

THE PROCESS OF RESPONSE, REHABILITATION, RECONCILIATION, AND RESTORATION OF THE CLERGY

With credits to the East Ohio and the New England Districts and the Committee on Rehabilitation and Restoration of Ministers'; General Assembly, Church of the Nazarene, June 22-27, 1997.

The *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* states:

"The objectives of church discipline are to sustain the integrity of the church, to protect the innocent from harm, to protect the effectiveness of the witness of the church, to warn and correct the careless, to bring the guilty to salvation, to rehabilitate the guilty to salvation, to restore to effective service those who are rehabilitated, and to protect the reputation and resources of the church. Members of the church who do violence to the General or Special Rules, or who willfully and continuously violate their membership vows, should be dealt with kindly yet faithfully, according to the grievousness of their offenses. Holiness of heart and life being the New Testament standard, the Church of the Nazarene insists upon a clean ministry and requires that those who bear its credentials as clergy be orthodox in doctrine and holy in life. Thus the purpose of the discipline is not punitive or retributive but is to accomplish these objectives. Determination of standing and continued relationship to the church is also a function of the disciplinary process (*Manual* paragraph 500)."

I. Objectives

1. The primary objective of the Kansas City District in addressing the subjects of response, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and restoration is to reduce the numbers who are lost to the clergy and to the service of our Lord and the Church as a result of their misconduct, and to protect others from the violation of trust relationships.

2. Another objective is to strengthen the relationship of trust and confidence that exists between clergy and the congregations in the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene.

3. It is our goal to work to prevent such incidents of abuse and misconduct by encouraging all ministers to be a part of an accountability partnership or group that meets regularly and where there is real openness, including discussions of perceived strengths as well as weaknesses.

4. We seek to more clearly define an effective process of responding to evidence of misconduct by one in a position of trust and/or authority.

5. A final objective is to adequately protect, give counsel, and seek healing for those who have been abused or wronged.

6. As our Christian responsibility, the ultimate objective of rehabilitation is the restoration of the person, first, to the Lord, second, to their families and, when possible, to restoration in the ministry. (See *Manual* paragraphs 435.5 and 500.)

II. Working Presuppositions

1. The Christian duty of the church is to acknowledge her concern for victims who have been injured in the context of moral malfeasance and show concern for them.
2. For the abused, both the wrongfulness of the abuse and the reality of their pain need to be acknowledged. A compassionate response to the "wronged" should include emotional, spiritual, and practical support steps to prevent further abuse to the wronged persons and to others, and encouragement in the wronged person's own process of healing.
3. As God's representative, the minister assumes a position of spiritual authority, perceived power, and assumed trust. It is the responsibility of the minister to guard vigilantly relationships and behaviors so that this trust is not betrayed.
4. The principle cause of disciplinary action under consideration is the immoral conduct on the part of a minister, generally referred to as "conduct unbecoming a minister" (*Manual* paragraphs 500, 505, 505.1). Other causes of disciplinary action that also require the need for rehabilitation may be doctrinal disloyalty and illegal use of finances (*Manual* paragraphs 433.14, 415, 505.1).
5. Rehabilitation assumes that the minister (licensed or ordained) has demonstrated a spirit of repentance and accepted responsibility for his/her actions and is willing to submit to a process of discipline and rehabilitation as outlined by the Advisory Board of the Kansas City District Church of the Nazarene as set forth in this document and the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*.

III. Critical Issues Involving a Minister

1. To consider differences in circumstances such as confirmed behavior revealing repeated patterns, a one-time situation, or being victimized.
2. To consider the impact of psychological aberrations, compulsive behavior, and sexual orientations.
3. To evaluate the attitudinal reactions of the person.
4. To assist the person in accepting the responsibility for his/her actions and choices and thus participate in the redemptive processes offered by the church.
5. To define clearly what is involved in the loss of credentials and determine how the loss of credentials affects the future exercise of ministry.
6. To be concerned about the need for temporary economic assistance.
7. To communicate candidly that our first priority is restoration of the individual in their relationship to the Lord, then to their families, and to delineate any limitations to the possibility of future ministry in the church.
8. To define clearly the guilt or innocence of the person.

IV. Guiding Considerations

1. Provide a supervising pastor to whom the minister under discipline can go for support, spiritual direction, and accountability.
2. Permit the supervising pastor to be someone other than the pastor where the minister under discipline might attend church. (It may work an undue hardship to attend the church of the supervising pastor because of distance, and, conversely, the pastor of the nearest church may not be the best suited to supervise.)

3. Encourage, and in some cases require, the person to participate in a small accountability group of two or more members for spiritual direction and support. The supervising pastor may be a part of the accountability group.

4. Require appropriate psychological and spiritual counseling for the minister and spouse. The counselor will provide quarterly reports and a final report to the district superintendent.

5. Encourage the use of a subcommittee of the District Ministerial Credentials Board as a Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee (not a large number) selected on the basis of experience and training rather than on popularity. Subcommittee membership should be comprised of those who have the authority for recommending restoration to the District Ministerial Credentials Board and to the Advisory Board, who, in turn, will recommend to the Board of General Superintendents (*Manual* paragraph 435.7).

(Keeping restoration in the hands of a limited number rather than unnecessarily publicizing it before a large group that is uninformed.)

(*Manual* paragraphs 435.6-435.7)

435.6. A member of the clergy who is not in good standing shall not preach, teach a Sunday School class, or hold any other position of trust or authority in the church or worship services, and shall not be given any ministerial role unless the District Advisory Board, the Ministerial Credentials Board, the district superintendent, and the general superintendent in jurisdiction determine that the individual has made sufficient progress toward rehabilitation to warrant once again allowing the individual to be of service in a position of trust or authority. Those considering approval shall carefully consider whether the individual who has lost good standing has appropriately repented of his or her misconduct. True repentance involves a deep sense of personal guilt coupled with a change of conduct which continues for a length of time sufficient to be evidence that the change is likely to be permanent. Approval to serve in a position of trust or authority may be granted with or without restrictions.

435.7. A member of the clergy who has lost good standing may be restored to good standing and have his or her credential restored only by the action of the Board of General Superintendents upon a recommendation for restoration from the district where good standing was lost. A recommendation for restoration shall require the approval of the district superintendent, the District Ministerial Credentials Board, and a two-thirds approval of the District Advisory Board. In considering whether or not to recommend that a credential be restored, progress on the plan of rehabilitation shall be the primary issue but passage of time shall be an additional consideration.

However, in the event the member of the clergy has committed sexual misconduct, the member of the clergy shall not be eligible to apply for restoration until four years have passed. A member of the clergy who has lost good standing as a result of sexual misconduct, must satisfactorily progress on a prescribed plan for rehabilitation for a minimum of four years, before good standing may be restored.

-Nazarene *Manual* 2001-2005

V. Recommended Response Program

1. When information is received by the district superintendent that the possibility of misconduct has occurred, he/she shall appoint a response team. This team may be composed of elders, deacons, and the Advisory Board laity.
2. The response team shall consider written or verbal "information" regarding the alleged misconduct. The purpose of this initial response is to determine the probability of guilt, the feasibility of removal from ministry, and the need for investigation. At least one member of the response team should interface and/or work with the spouse and/or other family involved.
3. A specific response will be outlined by the team regarding:
 - a. Confrontation of the accused.
 - b. Information to be shared, keeping in mind that disclosure should be as wide as the circle of influence. This would most likely include:
 - i. The local church board
 - ii. The local church after consultation with church board
 - iii. Other clergy
 - c. Response to the family of the accused.
 - d. Response to the abused or wronged parties.
 - e. Responses in case the accusations are unfounded.

VI. Recommended Rehabilitation Program

1. An ordained minister who surrendered his or her credentials may petition the Kansas City District to be considered for rehabilitation with the possibility of restoration of credentials. Request for consideration forms may be obtained at the District Office. The Ministerial Credentials Board will consider the petition and inform the petitioner of the Board's action.
2. Where credentials have been surrendered, the period of rehabilitation shall be for a minimum of four years.
3. The minister under discipline shall be required to meet annually with the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee (see committee recommendation above) selected from the District Ministerial Credentials Board appointed by the district superintendent to report progress in the rehabilitation program.
4. The person under discipline may not have any active ministry unless the District Advisory Board, the District Ministerial Credentials Board, the district superintendent, and the general superintendent in jurisdiction determine that the individual has made sufficient progress toward rehabilitation to warrant once again allowing the individual to be of service in a position of trust or authority. Any limited ministry that receives approval may be performed only under appropriate supervision (see *Manual* paragraph 435.6).
5. The minister under discipline shall be assigned to a supervising pastor with whom he/she shall meet at least monthly for assessing his/her progress and for receiving spiritual guidance. Clear evidence of amendment of life and practice is to be maintained.
6. The supervising pastor will be required to report to the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee semiannually regarding the process with the minister under discipline. This shall continue until the minister under discipline has been restored to ministry or until the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee deems it appropriate to discontinue.

7. The individual shall be encouraged, and in some cases required, to meet regularly with a small accountability group of two or more persons for spiritual direction and support. If required to do so, he/she shall be included in the process of selecting this group under the direction of the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee, but the district superintendent shall make the final decision. These meetings shall continue following the restoration to ministry if the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee deems it necessary.

8. If a spouse is involved, the spouse may be involved in the meetings with the accountability group.

9. Psychological and spiritual counseling may be required for the person (and the spouse) with a counselor(s) approved by the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee. A minimum of ten counseling sessions should be held, and depending on the nature of the problem, perhaps half of the sessions will be with the spouse in attendance. The counselor will provide quarterly reports and a final report to the district superintendent.

10. The person and, if applicable, the spouse, shall be assigned to a local church for nurture. (This may or may not be the church of the supervising pastor.) They shall be expected to attend regularly and participate in all the means of grace available to them through the church.

11. The minister under discipline shall communicate directly with the district superintendent quarterly to report progress in the rehabilitation program. This report might be accomplished in a personal interview or meeting whenever possible.

12. The membership of the person under discipline will be required to remain within the district where the disciplinary action occurred except in extenuating circumstances according to *Manual* paragraph 434.5.

13. The district superintendent and the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee should be sensitive to the economic concerns, including job placement, as a part of facilitating the rehabilitation process and may make whatever recommendations it deems advisable.

VII. Recommended Support Program

(This program is designed as a response to and for the persons who have been wronged or abused.)

1. The response team may assign a confidant to the wronged persons. This confidant should be a person of the same sex who can listen carefully to the story of the persons wronged without judgment or criticism. Preferably, the confidant should be outside the local church setting.

2. Opportunity should be provided for the persons wronged to talk with the response team (and perhaps later to the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee.)

3. Counselor or confidant of the wronged persons should have access to the Ministerial Rehabilitation and Restoration Committee for additional input and report to the district.

4. A reconciliation process should be provided for the wronged persons. This process may include, but not be limited to, meetings with the counselors, district superintendent, and other appropriate persons.

5. Consideration for the safety and comfort of the wronged persons should always be held as a standard.