

CONGREGATIONAL

STAFF SUPPORT (MUTUAL MINISTRY) COMMITTEE

In order to help each congregation of the Western Iowa Synod function effectively, the Board for Ministry strongly recommends that each congregation form a Staff Support Committee (or a similar such committee that will carry out its function). According to the model constitution for congregations of the ELCA, this committee should be composed of six persons who are appointed for two year terms, three each on alternating years. Appointments are made by the president of the congregation together with the pastor. However, it may be that size and method of appointment may vary from congregation to congregation.

The purpose of the Staff Support Committee is to affirm and strengthen the mission efforts of the congregation and the ministry which is performed by the staff. The committee listens to both staff members and congregational members so that there can be a clarifying of expectations, open communication, and a review of staff performance. The committee also serves to stimulate support of staff through prayer and caring by congregational members.

Functions and benefits of a Staff Support Committee include the following:

- Helps develop open communication about expectations, attitudes and concerns within the congregation, the community and the staff.

- Identifies early warning signs of misunderstandings and takes action to diffuse certain problem situations before they get out of hand.

- Becomes the “listening post” for the pastor and other staff members and the people of the congregation.

- Serves as a group with whom the pastor and other staff members can test new ideas and share confidential matters.

- Can conduct annual reviews and provide affirmations of staff members.

- Can plan strategies to improve skills of staff members or help develop plans within the congregation to solve problem situations.

- Can assess each year the working conditions, compensation, housing, and other benefits provided for the pastor and other staff members.

Other benefits will also develop as the committee helps build a sense of partnership between staff and congregation in the carrying out of ministry for the church as an expression of our Christian faith.

It is important that congregations establish Staff Support Committees as part of their normal programming and not wait until there is a time of crisis in the congregation with misunderstandings and hurt feelings. The committee should be understood as a significant element in the congregation’s life with regular reports to both the council and the

congregation, although these reports will, of course, not include confidential matters.

For more information about Staff Support Committees and their functioning, it is suggested that each congregation secure from the Division for Ministry of the ELCA a copy of the booklet, Staff Support Committee. It can be ordered from the Division for Ministry, ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 606314195. The Board for Ministry of the Western Iowa Synod stands ready to provide help to conferences or individual congregations who may want assistance in the formation of Staff Support Committees. The staff and congregational assessment materials which follow are intended to help the Staff Support Committee in its functioning.