

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIPS¹

This paper was prepared by a special study committee for the Standing Committee of Annual Conference as a partial response to several questions about ethics and ministry in the church. Though this statement does not have the authority of Annual Conference, Standing Committee believed that it helpfully portrayed the responsible and accountable relationships and spirit that sustain the set-apart ministry in the Church of the Brethren. Consequently, Standing Committee, in 1988, commended this statement to districts, congregations, and ministers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dynamic change has characterized the shape of ministerial relationships in the Church of the Brethren throughout its history. Periodically, these changes are addressed, and polity statements and regulations are developed to meet emerging ministerial patterns within the denomination.

Such change in the shape and character of ministry relationships calls for continuing study to assure that appropriate counsel is offered in each age.

This paper presents the results of a current study of ministerial relations in the Church of the Brethren. Issues addressed include . . .

- The adequacy of District Ministry Commission organizational patterns (e.g., tenure);
- Procedures for moving membership and ordination from one district to another;
- The implementation of ethical guidelines for ministers; and
- The effectiveness of current polity and structures for overseeing the church's set-apart ministry.

The guidelines and counsel given here are seen within a context of interdependent relationships within the whole body of Christ. This network of relationships is basic to what constitutes, nurtures, assesses, and corrects the corporate ministries of the Church of the Brethren; and it is articulated in ministerial ethics and polity.

The theology of ministry and the ethics of ministry in the Church of the Brethren form a foundation for considering ministerial relations in the denomination. Section II, Theology of Ministry in the Church of the Brethren, and Section III, Ministerial Ethics in the Church of the Brethren, present this foundational material. Section IV, Dimensions of Corporate Ministerial Relations, is the specific focus of the study and forms the bulk of the paper.

II. THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

1. Previously titled "Ethics in Ministry Relations," 1988

In the Church of the Brethren, our understanding of ministry is grounded in the confession that believers' baptism into Jesus Christ is our commitment to partake in God's righteous work to redeem and reconcile all creation, a work first fully manifest in Jesus Christ. Ministry that redeems creation is always the work of God's incarnate presence. Such ministry is proclaimed by God's Holy Spirit, which makes manifest God's justice and righteousness, God's liberation and salvation; whereas, apart from God's Spirit, we see only injustice and suffering, captivity and sin. Baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, believers enroll as covenanted members of Christ's body, as agents of reconciliation in whom God's ministry incarnate is the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the life of creation. Christian ministry is the incarnate love, praise, and service of God by those whose life is God's Spirit, whose life is service as members of Christ's living body. Images from scripture have always guided the Church of the Brethren in its understanding of ministry. We speak of "the priesthood of all believers," or the "universal ministry." We remember that we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . ." (1 Pet. 2:9), called to use "whatever gift [we] received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10).

We believe Christ "gave 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 until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13).

From the earliest beginnings, sisters and brothers have sought to live as Christ's faithful disciples, guided by the faith that whatever we do to others we do to God (Matt. 25:40, 42-43). At love feast and communion, we recall that we are ministers sent to serve as Christ did, "washing the feet of the world" (John 13:15-17). As Christ's ambassadors, we are sent to reconcile the world to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19-20). We are members of Christ's body called to "offer our bodies as living sacrifices" so that "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:1, 5; 1 Cor. 12).

Historically and to the present day, the Church of the Brethren has viewed baptism as enrollment into ministry. Baptism is ordination to ministry, since in baptism we become members of Christ's incarnate, living body, which is God's *diakonia* (service, ministry) to save creation. Baptism is the believers' covenant to minister, to serve God with heart, soul, mind, and strength—with our whole lives.

The Church of the Brethren also understands that some members are "set apart" for particular ministries. In Schwarzenau, seven cast lots to see who would baptize Alexander Mack, whom the others set apart to baptize them. Our congregations have nurtured various forms of set-apart ministerial leadership, from the free ministry and salaried ministry to EFSM (Education for Shared Ministry) and TRIM (Training in Ministry).

As Brethren, we see analogies in scripture between the covenant valid for all God's people and its set-apart leaders. At Sinai, all Israel was subject to obey the commandments; but only a few were called to be tribal leaders, judges, prophets, or kings. Leadership is dangerous, for there was danger to all Israel when leaders transgressed; this became clear when the kings of first the Northern and then the Southern Kingdoms disregarded God in their hearts and finally led all Israel into chaos and exile. Also, during Jesus' life the disciples enjoyed a mentored training in discipleship; they were learning ministry as they ministered with Jesus. But Jesus' death ended the mentoring period. Some followers became members of his risen body, and some did not; some became apostles and leaders, and some did not. All who confessed Christ were called to

serve God and their neighbors; yet the leaders' faith affected the shape of others' faith and life.

After Sinai as after baptism, believers suffer when we transgress. But the whole community suffers when a false spirit is in the hearts of leaders and ministers entrusted to guide, form, and nurture us. Those called to the set-apart ministry receive no hierarchy over others; rather, we call out those whom we trust are strong enough to bear life's heavier burdens and testings, and yet be the Lord's servant and minister. We call to the set-apart ministry those who show themselves able to rightly discern the mind of Christ in this age and place.

Set-apart ministers are responsible servants of God's whole church, not only of a congregation, a district, or even a denomination. Set-apart ministers are called to nurture all who are baptized into Jesus' death, who rise to life as members of Christ's incarnate body, praising and serving God in congregational life, in their families, with their neighbors, in their working places, and "to the ends of the earth."

Historically and today, brothers and sisters believe the set-apart ministry is no more valuable, important, or spiritual than the ministry of all believers. The ministry of all believers and the ministry of individuals called to particular tasks are not in tension with one another. At the same time, we need to address the particular tasks, guidelines, and requirements of those called to set-apart ministry so that these ministers may be nurtured for and held accountable to their particular call.

III. MINISTERIAL ETHICS IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Brethren view ethical behavior as wholesome Christlike attitudes and actions that build up the whole body. Wholesome ethical behavior is basic to the ministry of all believers and is not essentially different for baptized and ordained members of the body. Our reflections around ministerial ethics assume that all members embody clear, healthy, personal ethics. We also recognize that in local, district, national, and international communities, and across generations, some ethical expectations vary. However, this paper does not address basic ethical matters, common to all believers.

This paper speaks to relational ethics, specifically to various relationships pertaining to set-apart ministries. This paper addresses how congregations, ordained ministers, and those serving in district ministries identify, nurture, judge, and correct the ministerial relations by which we grow as interdependent members of Christ's body.

Concentrating on relational dimensions of corporate faith life, we address the moral fabric by which the attitudes and behavior of ministers, congregations, and districts affect the life and faith of other people. This is an explicitly ethical dimension of ministry (though not the realm of personal ethics), which considers how corporate and leadership concerns affect shared moral life.

When ethical dilemmas or relational breaks occur, those who are visible attract positive and/or negative attention. Issues that burden the church are understandably and appropriately directed to people in key service positions. These include ordained ministers, District Executives/Ministers, and those on congregational and/or District Ministry Commissions who represent other members. In an understanding of the Christian life, which recognizes that all baptized Christians are subject to the same ethical values and norms, the particular ethical task of set-apart leaders occurs because their actions as corporate persons and bodies affect other people.

The ethics of ministerial relations ask how God's whole creation shall be redeemed; it is not enough to ask how individual people shall be saved. Viewing ministerial ethics as relationships that nurture the church as Christ's living body is basic to our heritage. Earlier Church of the Brethren ministers' manuals (e.g., 1940) did not write ethical codes; rather, they addressed attitudes and actions that nurture a healthy corporate life of faith. Efforts to reduce ethical attitudes, standards, and procedures to directive codes is a relatively recent innovation.

In a relational ministerial ethic, ethics are not best assessed through autonomous, independent, hierarchical, or functional judgments. In the church's living fabric, any qualified person or group may initiate a call for help; we need not wait until difficulties in relationships become acute or cause dysfunction. Precisely because we are dealing with the shared corporate life of faith, those who have the perception and trust to act in ways that up-build the body are called upon to act.

IV. DIMENSIONS OF CORPORATE MINISTERIAL RELATIONS

These understandings of both the theology of ministry and ministry ethics provide a context within which we can address particular elements of the church in relationship to others.

Therefore, this section addresses five dimensions of ministerial relationships. Those relationships are district to district; district and minister; district and congregation; congregation and minister; and minister to minister. In each of these relationships, three facets are addressed: (1) the relationships themselves; (2) guidelines for building and sustaining relationships; and (3) reestablishing health when there are difficulties in relationships.

A. District to District

1. *Relationships.* Congregations of the Church of the Brethren within defined geographic areas are related to one another through district organizations. The different districts engage in joint programming and undertake mutual efforts to make effective use of resources, including ministerial leadership, to advance Christian mission.

A clear understanding of the interlocking relationship between the districts encourages them to develop common standards and procedures in ministerial recruitment and training, certification, deployment and placement, and professional performance. These understandings, set out by Annual Conference and the General Board, guide responsible leaders in the respective districts. Accountability occurs through the District Ministry Commissions, the District Executives/Ministers in collegial association (Council of District Executives), and Standing Committee of Annual Conference.

2. *Sustaining Relationships.* The polity of the denomination, as established by the Annual Conference on matters relating to the calling, licensing, and ordaining of ministers, is practiced by each district.

The granting of full ministerial standing (ordination) by any district is recognized by all other districts.

Licensed ministers moving from one district to another, when received with a supporting recommendation for continuing status and upon favorable action of the ministry commission of the receiving district, are added to their rolls without another licensing ceremony.

Ordained ministers who move between districts are expected to have the supporting recommendation of the sending district, certifying standing and noting service and classification. The receiving district is expected, in turn, to advise the sending district that local church membership has been transferred and that the name has been added to their ministerial rolls.

Information files on individuals whose names are on a district's ministerial roll are held in the district office. When a transfer occurs, files are dispatched to the district office of the receiving district.

District officials, especially District Executives/Ministers, are in open and frequent consultation in both formal and informal ways, sharing information, offering perspective, and giving counsel.

Other denominationally aligned people who desire to engage in ministry in the Church of the Brethren and want to enter the "placement process" are interviewed by the Ministry Inquiry Committee and the District Ministry Commission (or its appointed representatives) and approved by the District Board before the candidate's profile is entered into the system. Membership in the Church of the Brethren is a prerequisite for ordination. Transfer of membership to another denomination releases a person from ordination, unless the new denomination affirms and receives the ordination. Ordained persons entering the denomination are received into local church membership before the issue of transfer of ordination can be effected. Districts are urged to give consideration to special needs/situations as directed by the Annual Conference statement on membership/associate membership.

3. *Difficulties in Relationships.* When a licensed or ordained minister who has experienced brokenness in relationship in one district moves to another district, the information regarding the nature of the brokenness is shared with appropriate persons and/or groups in the new district. Types of brokenness in relationship include terminated ministry, questionable ethical behavior, neglect or irresponsibility in ministerial duties, separation from spouse, or divorce. If the district was called on for assistance and the minister was placed under counsel and discipline with a probationary period, that information is shared with the new district. If the minister is seeking placement, such information is shared on the profile and on the request for clearance.

Processes of counsel, discipline, and reconciliation begun in one district are continued to conclusion in another district if there is a move in the midst of such a process.

Difficulties that occur between districts are handled by the appropriate bodies in each of the districts, with the District Boards as the final authority in each district. Unresolved issues between districts can be taken to the Standing Committee of Annual Conference, since districts are accountable to Annual Conference.

B. District and Minister

1. *Relationships.* In the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference places authority for calling, certifying, and caring for its set-apart ministry in each District Board. District Ministry Commissions approve the granting of licenses on behalf of the boards, while the

boards approve ordinations on the recommendations of their ministry commissions. While licenses are primarily internal, between the districts and their congregations, ordinations are held by districts on behalf of the whole church.

Districts have the responsibility to support and encourage ministers who are members in their congregations. At the same time, concern for the welfare of congregations is kept in creative tension with concern for the welfare and growth of ministers. The health of the district is enhanced through these relationships.

Ministers, by their service to and support for the church, participate in the life of the district. They find mutual encouragement in ministry activities in the district and participate in the formal activities of the district in keeping with their time constraints and the call of the church to do so.

2. *Sustaining Relationships.* Districts carry out their responsibility for set-apart ministers through regular structures of accountability. In the case of licensed ministers, such accountability is an annual matter resulting in (a) an ordination; (b) a renewed license; or (c) a termination of the license. In the case of ordained ministers, districts use a five-year expiration-of-ordination card as a reminder for periodic review of ordination status. At any time within these five-year cycles, ordinations can be evaluated as well.

For ordained persons not in pastoral ministries, the following are assumed: (a) the minister participates actively in a Church of the Brethren congregation; (b) the minister supports the practices and teachings of the Church of the Brethren; (c) the minister has a call to his or her ministry and is supported in it by the congregation; and (d) the minister follows the regular ministerial report and accountability procedures.

Districts maintain an accurate file and a public roll for all licensed and ordained ministers who hold membership in their congregations. The file and roll include current address, congregational membership, church involvement, and ministry classification. The minister is responsible for providing the district office with new information, which is then entered into the file and on the roll.

Ministers who serve as pastors of congregations can look to the district to provide assistance in pastor-congregational relationships, in the placement process, in nurturing their pastoral ministry, in pastor-congregational evaluations, and in resolving problems and conflicts. The assistance is normally provided through the District Executive/Minister with the approval of the appropriate district bodies.

Districts expect the pastor to use the services of the district office and district structures. Ministers also are available to serve the district when elected to a position or asked to offer particular assistance. Ministers show their support for the church by giving their gifts to strengthen and facilitate districts as an agency of the church

Districts provide assistance to ministers in securing continuing professional education and providing support opportunities (workshops, support groups, and retreats). Ministers use district channels for securing ongoing growth and support for themselves and their families.

District Executives/Ministers, acting for districts, are advocates for ministers, provide consultative services to ministers and their families, share information about approved professional help and assistance in crisis times, and serve as pastors to ministers and their families. Ministers maintain candid and helpful relationships with District Executives/Ministers and call upon them and their district support structures as needed.

With the support of District Ministry Commissions and District Boards, the District Executive/Minister provides advocacy for pastors and congregations or other employing groups concerning fair employment and maintains current information on employment options, especially pastoral openings.

3. *Difficulties in Relationships.* One guiding principle for healing broken relationships is that efforts for reconciliation begin as close to the source or cause of the brokenness as possible. Difficulties between pastor and congregation are resolved there if at all possible.

The District Executive/Minister, as staff person for district bodies, serves as an advocate for both pastor and congregation. When the advocacy role is complicated by conflict with them, District Executives/Ministers ask other persons to serve in that role or call upon other appropriate district organizations. The executive committee is both the supervising body for the District Executive/Minister and the deliberative and recommending body for the District Board in the case of unresolved local brokenness. The discipleship and reconciliation committee is a special long-term district body that can be called on by local parties for resolving local conflicts. It too is reportable to the District Board. District Ministry Commissions are asked to consider difficulties that emerge primarily with the set-apart ministers.

All ministers, and especially pastors of congregations, are not only accountable to the district for their authority for ministry, but are also responsible for using these district bodies, beginning with the District Executives/Ministers, in handling problems relating to their ministry.

When difficulties arise with particular ministers, the District Board through its Ministry Commission shall be in direct communication with persons to request a hearing on the presenting issues. Such presenting issues include the repeated failure of a minister to respond to requests to provide data when others feel there is a neglect of ministerial duties; a pattern of non-participation in national and district events (e.g., Annual Conference, district conference, ministers' retreats); other examples of disregard for corporate nurture events, defiance of authority or disloyalty. If, in a hearing, denominational disinterest, antagonism, and/or disloyalty are determined and/or the unity of a congregation is judged to be in jeopardy, the commission will counsel the pastor to terminate service in the congregation. If the counsel is refused, the commission will call for a hearing with the executive committee of the congregation, at which time the data will be shared and the commission's judgment tested. The commission may also recommend that the District Board terminate the ordination or the license of the person. When the District Executive/Minister and/or the District Ministry Commission senses that a broader perspective on concerns involving a minister is needed, when a

communication is difficult or cut off, or when greater objectivity is required, the district's discipleship and reconciliation committee shall be invited to function. The executive committee of the District Board may also serve in such capacity. Standing Committee of Annual Conference shall be invited to adjudicate in cases that do not respond to other mediation efforts.

Ministers who believe they were not well served by the District Executive/Minister can appeal to the executive committee of the District Board or to the board itself. If the minister feels that district assistance has been unsatisfactory, he or she has the right of appeal to Standing Committee of Annual Conference.

C. District and Congregation

1. *Relationships.* The Church of the Brethren has traditionally maintained a strong conviction that congregations are bound to one another in Christ. "The adjoining church" and the emerging role of the area "elder" were early indications of such covenantal relationships. This belief in connectedness resulted in the formation and function of districts, and it continues to be lived out in Church of the Brethren polity at the present time. District organizations, elected leaders, and staff seek to enable and maintain the set-apart ministers under the authority and support of Annual Conference.

Congregations, in turn, depend on districts to provide assistance in calling pastors, in establishing and maintaining healthy pastor-congregational relationships, and in mediating problems that develop in those relationships.

2. *Sustaining Relationships.* Districts plan and carry out programs that benefit, augment, and facilitate congregational ministries.

Congregations have a key role in calling persons to the set-apart ministry and recommending them to the district. In that calling role, congregations have the responsibility to call gifted individuals who can help bring wholeness and vitality to the whole church.

While congregations call and recommend persons for ministry, they can expect active District Boards and ministry commissions to interview, approve, counsel, care for, discipline, and oversee the set-apart ministry.

Congregations also call and employ ministers to serve as pastors, recognizing the distinction between the pastors who serve them and the pastors' authority for ministry which is under the care of the district.

A congregation that wishes to call as pastor one who is not actively ordained in the Church of the Brethren secures the approval of the District Board for that minister before a vote is taken.

The District Executive/Minister, as staff for the district, is often the initial contact between a congregation with a request or need and the district. The District Executive/Minister will pass along requests for assistance to appropriate district bodies. Congregations who wish to maintain healthy pastor-congregational relationships call on the district to provide counsel and assistance, usually through the District Executive/Minister.

3. *Difficulties in Relationships.* The District Ministry Commission and District Board can approve or deny a license or an ordination for one who is recommended by a congregation, if the district judges that the candidate is not suitable for the set-apart ministry.

In the case of a disagreement between a congregation and the District Board regarding the status of ordination for a minister, the district's judgment prevails. The congregation may appeal that decision to the District Board or, if necessary, to Standing Committee of Annual Conference.

When a congregation experiences conflict in its relationship with the pastor, it seeks the aid of the district through the District Executive/Minister. The District Executive/Minister may call on other bodies within the district, especially the discipleship and reconciliation committee, to help bring resolution and healing.

D. Congregation and Minister

1. *Relationships.* Ministers are called to serve the church as spiritual and administrative leaders. Whether they serve as pastors of congregations or hold membership in a congregation and serve in a ministry nearby, ministers are charged to relate to those whom they serve as prophets, pastors, and servants among servants of Christ.

Congregations have a key role in calling persons to the set-apart ministry and recommending them to the district. In that calling role, congregations have the responsibility to call gifted individuals who can help bring wholeness and vitality to the whole church.

While congregations call and recommend persons for ministry, they can expect active District Boards and District Ministry Commissions to interview, approve, counsel, care for, discipline, and oversee the set-apart ministry.

Congregations have continuing relationships with all ministers who hold membership in them. The congregations, through their executive committees (ministry commissions) nurture, support, and hold in accountability all those whom the church has called into set-apart ministry. But the relationships with those ministers who are called to serve congregations as pastors are special and warrant special care and nurture. Therefore, the comments in the next two sections refer to pastor-congregational relationships.

2. *Sustaining Relationships.* The executive committee of the local church board or another designated commission/committee serves as a pastoral relations committee. That committee has the authority to appoint a subcommittee to serve as a supportive group to the pastor and a listening group to members of the congregation.

Pastors relate to members of the congregations as colleagues in the work of ministry. Mutuality in undertaking the defined responsibilities between pastor and lay persons is basic.

Pastors use their special leadership role to build unity and promote harmony and effective service. They have a special responsibility for ministry with and to all persons in the congregation, even when diverse beliefs pose a challenge to such ministry. A common commitment to feed the flock and equip the servants of Christ for ministry prevails.

Both pastors and congregations follow the denomination's pastoral placement procedures, relying on the District Executive/Minister for counseling and assistance. Pastors and congregations enter into contractual and covenantal agreements with each other. They understand that the pastors are called to be spiritual, administrative, shepherding, and facilitative leaders who use their gifts on behalf of the church to help all people develop in spiritual maturity and active leadership.

Pastor-congregation agreements vary, but all include a fair salary, which reflects consideration of the recommended salary scale; either an adequate parsonage or a sufficient housing allowance; a travel allowance; hospitalization insurance; and pension.

Pastors nurture close personal relations with family and friends, keeping sabbath and renewal time for themselves and setting examples for congregational members. Congregations encourage their pastors continually to grow spiritually by providing funds, time, and strong support for participation in professional growth opportunities.

Congregations assist pastors in their ministry to the entire congregation by refraining from asking former pastors to return to provide pastoral services (e.g., officiating at weddings and funerals).

Congregations also assist pastors when they do not ask pastors to be involved in "factions" or expect them to be "hired hands" for the congregations.

Pastors keep schedules faithfully, meet commitments promptly, and maintain wholesome and helpful working relationships with boards and committees/groups. They seek to support and enhance the congregation's place in the community. Financial affairs are conducted honestly and bills are paid promptly. Lifestyles are exemplary and above reproach.

Congregations and pastors help one another when there are clear expectations, and this is especially so for congregations who have called several people to serve in staff relationships. Capable, functioning, executive committees, pastoral job descriptions (or equally clear and mutually agreeable understandings), clean lines of accountability, annual evaluations of pastors and congregations, and open communication are ingredients of healthy pastor-congregational relationships.

3. *Difficulties in Relationships.* The pastor-congregation agreement assumes a relationship of trust. In a termination of that agreement, the pastor and family experience immediate losses. Consequently, Annual Conference has approved a three-month minimum support for the pastoral family in the case of termination. Annual Conference has also supported a sick-leave policy over the lifetime of the pastor in the case of illness and has approved a Ministry Assistance Fund to assist pastoral families through times of crisis.

If the pastor has been negligent in pastoral responsibilities or unethical in personal or professional behavior, and has been deemed so by both official congregational and district bodies, the covenant between pastor and congregation is considered to be broken. Where a termination follows, the congregation negotiates the terminating terms of agreement with the pastor in consultation with district authorities, normally the District Executive/Minister.

Conflict between pastors and congregations is a normal part of their relationship. Recognizing that fact and facing conflict as soon as possible allows healthy interaction to continue. An active executive committee (ministry committee) in the congregation and rapport between it and the pastor enable the facing of differences and difficulties before they become unmanageable. The use of third-party assistance (usually a District Executive/Minister) is recommended, especially as differences escalate.

The ultimate goal in minister-congregation difficulties is the restoration of healthy relationships, or if that is not possible, common assent in terminating relationships with the least amount of dissension or alienation.

E. Minister to Minister

1. *Relationships.* Ministers serving the Church of Jesus Christ relate to one another as colleagues and are accountable to one another. They serve the same Christ and seek to make effective the ministry carried forward in Christ's name. They encourage and strengthen each other in their respective ministries. All ministers (and especially pastors) in the Church of the Brethren are expected to model such collegiality.

2. *Sustaining Relationships.* Ministers are encouraged to share together and challenge each other as colleagues in support groups and retreats. If such support structures are not available, ministers are urged to form them. Ministers are encouraged to participate in support/accountability groups freely and responsibly, keeping sharing confidential and privileged.

Ministers show mutual respect for each other, even though life-styles may differ. They always hold the office and the calling in high esteem.

The performance of ministerial functions in another pastor's parish is considered unethical and is to be avoided. Rare and special circumstances may be negotiated between ministers (especially pastors), always in the spirit of good will and understanding.

When changes in pastoral leadership occur, the pastors involved shall evidence a cooperative and gracious spirit in the transfer of responsibility; each pastor shall respect the integrity and the special gifts of the other and avoid competitiveness. Each shall help the congregation to understand the new relationship and shall urge the transfer of loyalty and support to the new leadership so that the church can move forward.

When serving in a multiple staff situation, pastors shall respect the gifts, work style, and work assignments of each other. They shall relate in cooperative, mutually supportive ways, encouraging each other in their ministry.

3. *Difficulties in Relationships.* Ministers who do not relate to other ministers in mutually supportive ways shall be held accountable by their colleagues. If appeals are ignored, the concern shall be referred to the District Ministry Commission.

Involvement of a minister in the ministerial services (pastoral counseling, performing weddings, conducting funerals, etc.) in a former parish shall be brought to the attention of the District Ministry Commission. If the minister is now serving in a different district, the

District Executive/Minister of that district shall be requested to counsel that such service be discontinued.

Ministers who are in conflict with one another are urged to resolve their differences. Mediation/reconciliation procedures shall be sought out and used. The Discipleship and Reconciliation Committee shall be activated as deemed necessary.

Repeated public criticism of one minister by another shall be called to the attention of the appropriate district officials, and the offending minister shall be called to accountability.

V. CONCLUSION

Believing that the work of ministry belongs to the whole church, we affirm the interrelatedness of our calling as Christians. The church is a community of faith, where each member is commissioned to use the gifts that the Spirit grants for building up the body of Christ. As members one of another, all are bound together in a network of relationships based upon mutual trust and accountability.

As individuals are acknowledged to possess the Spirit's gifts for service in the set-apart ministry, the church needs to develop and interpret clear understandings that will guide and undergird relationships related to set-apart ministry. The church must also nurture, assess, correct, and build up relationships so that the whole body is strengthened and enhanced.

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