

The Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba Performance Review Guidelines

1. Make sure that everyone understands the purpose of the review

The purpose of regular reviews is to gain a greater sense of how effectively the pastor is accomplishing their mandate. The review can also allow an opportunity for the pastor's "mandate" or job description to be reviewed and assessed. Is it still current? Reviews give feedback to both pastor and church leaders for even more effective ministry. A helpful review can accomplish the following:

- affirm and encourage the pastor in those things they are doing well
- pinpoint areas of ministry that need further attention
- help the pastor to set performance goals for areas that need improvement
- clarify additional resources the pastor may need to be more effective
- empower pastors to minister with more confidence and with greater joy
- enable pastors to finish well in a given congregation
- establish a long-term development plan – which may include further study or specific ministry opportunities for experiential learning

2. Do not use the review process as replacement for ongoing feedback

Cultivating regular, open and honest communication between congregational leaders and pastors can help prevent destructive performance reviews. A performance review should typically not deliver surprises to the pastor. A review is not "everyone's chance to tell the pastor things that should have been said before".

To encourage ongoing dialogue about performance issues, designate a separate committee or one specific leader (Moderator, Chair of Personnel Committee) to meet with your pastor regularly for discussions and updates.

As well, leadership team meetings can incorporate "check-in" and "check-out" times to talk about how things are going. Leadership teams can make it a regular practice to celebrate what is going well as well as to discuss what is not going as well in the pastor's life and ministry.

3. Design an objective tool for conducting the review

The review instrument used should be solely based on the current job description of the pastor being reviewed. Make sure that the job description is up to date and accurate. Use a standard set of questions for all the references you contact. Reject review questions/comments that are outside of the written job description or not based on mutually agreed upon expectations. Performance expectations, whether they originate from previous reviews or from leadership decisions, should be clearly stated and well documented. It is helpful for each reviewer to have a copy of the job description in hand when they complete the review.

A good idea is to make self-review part of the review process and to provide the pastor with an appropriate instrument for self-review. It may be helpful to include 360 feedback. Discuss this option with your pastor and include them in deciding who it would be useful to receive feedback from.

4. Make the review timely

A yearly review is standard, preferably at the same time each year. From start to finish, the entire review process should be finished within one month. More extensive reviews can be done every other year or every three years.

5. Involve the pastor in the entire review process

Before the review begins, all the elements of the review process must be understood and agreed upon by all persons affected. The process itself should never be a surprise. A written employment agreement where the details of the review process are outlined is helpful.

6. Separate ministry continuance decisions from the review process

The primary purpose of a pastoral review is not to decide whether a pastor should continue ministering in the church or not. The practice of voting a pastor “in or out of office” sounds more like we are electing a politician than like we are prayerfully discerning a spiritual leader to pastor our church. It is crucial for the church to articulate a clear process of how they “call” as well as “uncall” their pastoral staff. It seems wise to avoid coupling the pastoral review process from decisions of continuance or non-continuance. Normally, reviews should always give the employee the chance to work on areas that need improvement.

7. Present the review findings face to face and with sensitivity

Feedback from the review instruments, whether from the congregation or from leaders, needs to be handled with care. Discerning what feedback will be communicated and how it will be communicated with the pastor will in large part determine the success of the review.

Feedback summaries that validate observed behaviors are most helpful. Comments that identify individuals or isolated critical comments that are not representative of the congregation as a whole should be deleted. Constructive feedback will focus on common themes and insights that emerge from the review process.

It is very helpful for the church to involve someone who has HR experience in the review process, especially when communicating the findings of the review to the pastor. The sense of vulnerability is very high with any review. Sensitivity, experience in dealing with personnel issues, good communication skills are desirable traits for persons leading the review process.

8. Allow time (1 week) for the pastor to respond to the review

It takes time to digest the results of a review, especially when recommendations for change or improvement are being made. Immediate responses are often emotional ones. Time to consider a balanced response (written or oral) is needed. Developing growth goals based on the review will also require further work. Ideas for response:

- encourage the pastor to make comments/suggest changes to the review
- include a section on the review document for the pastor to write comments
- once the document is completed and reviewed, it should be signed by both parties (employer and employee)

9. Work with the pastor to set realistic goals as a result of the review

One of the results of a healthy review process includes setting action plans for areas that need development. Setting goals for improvement or change will be much more effective when pastor and church leaders work together. Setting Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time limited (SMART) goals, together, can drastically improve the performance of both church leaders and the pastor being reviewed. Write these goals down as part of the review process and make sure the pastor is provided with the resources needed to pursue their goals.

10. Affirm, affirm, affirm

Reviews are opportunities to for growth as well as opportunities for praise. Most pastors will not get arrogant or proud from too much affirmation! Provide specific examples of how the pastor under review has done excellent work or where God has used them. Talk about what you and the congregation appreciate about their character, their attitude or example. Encouraging and supporting development opportunities are good ways to demonstrate practically your appreciation and commitment to your pastor. This is a very important element in any performance review.

Annual reviews provide great opportunities to celebrate your pastor, adding value and meaning to their work and lives. May God bless your partnership in kingdom ministry!