

KCC Question of the Week

28 September 2011

Here's the Question of the Week:

At the quarterly congregational town hall meeting on September 25th, I heard that a proposal for handling grievances was shared. Could it be shared, so that people not in attendance last Sunday can have a chance to see it?

Here's an Attempt at a Response:

Sure. It's printed below. Sorry it reads a little thick, but these things often do. Thanks for the question.

Proposal for a Faithful Handling of Grievances within the Congregation

Rough Draft from September 22nd, 2011

During the interimship of Dr. Bob Cueni, what was called a "two-committee system" for pastoral care and oversight was proposed in the Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual worked on by Dr. Cueni, Gail Hartman, Nancy Parsons, and Zoe Higgins, and Paige Martin.

This document awaits further revision and Board approval. Nonetheless, the two-committee system is seen as non-controversial and wise. It included the Personnel Committee and The Pastoral Support Group.

The basic definitions of these two bodies as they are described in the manual are as follows:

The Personnel Committee.

(A group designed) to oversee matters related to employees of the church, including the minister(s), the Board shall establish a Personnel Committee which shall be responsible for maintaining objective, predictable, fairly administered policies, performance expectations, and evaluations for all members of the congregation's staff, including the minister(s).

The current members of this committee are as follows: Chairperson Al Bilderback, Jim Dillier, Kathy Johnson

The Pastoral Support Group.

(A group designed) to insure the formation and functioning of a proactive, voluntary growth option for the ministers. The Pastoral Support Group reports to the Board that it has met, but does not record or report the content of its meetings. A minister's choice to have such a committee is a sign of health and desire for personal and professional growth, not a sign of weakness, defensiveness or dependency. This group's function is to provide the minister (and minister's family) with confidential emotional and spiritual support, prayer partnership, counsel and advice, honest communication about feelings and opinions in the congregation, advocacy for the pastor's needs and loving, informal accountability to the minister's own stated values. KCC has more than one full-time minister, and each minister have his/ her own Pastoral Support Group.

The current members of this group are as follows: Chairperson Cathy Gill, Laura Duncan, Bob Martin, Bill Cowsar, Sandra Ingram, Mary Sue McIlvain, and Tom Shane.

Drawing from the counsel of Jesus in Matthew 18:15-35 and the wisdom represented in the Personnel Manual, the following process of dealing with grievances against the minister(s) is proposed:

- The person with the grievance refrains from gossip and goes directly to the minister(s) to discuss the content of the grievance with the minister(s) at a place and time agreed upon by all parties. If the person with the grievance wishes to take another person or persons to this meeting, they are encouraged to do so. If it is deemed necessary to schedule further meetings, this may be done with the approval of all parties.
- If the issue persists after this meeting or meetings the person with the grievance may request a meeting not only with the minister(s) but with the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Chair of the Pastoral Support Group at a mutually agreed upon time and location. It is intended that this meeting be held in a timely fashion, and yet it is believed that it is important for the chairs of these two bodies to be present. If these two emphases are irreconcilable, then the Chair of either body may appoint another member of their body to be present. If further meetings are deemed necessary and agreed upon, then they may be scheduled. Also, if the Chair of either body is contacted by the person with the grievance, they will make sure that step one has been pursued before any further steps are undertaken. Anonymous complaints will not be considered or honored.
- If the issue still persists, this group will discern what will happen next. In most cases this will be a hearing by the General Church Board at their next scheduled meeting so long as there is at least a two week cooling off period between the conclusion of step two and the next scheduled General Board Meeting. The body included at this point may request additional meetings and/or Area/Regional consultation if it deems these important.
- At the conclusion of step three one of three points will be reached; A) The issue will be declared resolved and reconciled; B) The issue will be declared not resolved or reconciled but in need of further work (which will be detailed); C) The issue will be declared resolved but, at least temporarily, irreconcilable. In this event a binding proposal will be offered for how the different parties need to move forward from that point on.

- At every step of this process it is expected that the prayer, communication, and action undertaken by all parties will have the desired goal of resolving and reconciling the issue and the people involved in it. This will be seen as how we honor Jesus in the midst of conflict within his body.

Anyway, thanks for the question.

Peace in Christ,

Robert