

**Pastoral/Congregational Review
Based in the Appreciative Way
Reviews for multiple staff ministry teams
(Mennonite Church Eastern Canada)**

DRAFT 4
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Introduction

Many congregations have come to value the Appreciative Way as a method of evaluating their pastors **individually**. What follows are several reasons why a second model is presented, as a way to evaluate **pastoral teams** using the Appreciative Way.

- Congregations may develop a fatigue factor if several pastoral reviews happen consecutively. The second or third pastor(s) to be evaluated may not get the full benefits of a review.
- There is an inherent synergy (how the parts work together in a greater whole) which is missing if their ministry is not reviewed as part of the team.
- Any pastoral review needs to bring the mission and vision of the congregation into the review process – Who are we? What are we called to do? To these and related questions we add the question: How does the **pastoral team** help us fulfill this calling?
- A team review helps to test the model of ministry in the congregation and helps pastors and congregation to work together toward common goals.
- Team reviews help pastoral teams grow, improve their function as a team, and improve the function of individual pastors within the team setting (i.e. become better “team players”).

I. Aspects to consider as you begin the process

In order for team reviews to function well, the following understandings should be in place:

1. The essential prior condition is that there needs to be a **team model** in place, that pastors understand themselves to be working together as a team, as opposed to each pastor working independently of the other. Where there is a lead minister (senior pastor) to whom the other pastors are clearly responsible, a team review is probably not the desired model.
2. Be clear about the areas in which you review the team as a whole, or where you will focus on individual members of the team. Some components could be for the team together, some for each team member individually. A clear understanding of their respective job descriptions is important. For example, do they overlap, or are they quite distinct?
3. What are your expectations vis a vis the contracts of the various pastors being reviewed? Is this a review intended to inform future contract renewal? Are the contracts of the team concurrent, or at different stages? (see II , 3 below)

4. How will the pastors be involved in the review process?
 - a. There may be separate focus groups for each pastor, as well as groups with focus on the pastoral team. A pastor may be present in some but not all of the focus groups set up to evaluate his or her own ministry. This allows congregants to choose whether they wish to speak in front of their pastor.
 - b. Similarly, the pastoral team can attend some, but not all, of the focus groups dedicated to reviewing them as a team. [see also c below]
 - c. In the spirit of peer review, it may be helpful to provide private opportunities for individual pastors to respond to appreciative questions about the ministry of their colleagues, and to comment on where they believe the team functions effectively and where team functioning may be enhanced. Pastors should never speak of these matters in public focus groups, but only in private settings arranged by the Review Team. This input needs sensitive interpretation and needs to be considered together with other data received.
5. What element of congregational evaluation and visioning do you want to address in this review?
6. Are you aware of any underlying issues that may surface to affect the outcome of this review? How have these been addressed? Does your church have a mechanism for addressing known ongoing issues between team members?

II. Several considerations to keep in mind as you shape team reviews.

1. In some situations it may be helpful to have a specially-formed focus group for people “close in,” (who work with pastors on boards or committees) and for the Review Team to carefully compare data received from that source with data coming from people who see only the “public” face of the person/team.
2. If team members are being reviewed together or concurrently, it is important to have an overall review team – perhaps a bit larger than usual – so it can divide into sub-groups for each pastor’s review.
3. The review team needs to be aware of what they are looking for in reviewing:
 - a team that has been together for 12-18 months (i.e. what is going well, and what mid-course corrections may need to be made?)
 - a team nearing the end of a 2nd or 3rd term (i.e. is this team able to support well/give leadership to the mission/ministry of this congregation going forward?)
 - a team in which one member is leaving (i.e. what is needed to complement remaining team members in supporting the mission/ministry of the congregation going forward?)

4. The nature of your pastoral team will determine how you shape the review process. Pastors on a team may have a) overlapping responsibilities as well as individual specified areas of ministry. Or, b) they may all have clearly specified and distinct areas of ministry (e.g. Youth Minister, Christian Education Minister).
The latter may suggest the need for at least one focus group made up of those who are more “close in” to the pastor’s work in each ministry area. (see #1 above)

III. Questions for focus groups reviewing multiple staff pastoral team.

Document D7 lists the questions used in Appreciative Way review of individual pastors. Use these questions, or variations of them, and add the following for **team reviews**:

Questions for all focus groups to review the team (from their “public” viewpoint):

1. Given your knowledge of our pastoral team’s gifts and our congregation’s current vision and expectations, in what ways have you seen our pastors working together effectively as a team?
2. How might we help the pastoral team work even more effectively as a team?

Questions to be used only for close-in groups (those who work with the pastors on boards or committees):

1. As you observe your pastors working together, what might enhance team functioning?
2. As you understand their respective gifts and interests, what might be some areas where job descriptions could be modified to utilize the best of what each pastor has to offer in the context of their team ministry?
3. Comment on the current balance between the leadership and ministry our pastoral team provides and the leadership and ministry of lay leaders and congregants. What adjustments, if any, might be made to that balance to enhance our ministry and mission as a congregation?