the identified deficiencies which bore positive fruit by infusing the ministry with new hope, leading to new ministry initiatives that led to greater congregational health, and helping Pastors grow in the areas of identified weakness.

That's what this evaluation is all about: having real conversations about things that truly matter so that in the end greater health emerges in the Pastor's ministry, more effective collaborative ministry with the lay leadership happens, and better performance of the overall ministry in and of the congregation emerges.

## *The Need for a Biblically Sound Pastoral Evaluation*

Pastoral ministry has changed over the years. Ministry has become more complex and in many ways more demanding, especially in churches with multiple staff. For these reasons alone, pastoral evaluations have become both common and necessary, and are here to stay.

When a congregation is healthy, and there is a high degree of trust between the Pastor and lay leaders amid a thriving ministry, there is hardly an evaluation that would misfire and cause needless misunderstandings or hurt. On the other hand, if a church is not healthy and the relationship between Pastor and lay leaders is one of low trust or conflict, and ministry is not going well, then we need to find a way to evaluate the ministry of the Pastor in such a way that needless hurt is minimized and the opportunity for growth is maximized so that it leads to greater ministry effectiveness and enhanced Pastor-church relationships.

This pastoral evaluation manual was written in response to these important insights: 1. The recognition that our own denomination considered the creation of a more effective pastoral evaluation a matter of urgency; 2. The conversations with Pastors about the history of their pastoral evaluations; 3. The insights gleaned from pastoral evaluation literature; 4. The review of samples of performance evaluations; 5. The observations from what other denominations are doing; 6. The feedback from specialists; and, finally, 7. The reflections upon my own experience as a Pastor for a quarter century.

### **The Problem**

Even carefully and well-designed evaluations often share a common problem: *pastoral evaluations lack accountability through anonymity.*

Providing anonymous feedback to the Pastor about his performance not only lacks accountability; fundamentally, it is an unbiblical approach. Anonymous feedback is a set-up for misunderstanding, and easily ends up being more discouraging than constructive, and not uncommonly ensues in needless hurt. For example, when a Pastor receives anonymous critical feedback about his ministry, he can be left to guess what area of ministry is the focus of the concern. No dialogue can take place with the author of the criticism, since no name is attached to the comment. As a result, the teachable intent of the evaluation can be seriously diminished for the opportunity to learn from a critically-perceived area of ministry performance cannot take place due to the anonymity of the feedback. One Pastor, through tears of frustration and hurt, said that he had received an anonymous note just before he went on sabbatical. The note stated that its author hoped that when the Pastor returned from his sabbatical, he would preach as well as when he first came. The Pastor didn't know who

Due to the greater complexity of ministry, pastoral evaluations have become both common and necessary, and are here to stay.

wrote this note and therefore didn't know how to interpret the expectation that was raised. For all the Pastor knew, his preaching had improved since he had come to this church!

Also, when feedback is provided anonymously, the writer may use a tactless tone or harsh language that would not be employed if the comments were to be signed by the author or if the feedback were conveyed face-to-face. The anonymous authors might be needlessly tactless and harsh because anonymity is used as a shield behind which authors can hide their identity and are encouraged to vent ill feelings. In fact, these ill feelings may not even be caused by the Pastor's actual performance, but may come from discontentment with the church, an unhappy marriage, wayward children, stress at work, a conflicted conscience, and so forth. In this case, these ill feelings are sinfully foisted upon the Pastor through psychological transference.

More positively, the lack of accountability through anonymity also forfeits opportunities to express personal gratitude, appreciation and love. For example, participating in a pastoral evaluation might give some people a welcome and natural opportunity to sincerely convey their love, thanks and appreciation for the Pastor and his ministry. However, since the comments are passed on anonymously, the positive personal impact is diminished. Furthermore, anonymity prevents the Pastor from gratefully acknowledging such feedback.

Admittedly, anonymous performance evaluations are common in the corporate world. Many churches look to a corporate model when they design their pastoral evaluations. However, the church is not a secular corporation, and therefore needs to find ways that are authentically biblical to perform pastoral evaluations. Bringing into the church a corporate model to evaluate Pastors is inadequate, for it does not take into account the very different nature of the church and the pastoral role which is highly dissimilar to roles found in the secular corporation. Moreover, when churches adapt personnel evaluations from the corporate world and turn them into pastoral evaluations, they do not realize that, as a generalization, personnel assessment tools do not work even in the corporate world. Roy Oswald, in an article called *Appraisal – an American Experience*, cites W. Edward Deming, professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration, New York University. Deming made a study of corporate evaluations and comes to a demoralizing indictment:

... when churches adapt personnel evaluations from the corporate world and turn them into pastoral evaluations, they do not realize that, as a generalization, personnel assessment tools do not work even in the corporate world.

*“ ... business and industry are continually being decimated by formal evaluation procedures. ... people need to feel a sense of pride about their work; they need to be affirmed for what they do – and the annual evaluation does just the opposite. 'The basic fault of the annual appraisal is that it penalises people for normal variation of a system ... nourishes short-term performance, annihilates long-term planning, builds fear, demolishes teamwork, nourishes rivalry and politics. It leaves people bitter, crushed, bruised, battered, desolate, despondent, dejected, feeling inferior, some even depressed, unfit for work for weeks after receipt of rating, unable to comprehend why they are inferior.’”*

Applying these assessment tools to the ministry, Oswald concludes:

*“The tragedy sometimes is that clergy want to engage in an evaluation process because at some level they are not feeling appreciated for all their hard work. Yet when the process starts, just the opposite happens. It's a good way to derail an otherwise energetic ministry.”*

This is why churches are deeply unwise to import evaluations of the boardroom into the consistory room. Since this matter is too often ignored, John Wimberly, in an article called *Teams and Performance*, writes:

*“Pastors and lay leaders sense that the traditional model for annual performance reviews is broken. It is. In a best-selling book aptly named *Get Rid of the Performance Review!*, UCLA management expert Samuel Culbert is one of many making the case that we need to eliminate these annual reviews that most managers and employees detest.”*

Similarly, Malcolm L. Warford in his book *The Spirit's Tether: Eight Lives in Ministry*, follows the ministry careers of eight seminary students over 30(!) years. One of the issues he notes is that *“Evaluation, when it comes ... often arrives as something ominous – a political thing – rather than something constructive as in ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Eph. 4:15).”* This conclusion is a tragedy and underscores the urgent need for an effective and authentically biblical evaluation of pastoral staff.

## **The Biblical Answer**

Pastoral evaluations, therefore, ought to move away from *the lack of accountability through anonymity* to *mutual accountability through transparency*.

Mutual accountability through transparency means that a pastoral evaluation is not just an evaluation of the Pastor's performance in the context of the Pastor's accountability relationships with his Elders. Transparency happens when those providing feedback are deemed to have the maturity to speak the truth in love and are required to identify themselves as the authors of their own insights into their Pastor's performance.

Mutual accountability through transparency is based on compelling biblical grounds. For example, the church is a family – not just metaphorically, but theologically. The New Testament's use of "household [of God]" (GALATIANS 6:10, EPHESIANS 2:19, 1 PETER 4:17) and Paul's use of familial language in instructing Timothy on how to relate to different age groups and genders in his congregation (1 TIMOTHY 5:1f.) amply bear this out. In addition, there is the biblical urgency to let *all things* – and therefore also pastoral evaluations – be done in love and for the edification of both the Pastor and the body as a whole. This means that truth must be spoken in love, rebuke offered in humility, admonition tempered by compassion, the dignity of the Pastor as person upheld, and the role of Pastor esteemed. What Paul admonishes the church to be mindful of in general terms also applies to pastoral evaluations:

*Pastoral evaluations must move away from the lack of accountability through anonymity to mutual accountability through transparency.*

*"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, Who is the head of His body, the church."*

EPHESIANS 4:15, NLT

And speaking more directly about how believers ought to relate to their Pastors as leaders, Paul admonishes,

*"Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other."*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13, NLT

As the CRCNA's *Ministries Priorities Committee Report* (2005) says:

*“Healthy churches foster the kind of atmosphere in which ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Eph. 4:15) becomes the normal way ... It will take patience and practice for church to attain and retain a healthy atmosphere of mutual accountability in a world that loves gossip on the one hand and says ‘it’s none of your business’ on the other. ... When we all admit our absolute dependence on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, then mutual accountability will permeate the life of the body promoting healing and health.”*

Thus, the *Pastoral Evaluation Manual* which is unique to Classis Alberta North asks mature church members to transparently speak the truth in love about their pastor. The results have been consistently effective in ministry transformation through transparency. Moreover, Scripture is replete with passionate appeals for unity and harmony (cf. PSALM 34:14, EPHESIANS 4:3, ROMANS 14:19, 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10, COLOSSIANS 2:2, 3:13-15, 2 TIMOTHY 2:14, HEBREWS 12:14, 1 PETER 3:8, etc.). The point is that the pursuit of shalom, and the living out of the church as a healthy spiritual family cannot be done through anonymous, sometimes secretive and therefore unhealthy, feedback. Indeed, just as with the family, the church is as sick as its secrets.

### **The Seven Benefits**

Offering pastoral evaluations through the biblical principle of mutual accountability through transparency offers seven important benefits:

#### **1. The Benefit of Truth Spoken in Love**

Since signed feedback eliminates anonymity behind which individuals can say things that normally they would not convey to the Pastor, a higher degree of truth spoken in love is required. Accountable feedback requires thoughtfulness of word choice and care in corrective critique. The perception of a Pastor's shortcomings must be tempered with grace. People rise to the occasion when confidence is expressed in them to speak the truth honestly yet graciously and in love.

2. **The Benefit of Encouragement**

The opportunity to honestly disclose one's thoughts is beneficial not just for those who might be critical of their Pastor, but also to those who love their Pastor. Those who want to commend their Pastor in a personal way are able to do so authentically through their participation in their Pastor's evaluation. The Pastor in turn is able to know who has expressed such encouraging sentiments and thus can find ways to acknowledge and thank the authors for them.

3. **The Benefit of Follow-Up**

Accountable feedback allows the Pastor at his initiative to engage in a constructive dialogue with those who provide feedback. Thus, Pastors can ask for clarification about an observation made by the authors of pastoral feedback, work matters out, and even perhaps mend broken relationships by offering and receiving forgiveness.

4. **The Benefit of Authentic Community**

Accountable feedback has significant potential to cultivate authentic community.

This is especially true when over time transparent feedback by way of mutual accountability becomes a spiritual discipline and faithful practice in the family of God which is the local church. The more we learn to speak the truth in love together, the healthier our faith communities.

Accountable feedback allows the Pastor at his initiative to engage in a constructive dialogue with those who provide feedback.

5. **The Benefit of Pastoral Job Descriptions**

Pastoral job descriptions, like pastoral evaluations, are becoming increasingly common. While pastoral job descriptions are difficult to write well (see **Resource G**), this pastoral evaluation will be helpful either in editing an existing pastoral job description or writing a brand new one since strengths and growth areas are honestly identified.

6. **The Benefit of Enhanced Pastor-Church Relations**

If mutual accountability through transparency is implemented, it will have long-term positive effects on Pastor-church relationships since transparency cultivates more authentic relationships in which truth can more readily be spoken in love.

7. **The Benefit of Mutual Accountability**

Mutual accountability through transparency requires regular evaluations of the office bearers by them and for them. While Christ Himself (MATTHEW 18:15-17) admonishes us first to deal privately with the alleged sins of others, there is a place for mutual encouragement, accountability and edification (e.g. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11, 2 TIMOTHY 4:2, TITUS 2:15, HEBREWS 10:25, etc.). The *Church Order* of the CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, Article 36b: *“The Council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, which concerns the performance of the official duties of the office bearers.”*

Thus, mutual accountability needs to happen intentionally on a quarterly basis by setting time aside during a regular meeting or a specially designed retreat during which office bearers, after a time

of mutual prayer, ask of one another questions such as, *how can we encourage one another to love Christ more by serving His body more effectively. Are we as individual office bearers walking our talk? Are we drawing deeply from the well of God’s grace? For those of us who are married (and have children), how are we loving Christ in our homes? If we each could shape our own personal ministry as office bearers, what would that look like?*

The field study for this pastoral evaluation clearly pointed to the need for an experienced pastoral Consultant who is able to guide and coach the Elders, Pastor and PET through the process.

We define an effective pastoral evaluation, therefore, as a truthful, grace-filled, transparent conversation about things that matter so that the Pastor-church relationship is enhanced and the Pastor and Elders are encouraged to continue further transparent conversations after the formal pastoral evaluation process has ended in order to celebrate strengths and collaborate on addressing growth areas.

### *The Open-Ended Questions*

The two or three questions – depending on the role of the evaluator – which evaluators are asked to answer are intentionally designed to be open-ended. Many pastoral evaluations use scales – often from one to five, from very weak or very poor to very strong or very good – to rate various pastoral competencies. The problem with such a rating system is that evaluators often do not know enough to accurately rate their perception of competencies which they are asked to assess. What makes matters worse is that typically these ratings are returned anonymously to the pastor so that any attempt at clarification is impossible.

Indeed, two pastors on separate occasions approached me with exasperation in their every gesture as they complained how church members were asked to rate their pastors' time management. Even elders often do not have a good grasp of how or how well their pastor spends his time. As the late Lyle Schaller – the influential consultant to churches throughout North America – said: “90% of what pastors do is invisible to 90% of the congregation 90% of the time” (quoted in *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Evaluation Essentials for Congregational Leaders*, p. 9). Using scales to rate a variety of pastoral competencies is in the end not very helpful; doing it anonymously tends to be needlessly hurtful.

*“90% of what pastors do is  
invisible to  
90% of the congregation  
90% of the time.”*

Lyle Schaller

The open-ended questions on the other hand allow the evaluator to assess their pastor in the context of his pastoral ordination vows and job description (if the pastor has one). The feedback evaluators provide therefore will naturally gravitate to what they think is important and truly matters about their pastor, his ministry and their relationship to him. They will not comment about aspects of their pastor's ministry with which they are unfamiliar. They will comment on pastoral matters they feel they know and do so in their own words and in their own unhurried time and space.

What is interesting is that themes related to pastoral strengths and growth areas emerge when the total feedback is reviewed. And out of these themes comes important information that will inform important conversations between the Elders and the Pastor about the things that truly matter and which will enhance the Pastor-church relationship. What is interesting is that one Pastor who had a very good evaluation of his ministry was given a sabbatical as a way to celebrate his ministry; another Pastor who had a

*Dear brothers and sisters, honour those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23 (NLT)

tough pastoral evaluation also was given a sabbatical to address growth areas. Another pastor with a positive evaluation felt more secure in his role and relationship; another pastor with a difficult evaluation commented that it may well have prevented an unhappy Pastor-church separation, or an Article 17 (of the *Church Order*; this provision allows for Pastor-church separations for reasons other than discipline or retirement; typically these are emotionally painful, spiritually challenging and financially costly separations). In every case, after good evaluations and tough ones, important conversations have ensued between lay

leaders and Pastor about things that truly matter, and steps were taken to celebrate strengths and address growth areas.

## *The Role of the Consultant*

The field study for this pastoral evaluation clearly pointed to the need for an experienced pastoral Consultant who is able to guide and coach the Elders, Pastor and PET through the process.

When the original proposal was approved and posted publicly on-line, a number of churches outside Classis Alberta North asked if they could use the evaluation. Not only did I always give permission; I offered to guide and coach them through the process by phone and email. Curiously, not one of them took up my offer. What happened was that those churches that used this evaluation without my guidance all made mistakes or used dubious short cuts which minimized the effectiveness of the evaluation, limited the scope of the evaluation, or even caused misunderstandings and needless hurt. This alone convinced me for the need of a Consultant to come along side Pastors and churches to guide them through the process.

Speaking the truth in love through relational transparency requires that we speak with one another thoughtfully, tactfully and prayerfully, even when we feel we must convey an admonition or even a rebuke.

Other good reasons exist for using a Consultant. An experienced Consultant gives the Elders confidence that the pastoral evaluation process is in capable hands; the PET is assured that they are not left with simply a manual to follow with no one to guide them through it; and the Pastor has the opportunity to bounce his own thoughts off the Consultant when the evaluation is complete – something that can be critical if the evaluation points to perceived pastoral deficiencies.

## *The Challenges*

During the pilot project that field tested this pastoral evaluation two challenges were raised that deserve further attention: 1. the principle of transparency; 2. the nature of a Pastor's authority in his relationship with church members which might skew the transparent feedback which these members provide.

## 1. Transparency

The central issue for any pastoral evaluation is how this is done not just most *effectively*, but most *biblically*. The answer to this issue is that the rules that guide pastor-church relationships must come not from the corporate world, but the Scriptures, for the church is not a business; it is the body of Christ.

The Scriptures are clear about the way relationships ought to be conducted within the family of God. While the word “*transparency*” is not found in the Bible, the values associated with transparency are. The term transparency comes from the field of photography. Before the advent of digital photography, a transparency was used as a see-through picture which was achieved when a positive photographic image was created on a transparent material such as film or a slide so that the image could be viewed when light shone through it. Transparency in social relationships has come to imply open communication, lucid accountability; the antonym of transparency is therefore anonymity, ambiguity, even secrecy. Thus, transparency means that communicators identify themselves to the recipients of their communication.

We have the urgent biblical injunction that “*we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church*” (EPHESIANS 4:15, NLT). Paul’s imperative for speaking the truth in love is that believers can grow together in “*every way*” more mature and Christ-like. Speaking the truth in love argues for relational transparency rather than anonymity, for transparent communication, unlike anonymity, cultivates authenticity which is essential for maturing relationships. Speaking the truth in love through relational transparency requires that we speak with one another thoughtfully, tactfully and prayerfully, even when we feel we must convey an admonition or even a rebuke. Indeed, healthy communication through transparency is antecedent to healthy community. In 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3, the value of speaking the truth in love is considered so important that the Scriptures imply that unless we speak the truth in love, our words are “*nothing*” and therefore not worth speaking at all (verses 1-3, NLT). Admittedly, this is a high and at times a difficult calling, yet one which especially church leaders must heed and which they cannot honourably dismiss in their relationships within the body of Christ.

*“... anonymous commenting tends to amplify a lack of civility, which degrades the conversation. ... [W]e’ve learned from experience that anonymity encourages the worst in a few of our commenters, which is turning many other readers away.”*

Moreover, church members are commanded to treat their Pastors with respect:

*Dear brothers and sisters, honour those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-13 (NLT)

Transparency seeks to speak the truth in love and honours Pastors for the position they are entrusted with. Should concerns arise with how Pastors fulfill their ministries, or if Pastors as persons are no longer perceived to be able to fulfill their pastoral roles, even then Pastors must be treated with honour, and the truth must be spoken in love which can only happen through transparent communication rather than anonymity.

Pastors therefore are not only expected to handle transparent feedback judiciously, but must necessarily do so lest they undermine the very road upon which they must travel.

As a matter of interest, THE EDMONTON JOURNAL recently published a "Note to Online Readers" (May 19, 2010, p. A2) which announced the new requirement of transparency for on-line comments to newspaper articles for reasons stated:

*"As many news sites have discovered, anonymous commenting tends to amplify a lack of civility, which degrades the conversation. Anonymous commenting also makes it difficult for readers to respond to each other in coherent ways. . . . Having a name associated with your comment also makes it easier for us to publish selected comments in the newspaper. . . . [W]e've learned from experience that anonymity encourages the worst in a few of our commenters, which is turning many other readers away."*

Even THE JOURNAL has come to recognize the negative impact of anonymous feedback, and the value – even the necessity – of transparency.

## **2. Pastoral Authority**

The second challenge deals with the vocational authority (or power) which attends the pastoral role. Authority in this context comes from the Pastor's position as church leader and primary interpreter of the Bible for those under his spiritual care. This authority usually induces church members to respect their Pastor.

The concern, however, is that pastoral authority can also have an intimidating effect whereby a parishioner cannot or will not be transparently honest and authentic with their

Pastor for fear that the Pastor may use his authority to negatively affect the parishioner or his relationship with the Pastor. Indeed, Pastors might even abuse the authority inherent in their position. Moreover, a Pastor's authority not uncommonly places him in a conflict of interest. At face value, this conflict of interest exists, and it certainly does in a formal way. However, while a Pastor is sometimes placed in a conflict of interest, it is expected that the Pastor will handle this conflict with discretion, wisdom, integrity and maturity. For example, Pastors preach and teach generous financial giving, knowing full well they are a primary recipient of the generosity of those they so instruct. Pastors also counsel, encourage, edify, admonish, rebuke and even discipline those who support them not just financially, but who are encouraged to follow their leadership. Also, the personal depth and trust which Pastors cultivate with many church members add a unique complexity to the Pastor-parishioner relationship that Pastors must be able to handle with care and maturity. The congregation not only needs the confidence and expects that their Pastor will handle such conflicts of interest with wisdom and integrity; such confidence and expectation are intentionally cultivated through the unique ordination vows (see **Resource F**) Pastors make both to God and His people before assuming their ministry of the Word and the sacraments. This trust also applies to Pastors when they receive transparent feedback of their ministries. Indeed, should Pastors violate this trust and thus abuse their authority, they undermine their own credibility and thus harm their ministry. Pastors therefore are not only expected to handle transparent feedback judiciously, but must necessarily do so lest they undermine the very path upon which they must travel.

Pastoral authority has another potential impact on pastoral evaluations and has to do with pastoral idealization that may distort transparent feedback. Idealization happens when church members perceive Pastors to be better or have more desirable attributes than is actually the case. Idealization is inevitable and can even be a tool for ministry, provided Pastors do not believe these idealized perceptions of themselves. Idealization does not mitigate the need for transparency, even though it may distort the feedback by reflecting a more positive image of Pastors and their ministries. However, this distortion can be compensated for by seeking out those who are reasonably mature to do the evaluating of their Pastor as this process requires so that their idealization of Pastors is minimized and they are able to speak the truth in love when they provide their transparent feedback to their Pastors about the ministries entrusted to their care.

## Postscript

Please note that while this pastoral evaluation process is quite straight forward, there are sensitive details that need to be recognized, understood and observed. Therefore, do not use this process without a qualified, trained consultant. Those who would like to use the process contained in *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual: Mutual Accountability through Transparency*; for inquiries about being trained in using this evaluation; or for further information, please contact:

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Churches of denominations other than my own have shown an interest in this pastoral evaluation. To adapt this manual for use in other denominations, a clarification of these terms might be helpful:

**“Classis”** is the term my denomination uses for a geographical cluster of its churches. Other denominations use *Conference, Diocese, District, Presbytery, etc.*

**“Elders,”** while a common biblical term, is specifically meant to refer to elected lay leaders who have *oversight* over the life and doctrine of the pastor who serves in their local congregation; the Pastor is *accountable* to them. In other denominations, they might be called board members, Council members, deacons, etc.

**“Council”** is composed of the Pastor(s), Elders and Deacons of a local church.

**“Office bearer”** refers to a Pastor, Elder or Deacon (the three “offices” mentioned in the New Testament) depending on the context.

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Pax+

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Notes:

*"I read this material with growing interest. You have come up with some splendid advice and material, all laid out very professionally. I could have used it myself in my time in many situations. I could readily see how many pastors and office bearers could benefit tremendously from this pastoral evaluation. Your materials deserved to be used on a broader scale."*

**Rev. Louis M. Tamminga**  
Director, Pastor-Church Relations, CRCNA  
(1983-1995)

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