

Those who tend the relationship

Many people share the responsibility for tending the relationship between pastor and people. We believe that God calls people to be pastors and the whole church affirms that when a pastor is ordained. We also believe that the people of a particular congregation call a particular person to be their pastor. The whole church affirms that when a pastor is installed. Pastors who are serving congregations certainly have a role in tending the relationship between pastor and people. In addition, an interim pastor serving a congregation during a time of transition has a unique opportunity for tending this relationship. The growing number of those who are serving congregations in synodically authorized ministries also must give attention to the relationship between pastor and people.

Many laypersons may be responsible for tending the relationship between pastor and people. The individuals and groups with this responsibility vary from one setting to another, depending on the congregation's structure and size. The call committee will have the work of tending the relationship during a pastoral transition. In most congregations this tending will be part of the work of the congregation council. It will also be part of the work of other congregational groups such as a mutual ministry committee, pastor/parish relations committee, staff support committee, personnel committee, or finance committee. In your congregation there may be other groups that are authorized to attend to the relationship between pastor and people. Others become tenders of the relationship from time to time. During times of pastoral transition, conflict, or congregational transition, the synod bishop or a member of the bishop's staff may become involved in the relationship between pastor and people. Those called upon to be congregational resource people and consultants also may play this role.

Tools for the tenders

Every congregation is called to a common mission—to be a living witness to God in the world. Every pastor is called to a common set of responsibilities and tasks associated with the pastoral office. But the particular kind of tending required for your particular congregation is likely to be different from what is required in another congregation. The relationship between pastor and people, and the kind of tending that it requires, may not be the same in small and large congregations; in rural, urban, and suburban areas; or in communities that are growing and those where the population is declining. The task of tending the relationship between pastor and people will need to reflect the unique history and ethnic composition of your community.

The chapters that follow and the tools associated with each probably won't work as one-size-fits-all tools. They'll work better as part of a large, well-equipped toolbox. The advantage of having a well-equipped toolbox—and knowing how to use each of the tools—is that this enables you to adapt to the unique circumstances of your own congregation.