

## **Pastor – Congregation Relations Group**

Being the pastor of a congregation is one of the most challenging of all leadership positions. It is different in many respects to forms of leadership which operate in contemporary corporate and organisational environments. The church too is different from other collectives of people and is perhaps more prone to conflict than other comparative groups. For these reasons some churches have adopted a Pastor – Congregation Relations Group to proactively deal with communication, conflict and change issues which will always come up within this important relationship.

1. The group should be made up of 3-5 members who are jointly appointed by the church eldership board and the pastor. Group members need to have the confidence of both church leadership and the pastor. Appointment should be for a term of three years.
2. The group should be trained and supported in conflict resolution, communication and change management skills.
3. The group is the first port-of-call for people who have a concern about the pastor's leadership, about change, sermons, non-personal issues to do with the pastor's ministry, performance and leadership. This is to protect the pastor from dealing with all the normal issues of concern and conflict which can distract a leader from moving forward in a constructive way.
4. The group is formally authorised and empowered to deal with concerns themselves where possible and to judge which concerns should be re-directed to the pastor.
5. The group needs to monitor its own relationship with the pastor and to meet regularly with the pastor, not to go over all the issues but for both to share in the processes of leadership, vision, change and communication. The meetings with the pastor should be proactive rather than reactive.
6. If the group begins to pick up serious issues, high level conflict, division in the church and large numbers of people dissatisfied this information needs to be appropriately communicated as soon as possible to the pastor, eldership board and pastoral review group.

An effective Pastor – Congregation Relations Group can save a lot of stress for a pastor and also provide a valuable service to the church as it represents a clear pathway for concerns to be expressed. The very existence of the group sometimes acts as a factor to lower anxiety.