

Ottawa Presbytery Pastoral Relations Ministry Team

Joint Needs Assessment Process in a Multi-staff Situation

The 2007 *Handbook for Joint Needs Assessment Committees* contains few references to multi-staff situations. Step 2 indicates that current ministry personnel cannot be members of the JNAC, “but may be asked for input”. Step 9 gives further direction about consultation with incumbent(s):

...If the needs assessment is for an additional ministry position, it is vital that you consult with the incumbents during the process. They have valuable insight into the demands on the paid accountable minister(s) of the pastoral charge that can be very helpful to the committee.

Consult with incumbents early in the process, and in multi-staff situations, consult with people who will be continuing in ministry in the pastoral charge.

Incumbents and fellow ministers who will continue in a multi-staff ministry *must never be involved* in the decision making about what goes into the recommendations of the JNAC report. (pages 14-5)

Step 11 provides information about a change in number of ministerial staff:

In the case of multiple staff when ministry personnel will be reduced and a new Ministry Personnel Description developed, the JNAC must determine whether current ministry personnel are eligible to apply for the new position. Usually, if the new Ministry Personnel Description is considerably different from the old one, a vacancy will be declared, with current ministry personnel receiving a minimum of 90 days’ notice and being eligible to apply for the new position (Opinion 04-010-0 August 17/04—contact Pastoral Relations, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services for a copy of this Opinion of the General Secretary).

If the pastoral charge agrees with the JNAC’s recommendation, there is a request to end pastoral relations. Usually, current staff have the right to apply for the new position but are not automatically assured of the position. (pages 17-8)

The 2013 *Related Manual Resource – Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting* does not address the matter of multi-staff situations. Under “Best Practices”, the section on consultation only mentions consultation with the congregation.

Issues to consider

- 1. Can the Joint Needs Assessment be conducted for only one position or is it about the whole ministry model?**

“The purpose of the needs assessment process is to create a snapshot of the pastoral charge – the faith community and resources – in order to make a recommendation for what future ministry leadership the pastoral charge needs to live out God’s mission in the world.” (p.6 *Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting*)

Since the needs assessment process looks at the entire ministry model for a pastoral charge, a Joint Needs Assessment Committee cannot be established for only one of the positions in a multi-staff situation.

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2. What happens when the JNAC report recommends a staffing model that involves some change in the job description(s) of the remaining ministry personnel?

It has been the practice to make minor adjustments to the job description(s) of remaining ministry personnel. The question as to what degree a position can be amended before it becomes a new position is less clear. This can be complicated by job descriptions or function that are changed during the JNAC process; questions of whether number of hours worked is more significant than specific areas of function; and the degree to which the staffing model being recommended is different from the one that was operative before the JNAC began.

This is an area about which there is not clear and consistent information. However the principles involved are:

- The integrity of the staffing model being recommended by the JNAC; how does the serving ministry personnel best fit into the model?
- The pastoral relations process within the church does not carry any pre-stipulations of entitlement for serving ministry personnel – no ministry personnel whether serving in single or multi-staff positions has entitlements that limit the recommendations of the JNAC process other than 90 days notice following action of the pastoral charge and presbytery; and
- The health of the pastoral charge should be considered by the recommendations of the JNAC.

In February 2014 the Pastoral Relations Ministry Team reaffirmed its policy that a Joint Needs Assessment is for the entire ministry model and reaffirmed the principles relating to changes in the job description(s) of the remaining ministry personnel.