

## CREATING A CONGREGATION WORKER CARE TEAM

The Worker Care Team is a group whose membership is selected by the care team chair and the workers together. The goal of the Worker Care Team is to advocate for the workers' health and well-being to congregational leadership. The Worker Care Team would intentionally keep the workers in prayer. It would also serve to assist the worker in evaluating whether they are getting good rest, re-creation, family time, cultivating healthy boundaries at work, and healthy life habits outside of work. To that end, a Worker Care Team would be concerned with such things as: adequate time off, adequate housing, working conditions and expectations, continuing education, fair salaries, health maintenance, sabbaticals, peer support groups, and the like.

Congregations that are interested in developing a Worker Care Team as part of their ministry may want to consider reading the book ***Holding Up the Prophet's Hand: Supporting Church Workers*** by Bruce Hartung and looking into best practices made by other congregations who have set up similar teams. An example of a ministry description is given on the next page. Keep in mind that each congregation, ministry, and church worker has different needs so the description can be tailored to your church worker needs.

Things to consider when working on developing a Worker Care Team include:

- Defining who would be included in the care given (e.g. pastor, DCE, church musicians, office manager, school staff, etc.)
- The need for strict confidentiality
- Bringing together people with whom the worker or workers feel comfortable
- In cases of a larger ministry (large congregations or congregations with a school or preschool), you may want to consider having separate teams since the needs of different kinds of church workers may be different

## SAMPLE LUTHERAN CHURCH WORKER CARE TEAM MINISTRY DESCRIPTION

Purpose: To encourage, foster, advocate, and plan for the overall health and well-being of the congregation's staff. This will happen in partnerships and conversations with the workers as they share with strict confidentiality what is going well and what needs attention, both professionally and personally, in their lives so that they may continue to flourish in their call both professionally and personally.

Responsible to: Appropriate church leadership

Duration of Role: TBD

### Specific Responsibilities

The Worker Care Team (WCT) will:

- Keep the staff and their families in daily prayer.
- Promote goodwill and healthy relationships among the staff and between the staff and congregation in order to maximize each worker's effectiveness and to build a strong partnership.
- Help clarify expectations and roles that the staff and members of the congregation have of each other.
- Provide called staff members a periodic opportunity to reflect on their call and the unique skills they bring to the ministry.
- Assist in communicating and interpreting the work of the staff to the congregation so that they may carry out an effective Christian ministry. This includes helping the congregation to understand the various duties that are the responsibility of the staff as well as the priorities for their time and talents.
- Help enhance communication among the staff and between the staff and the congregation, providing opportunities for members to give honest and open feedback while keeping the team from becoming a complaint sounding board.
- Encourage healthy spiritual, physical, relational, and financial practices among the staff and their families.
- Assist in providing a healthy process for dealing with conflict.
- Assist in advocating to congregational leadership for adequate working conditions, housing, continuing education, salaries, vacations, health maintenance, sabbaticals, and the like.
- Provide a sounding board when individual staff members are struggling with particular issues.

#### Guidelines:

- The WCT must consider the personal sharing of staff and other Team members as strictly confidential.
- The WCT has no authority to set policy, finances, or programs.
- The WCT reports directly to the appropriate congregational leaders.
- Functionally, members of the WCT are accountable to each other and to the staff they serve.
- The WCT should be devotional in attitude, seek opportunities to pray, worship and retreat together, and be open and receptive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- WCT decisions are normally reached by consensus rather than by majority vote.
- While the WCT may influence the setting of salaries, policies, staff evaluations, and various programs, it should not assume authority delegated by constitution or bylaws to other church officers, nor does the WCT replace any personnel boards.
- The work of the WCT is not about “doing”, but about “being” available to listen, reflect, offer counsel, and give meaningful support.

#### Skills, Talents, Gifts, and Qualifications

##### WCT Members should:

- Regularly participate in worship and Bible study.
- Have a proven track record of confidentiality.
- Have a heart for the well-being of the church staff and their families.
- Meet the approval of not only the congregational leadership, but also the worker or workers. The workers must feel comfortable speaking openly and frankly about the joys and struggles of ministry.
- Possess various skills that may be helpful to the team (eg. health and wellness advocate, spiritual direction, listening, human resources experience, counselling experience, financial management, etc.).