What Lay Leaders Need to Know About the Pastoral Excellence Program

Do you want your congregation to:

- Have a culture of involvement that actively assimilates newcomers and fully involves members in leadership?
- Support an active youth ministry that is integrated into the life of the larger congregation?
- Devote time & effort to community service and positive community change?
- Support their pastoral leader’s participation in regular continuing education?
- Be strongly ‘missional’?
- Grow numerically over time?

If so, read on...
Benefits to Your Congregation From the Pastoral Excellence Program

Congregations benefit when pastors are well-resourced, well-supported and well-trained. A seminary education is only the beginning of a pastor’s preparation for effective ministry.

Here are some testimonies from church members about the impact of the Pastoral Excellence Program on the life of their congregations:

“Our pastor is in her ‘first call’. She has explained to us that the New Clergy Group has been a reliable and essential source of support, helping her develop good ministry habits and her identity as a pastor.”

“This program has helped us better understand ministry as a shared endeavor between our pastor and our congregation.”

“We’ve noticed that our pastor brings us renewed energy, wider perspective, fresh insight, and creative ideas she receives in her clergy group and continuing education.”

“It seems like since he joined the clergy group he is just more vital, more healthy. He brings that into worship, meetings and the care he gives our members. We believe that vital pastors lead vital, healthy churches.”

“This program has helped us understand that excellent clergy don’t just spring up fully formed—they emerge from nurturing relationships and communities.”

Congregations with pastoral leaders who participate in the Pastoral Excellence Program are significantly more likely to have a culture of involvement that actively assimilates newcomers and fully involves members in leadership; Support an active youth ministry that is integrated into the life of the larger congregation; Devote time & effort to community service and positive community change; Support their pastoral leader’s participation in regular continuing education; Become strongly ‘missional’; and Grow numerically over time.

According to a 2008 Faith Communities Today (FACT) Survey
How Does the Pastoral Excellence Program Work?

The central piece of the Pastoral Excellence Program are Communities of Practice where pastors meet in monthly gatherings of five to ten clergy. In these meetings they:

- Share best practices and new ideas on a wide range of subjects, such as worship, mission trips, youth ministry, stewardship and evangelism and investigate resources which lead to excellent leadership.

- Help each other find solutions to specific challenges in their ministry and congregation.

- Support each other through difficult times, pray for each other and celebrate together the joys of ministry.

For newly ordained pastors, there are New Clergy Groups, where pastors in their first three years of ministry meet monthly in groups comprised of three to five new clergy and a seasoned pastor who is trained to serve as the group facilitator and mentor.

In addition, throughout the year there are learning events (commonly called “colloquies”) designed to provide training on various topics relevant to local church life, such as worship and use of family system theories to create healthier congregations.
Since its inception in 2003 this program has been funded by generous grants from the Lilly Endowment. The grants end in December 2012. To sustain this program into the future, the Massachusetts Conference, UCC has initiated the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Endowment Campaign, with a goal to raise $3.5 Million. The income from this endowment, together with modest participation fees, will allow the Pastoral Excellence Program to continue to build healthy congregations in the 21st Century and beyond.

**HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP BUILD HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS**

1. Support and encourage your pastor’s participation in a Clergy Community of Practice or a New Clergy Group

2. Make the Pastoral Excellence Program group participation fee part of your pastor’s compensation package

3. Contribute to the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Endowment Campaign by:
   - A pledge over a three to five year period
   - Participate in our Special Offering over the next five years
   - Include this vision as a mission component of your church’s Capital Campaign (Wrap-Around Capital Campaign)
   - A gift from your invested funds.

To make a pledge or a gift, or to learn more, please contact Andy Gustafson at (508) 875-5233 (ext 231); gustafsona@macucc.org.

“I am learning new things that are refreshing my ministry. My congregation is already benefiting from the fresh ideas and energy I bring to my ministry because of the program.”

**Rev. Terry Martinson**
Senior Pastor
Old South Union, South Weymouth, MA