

# The Face of Ministry in Changing Times

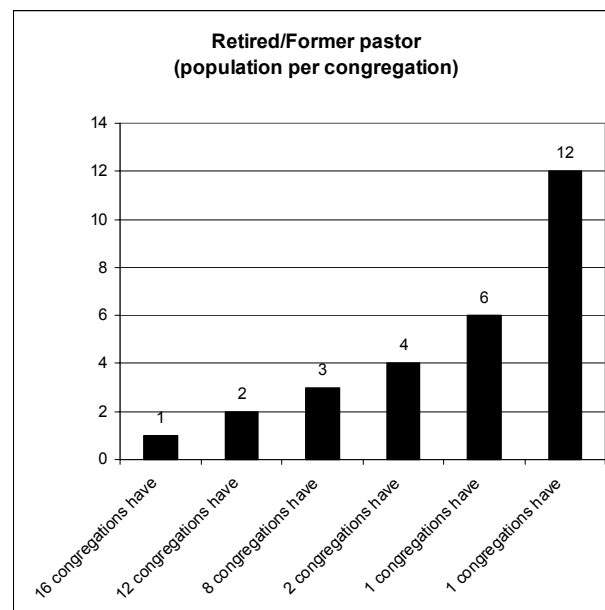
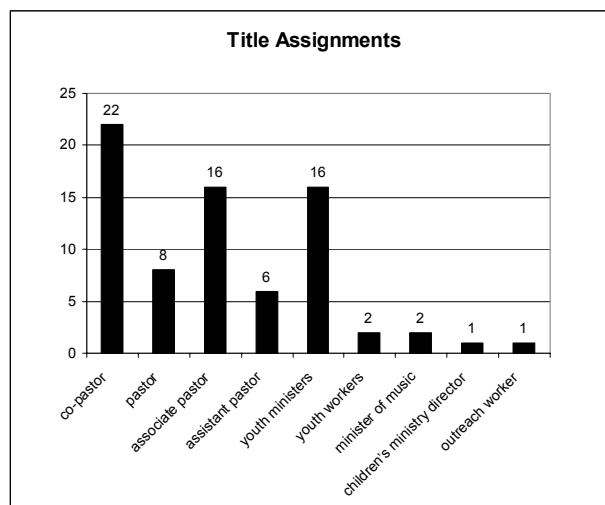
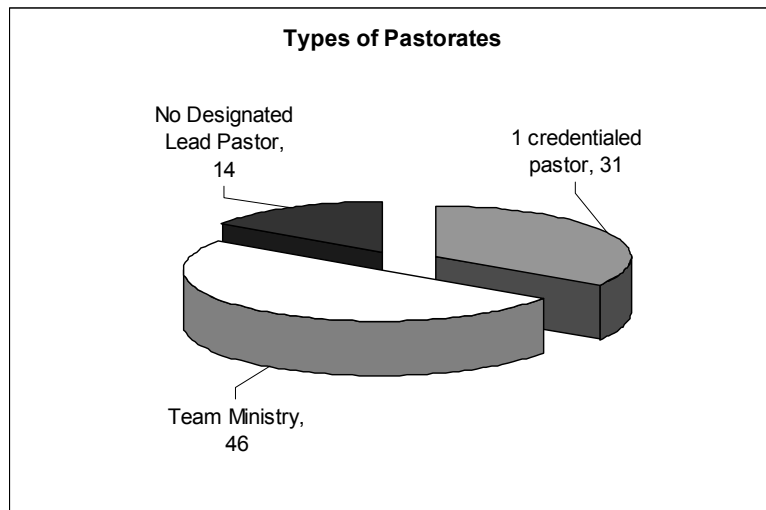
## Leadership Project Part 2

## Pastoral Leadership Summary

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## Leadership Project - Part 2

# “The face of ministry in changing times”

Mennonite Church Canada

## Pastoral Leadership Summary

In February’s Equipping, I summarized findings regarding lay leadership. In this issue, I shall summarize findings regarding pastoral (ministry staff) leadership, including retired pastors.

(The surveys were sent out in October, 2002 to 250 Mennonite Church Canada constituent congregations inviting respondents to describe patterns of ministerial and lay leadership in their congregations.)

There are several trends which are noteworthy. First of all, many congregations report an increasing number of women in leadership, including more female pastors. However, only a few of these are lead pastors. Secondly, congregations frequently report what might be termed “the professionalization of ministry.” That is, more pastors are being better paid to do their work, and have received appropriate training for pastoral ministry.

Nonetheless, there continues to be a significant group of lay ministers, consistent with an earlier model, and emerging also from contemporary models. And, as I said in the February Equipping summary, there is an increase in lay leadership, including the development of “mixed team” models of congregational leadership. It seems clear that Mennonite Church Canada and its constituent area churches need to work with this “marriage” of leadership models. There are implications both for the training and calling of pastors and others who are called to lead. Will we adopt a “ministry of the laity” model as other denominations have done, with the attendant training and certification? Or will we find our own unique Mennonite way in the midst of present leadership trends?

I noted a significant number of retired or former pastors in congregations, some with defined roles, others not. As we have an aging population of ministers combined with a pastoral shortage, what place do we give to these retired pastors as we order our life together in the congregations?

Finally, readers should note that not all the responses for each question add up to 82 (the number of congregations that responded). Some did not answer all questions, and some congregations reported a combined response, indicating a combination of the variables presented.

—Maurice Martin, Director of Congregational Leadership Development

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## Models of pastoral leadership:

Out of 82 reporting congregations, 77 presently have one or more pastors, 5 have none, either because they are “between” pastors, or because they have elected not to have pastoral staff. In addition, we found that:

- 31 congregations have 1 credentialed (ordained) pastor, which includes 19 full time

male pastors, 4 part time male pastors, and 3 full time female pastors.

- 46 congregations have a form of Team Ministry, most often defined as multiple pastoral staff. Of these, 32 have a designated lead pastor (29 male, 3 female).
- 14 state that they have no designated lead pastor on the team.

And what are these 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or more pastors on the team called?

- 22 are called co-pastor
- 8 are simply called pastor
- 16 are named associate pastor
- 6 are designated assistant pastor
- 16 are youth ministers
- 2 are youth workers
- 2 are called minister of music
- 1 is called children's ministry director
- 1 is named outreach worker

We see then that the majority of congregations have multiple ministry staff, which increases if we add the various types of lay ministers which we described in the last issue of *Equipping*. Nonetheless, 31 congregations, usually the smaller ones, have one pastor, mostly men.

And what level of training do pastors have? Where there is one credentialed pastor in the congregation, five males have certificate level training (none degree), six have undergraduate theology degrees, eleven have masters degrees, and one has a post-graduate theology degree. The three female (lone) pastors have masters degrees.

Where there is a ministry team, the lead pastors and co-pastors have training as follows:

- One male has certificate training
- 12 have undergraduate theology degrees
- 24 have masters degrees
- 6 have post-graduate theology degrees.

Of the female lead or co-pastors, 1 has certificate training, 3 have undergraduate degrees, 6 have masters, 1 has post-graduate theological training.

Those who are 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> pastors designated as associate, assistant, etc. (not lead or co-pastors) have training as follows:

- 1 male has certificate training
- 18 have undergraduate degrees
- 9 have masters degrees

Of the female assistant or associate pastors, 6 have certificate training, 12 have undergraduate degrees, 7 have masters degrees.

## Retired/former pastors in the congregation:

There are a total of 90 retired or former pastors in the reporting congregations:

- 16 have 1
- 12 have 2
- 8 have 3
- 2 have 4
- 1 has 6
- 1 has "more than 12"

Clearly, there is a wealth of pastoral experience sitting in our pews week by week. Do they play any ministry roles in the congregation? Yes!

- in 21 congregations they do some preaching
- in 13 churches they teach Sunday School or Bible study
- in 6 churches they do general pastoral care
- in 4 churches they offer pastoral care to seniors
- in 3 they conduct funerals
- in 6 they serve as deacons or elders
- in 2 they serve as advisor to the pastor(s)

They also assist in serving communion, sit on church council, or act as care group leaders. One feels called to teach lay leaders how to preach, of others it was said, "They bring wisdom and stability to the congregation."

Most of these retired pastors are accountable to the lead pastor, church council, or ministerial committee. One congregation declared: "We have a written agreement about this." Others are accountable to the ministry group or committee in the area in which they participate.

Three congregations indicated that they have a category "pastor emeritus" which defines the role of retired or former pastors in their midst.

## New models:

What have been the most significant changes experienced in models of pastoral leadership in congregations in the past 10-20 years?

What are some new models?

- Development of multiple staff ministry was named 17 times
- The "professionalization" of ministry (paid and trained) was named 13 times
- Women in leadership, both lay and pastoral, was named 19 times.
- Development of "mixed team" of pastor and lay people was named 7 times.

## Additional comments regarding leadership trends...

\*Some congregations wrote extensive comments. I have selected several which indicate emerging trends in leadership models. Each bullet indicates one congregation's voice.

- *"We have an Executive of 6 members who give administrative leadership but carry increasing responsibility for giving spiritual leadership to the congregation...The pastor as a leader is a new idea and one of which people are highly suspicious. Pastor as leader is threatening for some of them...They have been more used to the idea of pastor as priest – doing the religious things that need doing to make the experience of religion complete....My sense is that Mennonite Church congregations have been weak on leadership; a strong emphasis that power and authority rest in the congregation, a misinterpretation of priesthood of all believers, and our fear of bishops of another era have contributed to this weakness."*
- *"We struggle with the role of the pastor in leadership. Our church has had strong 'overpowering' leaders and then the pendulum swung to not wanting the pastor involved in leadership at all; we are presently trying to find a balance."*
- *"We have a diversity of persons who volunteer their gifts in worship leading, occasional preaching, pastoral care, Christian education, administration, music. But we don't call them lay ministers. Some have theological training, others do not. None of the lay ministers is ordained. One lay leader is licensed for chaplaincy ministry."*
- *"We don't use the term 'lay minister' as such, but have a Leadership Team composed of: Leadership Team Leader, Finance & Administration Commission Leader, Missions & Service Commission Leader, Nurture Commission Leader, Pastoral Care Commission Leader, Worship Commission Leader, Youth & Young Adult Commission Leader, two members-at-large, Pastor, Associate Pastor."*
- *"Two pastors (one lead, one associate) are on a*

*Mixed Team which includes four additional persons who are commissioned for their volunteer roles (not called lay ministers as such). Initially...the congregation began with a Ministry Team of four lay ministers, with a staff minister added a year later, clearly NOT to be the leader of the Team...Eventually it was determined that the staff minister should lead the Team (after it became clear the church 'expected' certain things of the staff minister but had not given him authority to see that they happened)."*

- *"Situations have changed, individuals are less willing to make long-term commitments. Deacons who were once called for life have more recently been called to three-year terms...The language used in this model is up-dated with terms and titles that are more easily understood. Committees are re-envisioned as Teams...The title of Deacon...has been released in favor of Care-giver...Also added is the term Elder, borrowed from the former Mennonite Church, not as familiar in the Russian-Mennonite tradition, but is helpful in its focus 'to provide spiritual oversight of the congregation, and serve as a support group for the pastor.'"*

## What does this survey say?

Clearly there is a shift toward more lay leadership in congregations across Mennonite Church Canada. There is a parallel change in titles, roles, job descriptions and congregational leadership structural models. Will the gap caused by the shortage of pastors be filled with lay leadership? There are some who suggest that this is the wave of the future. However, there is also the keenly-felt awareness that busy people are prepared to commit only for short-term service. Flexibility and responsiveness describe congregational leadership in the Mennonite church of the future.

In the post-modern age in which we live, many people want more "spirituality," less "church." To such persons, all the creative changing of leadership models may appear that the church is simply re-arranging the furniture, while continuing to look out the same living room window.

\* The complete report including comprehensive data and descriptions is available on the Mennonite Church Canada web site [www.mennonitechurch.ca/leadership/survey](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/leadership/survey)