

Constitution

The Constitution of Conservative Mennonite Conference provides for the designation of overseers for congregations. The CMC Executive Board encourages congregations to have an overseer. The selection of an overseer is a congregational decision with approval of Executive Board. An outline of procedure of selection of overseer is given in the CMC Ministerial Manual.

Terms of assignment and accountability

The assignment of overseer is for a specified term not exceeding five years, but with a possibility of successive terms. The overseer's service should be reviewed periodically at the initiative of the senior pastor or the appointing board or committee with appropriate congregational involvement. The overseer is accountable to the CMC Executive Board in regards to his ministerial credentials and his qualifications to serve as overseer. He relates with sensitivity to the needs and expectations of the congregation he serves with his tenure of assignment and reappointment being subject to congregational decision.

Purpose

The provision of overseer is for the purpose of providing for the congregation, a ministry of helping the congregation to develop vision for life and ministry, advising the pastors and the congregation, serving as pastor to the pastors, and developing wholesome relationships within the congregation and with CMC.

General duties

The overseer relates to the congregation and its leadership with a frequency and in settings effective for the above stated purposes. He is available to the leadership and the congregation through visits in person and by other communication. He may be contacted at any time by the congregation's leadership for counsel and by members of the congregation for expression of concerns and questions. Visits and other contacts may be initiated by congregational leadership or by the overseer.

Specific duties

The specific duties of the overseer include the following:

1. Communicating through:
 - a. Being present in the congregation for at least one Sunday morning worship service per year;
 - b. Having face-to-face contact with some or all of the congregation's leadership team (pastor[s], elders, or church board) at least twice a year;
 - c. Having various forms of contact with the pastor three or four times a year (this could include phone or email contact and could also overlap with the other contacts);
2. Receiving periodic or frequent information from the congregation. This can include items such as church bulletins or newsletters and receiving regularly minutes of the congregational leadership meetings;

3. Providing leadership in congregational decisions concerning the leadership of the congregation, such as selection of pastor or member of a pastoral team, licensure or ordination, and issues or situations of tension and controversy within the congregation;
4. Developing and writing, at the beginning of each oversight term, a memo of understanding that spells out in greater detail the specifics of each of the above three points, including who (pastor, overseer, or other congregational leadership team member) initiates the above types and times of contact. The congregation is encouraged to reimburse the travel costs of the overseer. Consideration should also be given for remuneration for time given to oversight work by the overseer.
5. The congregation is expected to reimburse the travel costs of the overseer, using CMC guidelines, which state “Reimbursement of travel costs should be calculated at actual cost when economical public transportation is used or at the IRS rate for the use of a car.”
6. Congregations are also asked to reimburse overseers for time given to oversight work. This time may include time on the phone, travel, meeting with the pastor/leadership team and/or congregation, and preaching. In some cases, time may include tabulation or writing on behalf of the congregation.

In addition to the duties listed above, it is appropriate for a congregation and overseer to agree on additional specific arrangements.