



Mutual Ministry Guide

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

**Approved by the
ELCIC's National Church Council**

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Mutual Ministry Guide

*Therefore encourage one another
and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.*

~ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Introduction

This guide is a starting place for congregational leaders and members to deepen ministry with one another. As God's people, we seek to love each other through mutual affirmation, thereby providing a strong foundation from which we may together serve God.

Some congregations and faith communities have found a Mutual Ministry Team (MMT) to be a helpful process for nurturing good and healthy relationships.

This guide has been prepared by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) at the request of the National Church Council. It is available for use across the ELCIC.

In the ELCIC, synods have primary responsibility for relating to congregations and are available to support congregations in all aspects of ministry, including nurturing healthy relationships, evaluation, addressing challenges and seeking growth and renewal.

The purpose of this guide is:

1. To help congregations to nurture good and healthy mutual relationships between the ministries of the rostered minister¹ and the church leadership.
2. To provide guidelines to facilitate intentional and regular evaluations of congregational ministries, the staff and rostered minister based on their church mission, vision, and goals within the context of their individual and unique settings.
3. To seek together opportunities for growth and renewal.

¹ There are two types of public rostered ministers in the ELCIC:

1. Pastors are ordained to a public ministry of Word and Sacrament.
2. Diaconal Ministers are consecrated to a public ministry of Word and Service.

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Nurturing Good and Healthy Relationships

1. The Role of a Mutual Ministry Team (MMT):

- a. To work with the congregational council/board to ensure clear and realistic expectations are developed for council/board members, rostered ministers, congregational ministries and staff.
- b. To support effective communication among the congregation, rostered ministers and staff.
- c. To act as a confidential sounding board and support team for rostered ministers and staff.
- d. To review and provide timely compensation recommendations to the congregational council/board for rostered ministers and staff if there is no other personnel team in place.
- e. To work towards conflict resolution as it arises and involves the rostered minister or other staff members.

2. Getting Started

- a. The congregational council/board and rostered minister(s) work together to form the MMT and in selecting members and orientation. The Mutual Ministry Team will report directly to the congregational council/board to which it is accountable. The Team can make recommendations to the congregational council/board.
- b. A team may be formed anytime; however the ideal time to begin is about six months after a new rostered minister has arrived. It is not wise to initiate the MMT during vacancy, conflict or upheaval.
- c. Best practices demonstrate that teams of 3 to 4 members function well.
- d. Provide each member with this guide and other information that is helpful to your work. Such information may include a congregational council/board meeting schedule, constitution and bylaws, policies, MMT budget, letter of call, and employment agreement. The minutes of the Mutual Ministry Team are taken and kept in such a manner that confidentiality is not compromised.
- e. Allow time for members to become familiar with this guide in advance. Invest in team building not only in the beginning but throughout their term. A strong team needs to be nourished in order to work well together.
- f. For rostered leaders involved in the First Call Process, the MMT is wise to consider how their processes will compliment each other.

3. Members of a Mutual Ministry Team:

Considering the potentially sensitive nature of this work, it is important to seek out members with gifts that support this ministry. Consider people who:

- a. are respected members of the congregation,
- b. reflect the diversity of the congregation,
- c. are able to work as a team,
- d. are emotionally and spiritually mature,
- e. are able to think reflectively,
- f. are able to meet regularly,
- g. are able to maintain confidentiality.²

In a shared ministry context, it is important that the MMT has fair representation from each congregation.

In forming a MMT you might consider, together with the congregational council/board, a member or members from the Call Committee as these are individuals the rostered leader will have met and established a relationship.

4. Terms of Service:

Defining terms of service for MMT members provides the opportunity to employ individual gifts and abilities without overusing members.

Consider a minimum term of three years. This allows sufficient time for experience and trust to develop. Staggering the terms provides continuity. Limiting the number of terms prevents burnout, and shares and develops leadership.

Evaluations

1. Purpose

Ministry evaluation is a tool that may be used by the whole congregation to reflect on their work together. Part of caring is to check in with one another, rather than checking up on each other. The purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to improve.

Therefore, ministry evaluation is effective when safe space is created in which we may be vulnerable and open. As we undertake candid conversation, relationships are strengthened, mutual understanding is achieved, and there is growth in our trust and understanding of God among us.

² Confidentiality –Confidentiality means that information that may undermine the well-being of an individual or a community is not disclosed to unauthorized audience. Secrecy, on the other hand, is opposite to transparency. It is destructive and divisive.

Evaluation based on opinion or anecdotal comments undermines the spirit of love and care we are called to extend toward one another. Rostered ministers, staff and leadership should not be evaluated on matters that they haven't been explicitly asked to do. Also, an effective process will include an evaluation of the work of the congregation.

We are able to celebrate the Spirit moving among us through mutual affirmation. Despite our imperfections, we learn to be appreciative of the work each person is able to contribute.

2. Best Practices for Evaluation:

a. Regularity.

Growth and renewal are best realized with recurrent evaluations building trust among participants. With regularity, reaction to circumstances of the day is avoided. The schedule and process will need to reflect your local context. Quarterly, biannual, annual or biennial timeframes are possibilities.

b. Corporately.

Understanding that we are one body, evaluation necessarily includes the ministry of both congregation and leadership. It is a reflection of the many persons and resources that contribute to the work of ministry and how the contributions of many are intricately woven together.

c. Intentional Format.

The MMT provides the format, leadership and safe space for evaluations.

Clear expectations provide a helpful foundation for evaluative work.

- i. Evaluation of the congregation, leadership/council/board:
 1. Reflect on your missional focus with questions such as:
 - How did we experience God among us this year?
 - What new learnings about God were uncovered by our ministry together?
 2. Consider expectations/goals described in documents you may already have such as a strategic plan, governance documents, constitution, or bylaws.
 3. Contemplation on simple questions serves to encourage dialogue and resolution.
 - E.g.: Does this expectation/goal/description still meet our objectives?
 - In what ways are we meeting or need to improve on this expectation/goal/description?
 - What new expectation/goal/description would we like to make?

- ii. Evaluation of Rostered Minister/Individual:
 1. Consider expectations/goals described in documents you may already have such as Letter of Call, Employment agreement, contract, strategic plan. Personal goals of the individual may also be used if previously stated.
 2. Consider simple questions that foster dialogue and mutual accountability, such as:
 - a. What in your work/ministry is most life-giving for you?
 - b. Where is your growing edge in this position?
 - c. What is the least satisfying or most difficult part of this job description for you?
 - d. In what ways can we assist in making your work/ministry more fulfilling?The sample questions above for “Evaluation of the congregation, leadership/ council/board” may provide additional ideas for questions.
 3. Evaluation is part of a ministry of care for one another seeking mutual benefit. Minimum compensation guidelines are provided by each synod and should be used in making salary recommendations to the council/board. Consideration for compensation above recommended guidelines may be made for rostered ministers and staff whose work or scope of work is beyond normal expectations. (e.g., working in more than one language, supervising multiple staff or multiple sites, exemplary overall performance) See below, “Outcomes of Evaluation/ Reviewing Compensation.”

Opportunities for Growth and Renewal

1. Suggested meetings topics

- a. January/February
 - Review the congregational and/or council goals, emphases and priorities for the coming year. Review staff job descriptions and/or use of time records for the past year; and consider whether any changes are required. Review and discuss with a rostered leader or staff person their specific goals and priorities for the coming year aligned with the congregation’s/ council’s/board’s priorities.
 - Help each staff member plan for Continuing Education.
 - Plan for vacation supply for rostered ministers and staff.
- b. May/June
 - Discuss how well the congregation is sharing leadership and tasks; and consider whether any changes are required. Review and discuss rostered minister’s attendance at committees and organizations, both inside and outside the congregation. (e.g., Is attendance expected at the meetings of all parish committees and/or auxiliaries? What is the expected participation in community organizations and the Church-at-large?)
 - Discuss joys, issues, and stresses of the rostered minister, staff and the congregation.
 - Discuss each staff member’s progress toward meeting their goals and priorities and what support is required.

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- c. October/November
 - Review parsonage/housing and office space arrangements.
 - Review the congregation's/council's/board's goals, the rostered minister's/staff member's goals and the work of the Mutual Ministry Team during the past year.
 - Discuss compensation and benefits.
 - Consider appropriate recognition for the past year's work of the professional staff.
 - Make proposals for next year's budget and submit recommendations to the congregational council/board.
- d. December
 - Prepare a report for the annual congregational meeting and submit to the congregational council/board.

2. Outcomes of Evaluation:

Evaluation looks toward the future and how relationships and understanding may be improved among us.

a. Reporting:

The team reports to the congregational council/board the completion of the evaluation and shares information that is mutually agreed upon to share.

b. Goals and expectations:

Participants may mutually agree to goals or expectations for the next period.

c. Continuing Education:

The ELCIC provides a national Continuing Education Plan (CEP) to encourage and support life-long learning among rostered and non-rostered/lay employees.

www.elcic.ca/Leadership/For-Ministers/Continuing-Education-Plan.cfm

The recommended guideline is that members are expected to engage in at least 90 hours of continuing education over each three-year period. At least once per year, the ELCIC provides a statement to each CEP member with the following details on their individual account for the last three years: a detailed record of education events with corresponding hours reported and funds dispersed. The congregation receives a copy of the statement.

Participants may mutually agree to areas/topics for continuing education. Identify continuing education possibilities in light of:

- concerns and ministry goals of the rostered minister/staff member
- concerns and mission goals of the congregation
- concerns and mission goals of the synod and ELCIC

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Enable the rostered minister/staff member to participate in continuing education by:

- mutual commitment of time and money
- shared evaluation and planning

d. Reviewing Compensation

One role that a church council/board might assign to a Mutual Ministry Team is *to review and provide timely compensation recommendations to the congregational council/board for rostered ministers and staff if there is no other Personnel Team in place.* (see page 4 above) It is good to see this role in light of the purpose of nurturing good and healthy mutual relationships. It is useful for Mutual Ministry Teams and rostered leaders to keep in mind that compensation is intended to support employees in making a living and to provide fair compensation for work done.

Compensation for Rostered employees has several components. Some aspects of the relationship between a congregation and its rostered leader are guided by an *Employment Agreement*. <http://elcic.ca/Leadership/EmploymentAgreementsAndLettersOfCall.cfm>

When reviewing a rostered minister's salary, the mutual ministry team begins by consulting the minimum salary schedule as set by their Synod.

In September 2016, the National Church Council approved harmonized compensation guidelines for use across the ELCIC. Each Synod prepares, approves and updates a salary scale/grid for the employees of that Synod. Compensation relating to a clergy residence may be integrated into the scale/grid or determined separately as per each respective Synod policy. Additional information can be found on the ELCIC Group Services Inc. website: www.elcicgsi.ca/?page_id=1912

An amount in addition to the base salary figure may be considered to affirm the rostered minister's ministry. Other factors to take into account include additional theological education, or other relevant experience, skills or responsibilities.

The final salary, including the base plus additional amounts, should be approved by the congregational council/board.

3. Working through challenges

Even in the healthiest congregation, there are times when conflicts arise. Tension in the life of the church is normal. Leaders can enhance the health of a congregation by their own behaviour. In times of conflict it is essential that we focus on our own behavior: stay calm, listen carefully, and don't get triangulated. The MMT can help in resolving conflicts by providing a safe, neutral space to discuss issues that cause tension. Make sure that the members of your congregation know the procedure of complaints and concerns. Depending on the intensity of the challenges, recognize the value of asking for help, from the congregational council/board, synod office or other resources

Note: in situations where sexual harassment or abuse is reported/alleged, the ELCIC has a *Policy and Operating Guidelines of the ELCIC regarding Sexual Harassment by its Clergy or Professional Lay Workers*. <http://www.elcic.ca/docs/harassment.pdf> Recognizing the seriousness of such these situations, congregational leaders are obliged to follow the operating guidelines in these circumstances.

4. Finding a Healthy Voice

It can be difficult to find our voice, especially when we are feeling hurt, dissatisfied or concerned. When we feel anxious, or sense that others are feeling anxious, it can be more difficult. At such times, it is tempting to use unhealthy communication, such as gossip, avoidance, anonymous complaints or personal verbal attacks. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to trust in one another's good will and love as we seek understanding, forgiveness, and growth.

As we strive to be a healthy faith community, it is wise to consider how we might address concerns and how we might communicate when under stress. The MMT may play an important role in encouraging direct sharing and healthy communication.

Some principles to keep in mind between those involved.

- a. All members affirm their right to express their opinions about the life and ministry of the congregation.
- b. Members may share their concerns, thoughts, and opinions directly with the rostered minister(s), church council/board, MMT, commissions, and at congregational meetings.
- c. When opinions or concerns are directed to the MMT, the MMT may assist as active listeners, inviting the parties concerned to seek mutual understanding and as necessary, forgiveness and resolution. For example, MMT members might ask, "How may I help you bring this forward?"
- d. In some cases, opinions or concerns expressed to the congregational council/board might be referred to the MMT.
- e. Keep in mind the difference between *anonymity* and *confidentiality*. In this context, *anonymity* means asking someone else to deal with your concern. *Confidentiality* means directly sharing your concern with MMT or council/board, but not having your name publically associated with a particular concern. Generally speaking, the addressing of anonymous feedback is discouraged as it inhibits our mutual call to accountability, love and reconciliation. For additional reflection on this matter, *Anonymity Guidelines* are *posted* in the Resources for Mutual Ministry. [\(create link\)](#)
- f. We are all life-long learners in finding a healthy voice, addressing concerns and effective communication. Challenges and dissatisfaction can become moments of learning.

Resources for Mutual Ministry

The following resource, sample documents, and links are available at:

www.elcic.ca/mutualministry (not a live link yet)

Periodically, additional resources may be added by the ELCIC.

Nurturing Good and Healthy Relationships

Healthy Congregations

Healthy Congregations is an interfaith organization that understands the times in which we live in. They equip leaders for challenges of thinking more clearly about families, relationships, and faith communities through the application of family systems thinking.

www.healthycongregations.com/

A Short Primer on the Mutual Ministry Committee

2010, by Beth Wagschal, Christ Lutheran Church, Peterborough, ON

Covenant of Conduct

Developed by Peter Steinke and the Healthy Congregations organization. Used with permission. This is a sample document that lifts up some matters of communication and accountability.

Evaluations

Ministry Review – Eastern Synod

ELCIC National Office Staff Self-Appraisal Form

Opportunities for Growth and Renewal

Continuing Education Plan for ELCIC

Cleaning Up Bad Communication Habits

<https://alban.org/archive/cleaning-up-bad-communication-habits/>

Anonymity Guidelines

These guidelines are based on the work of Peter Steinke and adapted for use in the ELCIC.

ELCIC Documents

Administrative Bylaws

Public Ministry in the ELCIC

Study Documents by the Committee on Faith Order and Doctrine

Standards for Rostered Leaders (Candidacy Manual)

Standards for Ordained [Pastoral] Ministers

Standards for Diaconal Ministers

Protection Policies

ELCIC Policy to Protect Children Youth and Other Vulnerable People

ELCIC Sexual Harassment Policy

Congregational Mission Profile