

**ORIENTATION FOR STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

Because of my experience with Mutual Ministry Committee, beginning at the time of the formation of the ELCA in 1988, Pastor Tim has requested that I take the lead in this effort. Since I am retired and am no longer formally engaged in the practice of pastoral care, I can now consider myself as a consultant. I am pleased to be your consultant.

I am here with you tonight because Spirit of Joy is getting ready to initiate an extremely important and valuable new element to its congregational life. And, that is a Mutual Ministry Committee.

This committee's purpose is to set in motion and practice mutual ministry. This committee will initially be faced with a big stereotype. The pastor is the called leader of the congregation. Day after day he is expected to care for others. Day after day through calling, meetings writing, teaching, planning, preaching, speaking, laughing, and crying --- he cares for others. Day after day he empties himself for the sake of the Gospel.

God has entrusted the Gospel to earthen vessels --- people like you and me. As earthen vessels, Christians can both empty themselves for others --- and they can be filled from others.

There comes a time for mutual ministry. A time to care for him who is our pastor --- our servant leader.

The Mutual Ministry Committee, unique from other committees and/or task forces, is devoted to taking time for what Martin Luther called "mutual conversation and consolation among Christians."

Why create and set in motion another committee? Because of the evidence --- clergy burnout, broken clergy marriages, bickering congregations. These are symptoms --- symptoms of busy people who do not, and in many cases, cannot set aside time for the mutual conversation and consolation called for by Luther. Or, said differently, our busy schedules cry out for mutual ministry.

Why another committee? Because God has entrusted the Gospel to earthen vessels, and vessels like you and me require some intentional care: some renewing, some refreshment in the midst of busy times.

Practically speaking: we don't want to see Pastor Tim burn out and suffer any of the side effects that could come about as a result. We don't want to sit by and watch our congregation become a dysfunctional organization. Conversation about mutual care and ministry for each other as congregation members can prevent many mishaps before they happen.

Pastor Tim is a vibrant, capable, talented, and energetic pastor. Spirit of Joy is a vibrant, exciting congregation open for ministry. To keep both components functioning effectively --- it is time for a Mutual Ministry Committee.

## A LOOK AT THE MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The MMC is made up of 6 persons, based on the size of our congregation. The terms are two years, with staggering terms. Therefore, at the outset, three are appointed for a one year term, and three are appointed for a two year term. Thereafter, there will always be new persons coming on, and experienced persons to keep the process moving. The committee appointees are ratified by the Steering Committee.

The Committee members are appointed by the pastor and the chair person of the Steering Committee. I will provide the necessary training for the committee personnel.

Everything that goes on in the Mutual Ministry Committee meetings is confidential. The Committee does not meet unless the pastor is present.

And yet, the Mutual Ministry Committee must have a clear understanding about accountability and reporting.

a) to the Steering Committee

The Mutual Ministry Committee does not set policy or salary. If and when any recommendations are developed, these get forwarded to the Steering Committee.

b) to one another

Committee members must remember that they are accountable to one another for maintaining discretion and/or confidentiality. Committee members who are accountable to one another form a trust bond with each other. This includes the pastor. This is so very important because personal information will be shared during any or all meetings. This commitment and understanding of confidentiality is essential. From time to time certain information may be shared during a meeting that cannot be shared outside the group. An important part of mutual ministry is how we handle sensitive information.

Reports to the Steering Committee or the annual congregation meeting summarizes the work of the Mutual Ministry Committee, and states formal recommendations, but must not disclose confidential items or detailed background information when the matters are personal. Discretion is an important guide.

c) to the congregation

Each annual meeting of the congregation should receive a report of the work of the Mutual Ministry Committee during the past year, and any kind of projection that can be given for the coming year. New priorities that may have been arrived at for the pastor and/or congregational ministries would be valuable information to share with the entire membership.

## RESULTS OF THE EFFORTS OF THE MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE.

1) The pastor's skills and talents will be enhanced. This will come as the pastor feels that he has support, and is able to feel secure in that support.

2) The caring that takes place in the Mutual Ministry Committee will serve as a model for the congregation, as a whole. The practice of mutual ministry with each other will be planted and will grow.

3) Spirit of Joy's mission efforts will be strengthened, and in all probability, multiply.

#### STEERING COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS

1. Ratify the selection of committee members made by the pastor and chair person of the Steering Committee when the time comes. I anticipate that with this start, the next steps in the process will happen very soon; i.e. committee member appointments, training of committee members, the start of committee work.

2. Write a job description for Mutual Ministry Committee members.  
I have some guidelines when you get ready for this.

**TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.**