



THE BRIDGE

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SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



ANNUAL REVIEWS & CONTINUING EDUCATION

By Bishop Steven Delzer

The importance of annual pastoral reviews and continuing education are two topics I've been thinking about a lot lately, both on my own and with other bishops. These themes connect well with our priorities of "Developing Leaders" and "Equipping Congregations."

In my vision for our synod, I would like to see every congregation of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod engage in an annual review with their pastor. I would also like for there to be a priority placed on continuing education for the pastor. The strategy could work like this:

1. Decide which group from the congregation will engage in the review with the pastor. The most likely group in most congregations will be one of these three: the Executive Committee of the Church Council, the Personnel Committee, or the Mutual Ministry/Pastoral Support Committee.
2. The pastor and the review team agree together on the date and time to engage in the first part of the review.
3. In the first meeting the pastor and the review team have conversation around questions such as the following (these are just some examples):
 - In the past year what has given you the most joy and sense of fulfillment in your ministry?
 - What do think you are really good at in your role as pastor?
 - What do you like best about the congregation?
 - With what do you struggle most in serving in this congregation?
 - What do you think has been our greatest accomplishment as a congregation in the past year?
 - As we look to the coming year (or years), and the ways in which we sense God calling us to grow in our shared ministry, in what part of your role as a pastor do you want/need to grow to most effectively lead us?
 - For that growth to occur what skills do you need to develop, what experiences do you need to have,

- what knowledge do you need to gain?
4. That last question is what then leads to discussion about possibilities for continuing education. The review team directs the pastor to find two or three possible continuing education opportunities that would lead to the growth that is needed for the coming year (or years). The pastor and the review team agree on a time and date for a second meeting at which together they will agree about which continuing education opportunity (opportunities) the pastor will participate in.
5. In the second meeting the pastor and the review team discuss the merits of each of the possible Continuing Education opportunities and how each will contribute to the growth that is desired. They then decide together which opportunity (opportunities) the pastor will participate in. The pastor and the review team then sign a continuing education covenant that includes the name, date, location, cost, and desired outcomes of the continuing education agreed upon.

I'd now like to share why I am advocating this approach. The most important reason for a pastor and congregational leaders to engage in an annual review is to have the conversation about where we've been in the past year(s), and where we sense God calling us in the coming year(s) in our shared ministry. The commitment to an annual review/ conversation keeps us accountable to one another, and to the ministry that has been entrusted to us, both as pastors, and as congregational leaders.

Another significant reason for a pastor and congregational leaders to engage in an annual review is to give careful consideration to the continuing education that will help the pastor to develop the skills, to have the experiences, and to gain the knowledge that will help her/him to most effectively lead the congregation into the future to which they sense God calling them. As you have these conversations,

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

May the Lord look upon you with favor + and give you peace.