

HEALTHY CHURCH TASK FORCE
Map of Offices and Resources For Classis Alberta North

Part 1 Mandate

Part 2 Existing Structures

Part 3 Appendices

1. Mandate

At the Fall 2013 Classis meeting, the HCTF was tasked with addressing the recommendations presented in the Classical Review Committee's work.

1.1 Motion Approved at Classis Spring 2014.

"That Classis accept the Report of the Ministry and Staff Review Committee regarding the Pastor-Church Relations Ministry, and that in view of the contents and recommendations of the Report, the vacancy in the position of Pastor Church Relations Consultant* resulting from the pending resignation of Consultant* Walt Brouwer not be filled until the recommendations in the report have been considered and dealt with."

* All references to "consultant" in the following document provide that the position is still under consideration.

1.2 From the Review Committee Report: Pastor- Church Relations Ministry

Recommendations:

1. That Classis direct the Pastor Church Relations Committee to consult with the denominational PCRC office, regional pastors, and church visitors in order to create a "map" that clarifies the parameters between the respective mandates and establishes guidelines for avoiding overlapping involvement.
2. That Classis direct the Pastor Church Relations Committee to establish a set of procedures about how and when contact is to be made with churches or pastors in regular circumstances and intense circumstances. In tense circumstances, the Committee may wish to consider the possibilities of becoming the "dispatcher" for regional pastors, church visitors, consultant* or others.
3. That Classis do whatever it is able to do to establish collegial relations between the local Pastor Church Relations committee and the denominational Pastor-Church Relations office so that the two offices complement each other.
4. That Classis ask the Pastor Church Relations Committee to work with the consultant* to significantly reduce the length of *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual* and to address the concerns noted in Conclusions 5 & 6 above. Further, the committee or Classis may need to determine the ownership of *A Pastoral Evaluation Manual* to see if amendments can legitimately be made.
5. That Classis Alberta North encourage the Church Visitors and PCRC consultant* to establish a conference to improve the understanding of church visitors and others with respect to elements of "healthy churches."
6. That in the future Classis appoints members to the Pastor Church Relations Committee such that they are unlikely to face conflicts of interest between their supervisory duties on the committee and any work they might do for committee.
7. That Classis direct the Pastor Church Relations Committee to do regular performance evaluations of their consultant*, ensuring that areas for both commendation for good work and recommendations for improvement be noted. The consultant* should be provided with

resources and training, and the process of improvement must be timely and properly monitored. This will require clarity about the task of the committee: Is it advisory or supervisory? We recommend that the committee be a supervisory committee.

Part 2 Existing Structures

It seems sensible to begin the process of mapping by reviewing the existing roles and relationships established in the denomination. The pertinent material concerning church councils, Denominational Pastor Church Relations, Regional Pastors and Church Visitors is attached at the end of the document. In Brief:

2.1a The Local Church

Congregations are gatherings of believers, their children and others who regularly meet for worship, fellowship and instruction in the Word. Congregations are led by Councils who are chosen from the membership on fixed terms and the pastor.

The council is primarily responsible for the flourishing of the congregation. The pastor serves the ministry of congregation through preaching and sacraments and leadership. Councils both supervise and support the pastor. Pastors both lead and serve the congregation. Leadership of the church is a collaborative partnership involving both the pastor and council who interact and cooperate within a healthy tension of responsibilities.

In light of this tension and commonly experienced internal church dynamics, congregations often find themselves in need of support and advice. Denominational agencies and structures are in place to assist congregations, but there is an acknowledged limit to the effectiveness of any resource due to personal and corporate brokenness due to sin.

2.1b Regional Pastors

1. The regional pastor's role is to serve as a pastor to fellow pastors. They work with pastors to provide support, crisis care, peer mentoring and encouragement. They are also to be mindful of the pastor's family.
2. The regional pastor is a liaison between the classis and Denominational Pastor Church Relations (PCR) in facilitating mentee/mentor relationships.
3. The regional pastor is to maintain the role of **first responder** in working with pastors and their councils, but is encouraged to refer to others who may be specialized in dealing with the issues raised.
4. RELATIONSHIP TO CLASSIS
 - Regional pastors should not serve in classical positions that affect their relationships to the pastors of the classis.
 - Normally regional pastors should not serve as **church visitors**, but they are encouraged to work with the church visitors informing them when they ascertain difficulties with a pastor and council.
 - Regional pastors maintain contact with the **mentors and mentees**, monitoring progress and concerns.
5. RELATIONSHIP TO COUNCILS
 - Regional pastors should not provide ministry to **consistories/councils** of churches in the classis where they are serving because that can easily compromise the relationship with the pastor. They may, however, interact with the council out of concern for the pastor or his/her family.

6. RELATIONSHIP TO PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONS

- The regional pastor is appointed by Pastor-Church Relations based on recommendation from the classical interim committee.
- Pastor-Church Relations provides training and ad hoc consultation relative to specific situations.
- Support of the regional pastor with the classis by communicating that other time consuming or relationship compromising tasks should not be assigned.
- Communication with councils of regional pastors as to the nature and importance of the regional pastor's work.

2.1c Church Visitors

- The church visitors are appointed by Classis
- The church visitors are to visit each Church Council, once per year.
- The church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties.

2.1d Denominational Pastor Church Relations (PCR)

The mandate for this ministry was that it provide programs of "healing and prevention" for ministers, staff, councils, and congregations. Currently the staff is involved in the following:

- Advocating for healthy relationships between congregations, pastors and staff
- Managing ministerial and church profiles in the pastor search process
- Overseeing the credentialing program for non-ordained staff
- Endorsing Specialized Transitional Ministers and helping congregations obtain their services
- Providing direct consultation in times of transition or crisis
- Overseeing the Continuing Education fund for pastors and church staff
- Creating and distributing educational and resource materials for congregations and church staff
- Working with and through Pastoral Mentors, Regional Pastors, and Church Visitors to provide support, encouragement, and counsel to congregations and staff.

2.1e Safe Church Committee

Synod has encouraged each classis to have a Safe Church team made up of representatives from each church. The team is a resource to churches, fulfilling three important mandates:

1. Provide opportunities for awareness and education, so that churches can recognize abuse, develop strategies to prevent it, and respond effectively. Prevention strategies include safe church policies; as well as prevention programs for children and youth such as the Circle of Grace program.
2. Provide support, so that churches can offer invaluable spiritual support to those who have been impacted by abuse. Churches are uniquely equipped to walk alongside those who are on a journey toward wholeness.
3. Offer the Advisory Panel Process, for use in handling an allegation of abuse against a church leader. This process brings the allegation into a more neutral place and provides important safeguards for all parties.

Safe Church Ministry is a resource for churches to prevent abuse, and to respond with compassion and justice where it has occurred.

2.2 Summary: Existing Areas of Involvement

1. The existing denominational structures provide comprehensive coverage when all parties are aware of and engaged in their responsibilities.
2. Denominationally, the map of roles and responsibilities looks like this:
PCR gives support and oversight to:
 - Mentor Pastors
Who mentor newly ordained pastors
 - Regional pastors
Who pastor the experienced pastors
 - Pastors, Church Councils & Congregations
When the church visitors and/or regional pastors are beyond their depth
3. The HCTF has redrawn the map so that it includes their ministry activities. This map includes existing roles and responsibilities that make room for an additional governance body (HCTF) to Classis and the PCR.

The map of roles and responsibilities in Classis Alberta North

The HCTF works with Classis and the PCR to support:

- Mentor Pastors (Nominated by HCTF, via CIC and approved by PCR)
- Regional pastors (Nominated by HCTF, via CIC and approved by PCR)
- Church visitors (Nominated by HCTF, Approved by Classis)
- Church Counsellors (Nominated by HCTF, Approved by Classis)
- Pastors, Church Councils & Congregations

The HCTF consultant* reports to the task force and assists the HCTF in their work.

In conversation with the HCTF

- Regional Pastors are first contact/responders to the pastors of Classis
- Church visitors are first contact/responders to the Councils of Classis
- Church Councils, contact Church Visitors for assistance

When the situation warrants:

- The HCTF 'dispatches' appropriate resources as needs are established.
- The HCTF regularly confers with the PCR to maintain collegial relationships and appropriate resourcing.

In this map, churches and pastors are encouraged to work with first level resources (regional pastors, church visitors). If contact is made with secondary resources, those resources (HCTF, CIC, PCR) refer back to first level responders. As a situation escalates, additional resources are dispatched and activated (HCTF, PCR, additional resources).

2.3 Case Study

The council of Center CRC has experienced some tension in the congregation concerning the level of pastoral care the members are receiving from Pastor Jones. Pastor Jones is aware of the tension, but is frustrated by the lack of visiting done by the Elders. Further he has brought this to the attention of the Elders and there has been little change. Otherwise, Pastor Jones and the congregation still seem to fit well and intend to continue in ministry together. In light of this,

1. The Council and Pastor believe they need some guidance from outside their fellowship so that the pastor/church relationship can thrive.

The Council has the following options. They can:

- Submit a request to their assigned Classical Church Visitors
- Submit a request for Church Visitors on their Classical credentials

The Pastor has similar options. He can:

- Contact his/her regional pastor

The Church Visitors and/or Regional Pastor meet with the concerned party. After evaluating the situation, they provide appropriate resources, if necessary, through consultation with the HCTF.

If the situation is resolved, the Church Visitors and Regional Pastor provide follow-up to the Council and Pastor to ensure the relationship remains healthy. They also report the events in writing to HCTF to provide an ongoing record of reference.

2. If the situation escalates, either Council, pastor or both:
 - Submit a request to the HCTF for advice and assistance

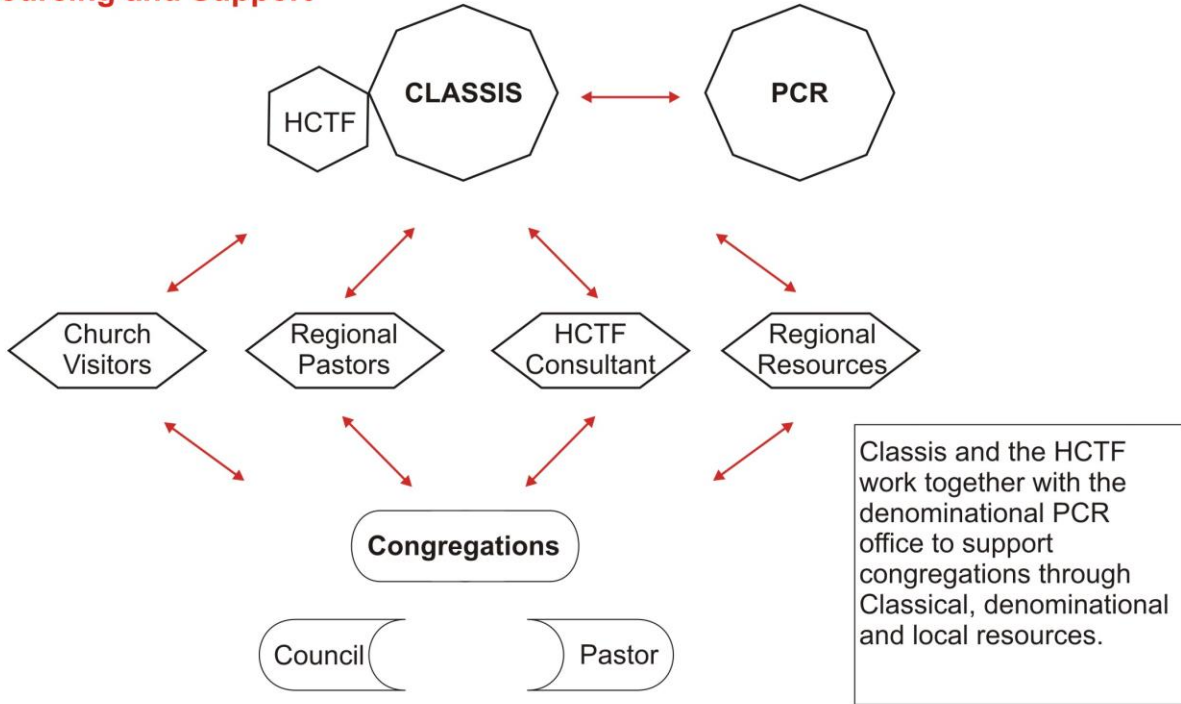
The HCTF then gathers information from the Council, Church Visitors, Pastor and Regional Pastor. Following this, they can recommend assistance for the Council/Pastor from:

- The Classical HCTF consultant*
- Other regional resources (counsellors, mediators, restorative justice facilitators, etc.)
- The denominational PCRC

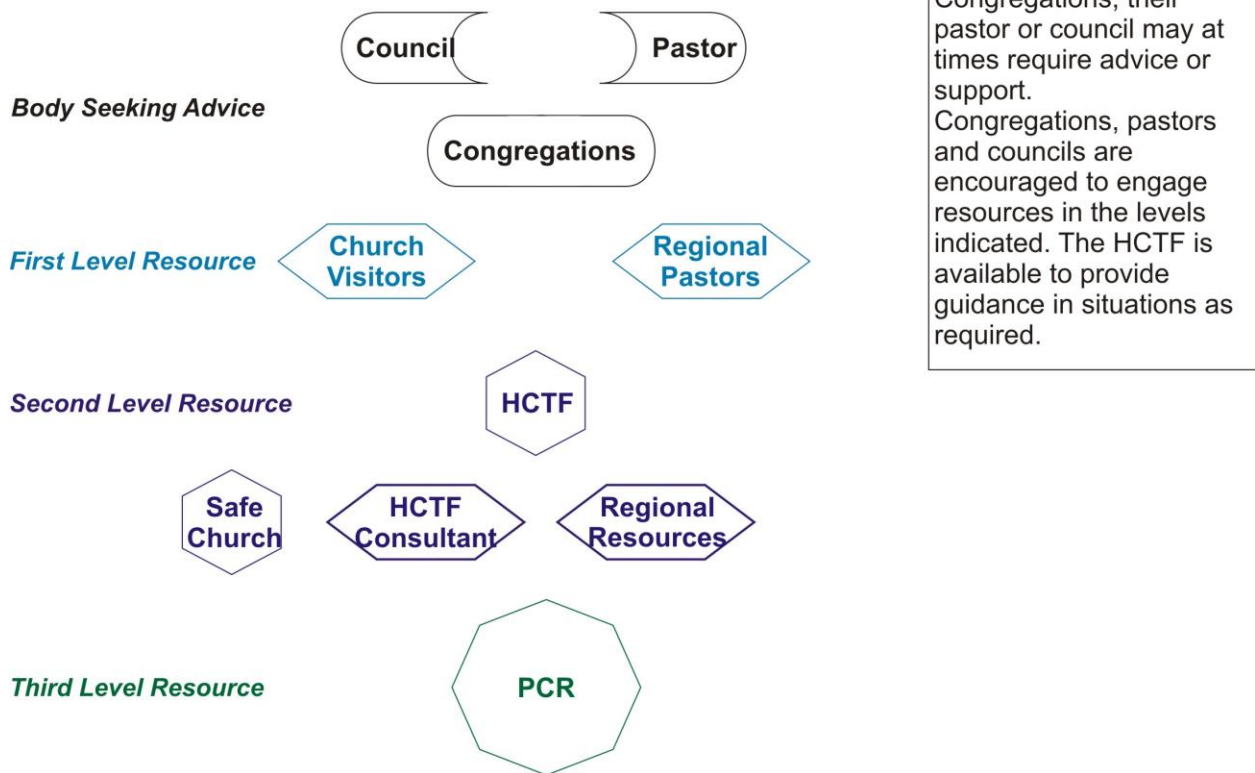
At this point the Church Visitors and Regional Pastor may or may not continue to provide direct assistance. Ideally, their role would become pastoral and supportive rather than directive.

Whichever resources are dispatched, there would be a written record of activities submitted to the HCTF. These records would provide continuity and clarity of the situation and its development. Committee and professional confidentiality would be exercised in the reporting as required. Official church visitor, counsellor reports and the like will be submitted to the HCTF, on the floor of Classis and to the clerk of Classis will continue to maintain the archive of these reports.

Resourcing and Support



Flow of Resourcing and Support



HCTF Consultant* position under consideration

2.4 Mandate of the HEALTHY CHURCH TASK FORCE

a. Mission

The mandate of the HCTF is to foster congregational health within the churches of CAN by means of the following:

1. Cultivating pastor-church relationships including:
 - a. Educating church visitors, regional pastors and others in respect to healthy church practices including available denominational resources
 - b. Informing, educating, training and implementing the principles and processes of restorative practices for congregations, councils and pastors
 - c. Review of regional pastor, church visitor and church counsellor reports
 - d. Providing templates for effective pastor and/or council evaluations
 - e. Report findings and best practices to Classis, CIC, PCR and others as required..
2. Dispatching appropriate resources for congregation councils and pastors
3. Strengthen, support and challenge pastors, their spouses and families including:
 - a. Through the work of the regional pastors
 - b. Organizing an annual Pastors and Spouses Conference
 - c. Through encouraging peer group participation
4. Encouraging the active participation of congregations, councils and pastors in restorative justice efforts within their communities
5. Create a roster of local skilled and trained and qualified mediators, restorative practice facilitators, church consultants, professional counsellors and specialized transitional ministers.
6. Intentional cooperation and appropriate reporting of its work:
 - a. with the CIC
 - b. with denominational pastor-church relations
 - c. with the Safe Church Committee

b. Membership

The membership of the HCTF consists of seven individuals in addition to one ex officio member as follows:

- The three classis-appointed regional pastors
- Three lay people, at least one of whom is trained in mediation and restorative practices
- Church Visitors Coordinator
- Consultant*

c. Meetings

The HCTF will normally meet at least ten times year, or more as required

3. Appendix

3.1 2013 (Prior) Mandate of the HEALTHY CHURCH TASK FORCE

a. Mission

The mandate of the HCTF is to foster pastor-church as well as congregational health, and ministry

effectiveness within the churches of CAN by means of the following:

1. cultivating healthy pastor-church relationships based on the principle of mutual accountability through transparency characterized by honest, graceful conversations about things that matter
2. collaborating with Church Visitors and the Safe Church Committee of CAN so that pastors and churches requesting the help of the HCTF will receive an informed, coordinated and unified response to their needs
3. being available for mediation
4. offering support to pastors, their spouses and families, as well as to congregations and their members
5. encouraging peer groups of pastors for mutual support and accountability
6. organizing an annual Pastors and Spouses Conference
7. informing, educating, training and implementing the principles and processes of restorative practices
8. encouraging the active participation of pastors and leaders in restorative justice efforts within their communities
9. drawing upon the expertise of trained and HCTF-approved individuals for the purpose of engaging restorative practices and mediation
10. reviewing Church Visitors reports and acting on them as necessary (note: this will require Church Visitors to promptly send their final reports to the HCTF) Overture to Join the PCRC and the RJTF *Pastor-Church Relations Committee* and the *Restorative Justice Task Force CLASSIS ALBERTA NORTH*
11. keeping in confidence matters disclosed in confidence, unless the law requires disclosure, or unless other arrangements are made with the permission of all parties. HCTF members confidentially may share matters within the HCTF related to process, and share content only when this is required in order to make possible a coordinated and unified response to the needs of pastors and churches

b. Membership

The membership of the HCTF consists of five individuals in addition to two *ex officio* members as follows:

1. The three classis-appointed regional pastors
2. Two lay people
3. The Pastor-Church Relations Consultant, *ex officio*
4. A person credentialed in restorative practices and mediation, *ex officio*

c. Meetings

The HCTF will meet at least six times year, or more as required

d. Budget

The budget of the HCTF will consist of the combined 2013 budgets of the PCRC and the RJTF, with recommended and approved adjustments made for 2014

3.2 Denominational Resources and Structures

The following material is compiled from www.crcna.org and Church Order

REGIONAL PASTORS

Role and Tasks

1. The primary focus of the regional pastor is to support fellow pastors. Some ways in which this can be accomplished are:
 - Taking initiative in becoming acquainted with the pastors in the classis. This can be accomplished through interactions at classis meetings, group meetings, telephone calls, e-mails, visits (coffee, meals, etc.), input from others. The concern is to stay in contact with each other.
 - Reaching out in crisis situations. Maintaining contact in normal circumstances makes it more acceptable to reach out in crises. It is also helpful to watch for signs of need such as isolation, stress, reactivity, and transitions (e.g. changes in family, health, ministry).
 - Responding strategically to identified needs by coaching toward collegial relationships, self care, and developing support structures such as personnel committees, pastor relations committees, connections with key lay persons.
 - Encouraging participation in continuing education and other growth opportunities.
2. In situations where the congregation has more than one ordained pastor, it is important to maintain contact with all of them. In cases where there are some tensions, it may be wise to ask another pastor in the classis to serve as a resource/support to one of the others so that there is not a conflict of interest.
3. The pastor's spouse and family also need support and recognition. Especially when there are conflicts, the spouse is at an extreme disadvantage in that he/she is most often an observer on the sidelines, thus not being able to process the pain and frustration through face-to-face involvement. The regional pastor can provide a vital and safe presence.
4. Some other groups of church staff in the classis:
 - Specialized ministry staff should be recognized and encouraged to seek supportive relationships.
 - Church planters and commissioned pastors are included in the regional pastor's circle of concern.
5. The regional pastor is a liaison between the classis and PCR in facilitating mentee/mentor relationships.
 - Each new candidate for ministry is required to have a mentor for the first five years of his/her ministry in the CRCNA. The regional pastor assists the candidate in choosing an experienced pastor from the classis to serve as mentor.
 - The regional pastor will communicate this choice to Pastor-Church Relations for final approval.
 - PCR recommends that the regional pastor actively support the mentoring relationships and if they are not helpful, facilitate a possible change which will be more beneficial.
 - The mentoring initiative encourages creativity. Changing mentors along the way, multiple mentors, group mentoring, or finding a mentor from a non-CRC context are all possible options in a given situation.
 - Synod has also recommended that pastors coming into the CRCNA from other denominations, and pastors who have had some difficulties, may be helped by being encouraged to have a mentor. The regional pastor is encouraged to assist them in establishing a mentoring relationship.

6. It is helpful for the regional pastor to maintain the role of gatekeeper in working with pastors and their councils. In this capacity, the regional pastor may be the first person contacted about a personal or relationship concern, but is encouraged to refer to others who may be specialized in dealing with the issues raised. Some possible referral resources are:
 - A clergy colleague who may be a support or have a specialization in an area of concern – note: this can be a variant of the mentoring relationship.
 - Classis resources such as church visitors or a designated committee of clergy and laypersons who can assist a council at the request of the classis.
 - The staff of PCR may be a resource for intervention, consultation, or education.
 - A therapist or other specialized person in the community (It is wise to explore options in your community so that you can make timely and appropriate referrals when the need arises).

RELATIONSHIP TO CLASSIS AND OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL FUNCTIONARIES

The regional pastor's role is to serve as a pastor to fellow pastors. In this role, the regional pastor also serves in relationship to other ecclesiastical functionaries:

1. Classis
 - Regional pastors should not serve in classical positions that affect their relationships to the pastors of the classis.
 - Normally regional pastors should not serve as **church visitors**, but they are encouraged to work with the church visitors informing them when they ascertain difficulties with a pastor and council.
 - Regional pastors maintain contact with the **mentors and mentees**, monitoring progress and concerns.
 - It is helpful for the regional pastor to give a brief presentation at each classis meeting. This serves as a reminder of your availability to pastors, as well as encouraging collegial interaction.
 - Regional pastors are appointed by Pastor-Church Relations with the advice of the **classical interim committee**.
2. Councils
 - Regional pastors should not provide ministry to **consistories/councils** of churches in the classis where they are serving because that can easily compromise the relationship with the pastor. They may, however, interact with the council out of concern for the pastor or his/her family.
3. Ministry Team Leaders of CRC Home Missions
 - The various ministry directors of Home Missions are actively involved with pastors and congregations in their assigned regions. Make acquaintance with them and let them know your interest in hearing about pastors in the classis who are in need of some attention. They can be a resource for your work and awareness.

RELATIONSHIP TO PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONS

1. The regional pastor is appointed by Pastor-Church Relations based on recommendation from the classical interim committee.
2. Pastor-Church Relations provides:
 - Biennial training conferences.
 - Ad hoc consultation relative to specific situations.

- Support of the regional pastor with the classis by communicating that other time consuming or relationship compromising tasks should not be assigned.
- Communication with councils of regional pastors as to the nature and importance of the regional pastor's work.
- Information relative to specifics of the mentoring initiative.

3. Accountability

- A brief **semi-annual report** to Pastor-Church Relations will be asked of all regional pastors. This report will be an opportunity to update Pastor-Church Relations on activities, needs, changes, and concerns in each classis. Obviously, urgent items can be communicated to us at appropriate times, but the other reports are a way of keeping the office updated on events in classis and with pastors. (A draft copy of the form is attached.)
- **Terms of service** will not be reinstated. However, we encourage the regional pastor and the classical interim committee to maintain dialogue about needs of the pastors and effectiveness of current responses. This may include determination of whether there are enough regional pastors for easy availability by pastors, or whether it is time for another pastor to take over regional pastor responsibilities. At least every three years there should be some conversation and reevaluation of the regional pastor services in the classis.

3.3 CHURCH VISITORS – (Church Order Article 42)

II. THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH

C. The Classis (continued)

- a. The classis shall appoint at least one committee composed of two of the more experienced and competent officebearers, two ministers, or one minister and one elder, to visit all its churches once a year.
- b. The church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and properly promote the edification of the congregation and the extension of God's kingdom. They shall admonish those who have been negligent, and help all with advice and assistance.
- c. The churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious problems arise.
- d. The church visitors shall render to classis a written report of their work.

3.4 DENOMINATIONAL PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONS

The 1982 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America approved formation of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (P-CR). The mandate for this ministry was that it provide programs of "healing and prevention" for ministers, staff, councils, and congregations. Ministry Shares enable P-CR to provide these services to congregations. Over time the strategies employed by P-CR have adjusted to the needs of congregations as well as to the staffing of P-CR. Currently the staff is involved in the following:

- Advocating for healthy relationships between congregations, pastors and staff
- Managing ministerial and church profiles in the pastor search process
- Overseeing the credentialing program for non-ordained staff
- Endorsing Specialized Transitional Ministers and helping congregations obtain their services
- Providing direct consultation in times of transition or crisis
- Overseeing the Continuing Education fund for pastors and church staff
- Creating and distributing educational and resource materials for congregations and church staff
 - Working with and through Pastoral Mentors, Regional Pastors, and Church Visitors to provide support, encouragement, and counsel to congregations and staff