

Today's congregations need strong servant leaders who can adapt to, change, and grow with their congregations.

For this, pastors must develop character, knowledge, and skills.

How can pastors grow and flourish in ministry?

How can council members support and strengthen pastors?

The first step is to understand pastoral excellence.



## PASTORAL EXCELLENCE IS MARKED BY:

- a deep, authentic relationship with God, marked by prayer, godliness, and fruits of the Spirit
- a strong vision of the church's mission
- a thorough grasp of the Christian faith and an ability to communicate it clearly
- a healthy pastoral identity
- an understanding of leadership in a congregational system
- a commitment to lifelong learning

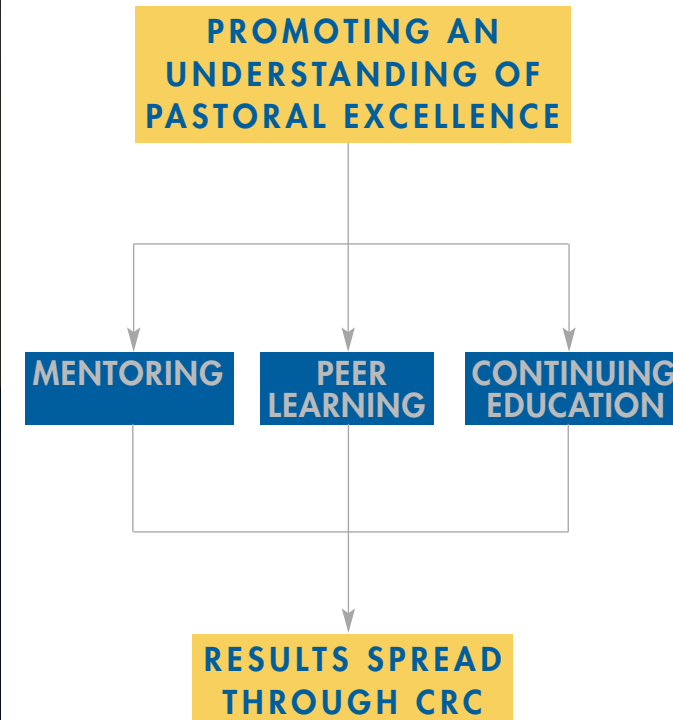
Pastors can't develop these traits all on their own. It takes a denomination-wide effort to develop a culture that sustains pastoral excellence.

Working together, pastors, council members, and agencies can develop practices that foster spiritually mature, imaginative congregational leadership.

Pastors inspired through *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* will encourage more people to pursue ministry as a vocation. What we do now can shape several generations to come.



S U S T A I N I N G  
**Pastoral**  
E X C E L L E N C E



*Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* aims to strengthen and sustain pastors in ministry through mentoring, peer learning, and continuing education.

## MENTORING

All new pastors find surprises in congregational ministry. Mentors can help them explore new ground, learn from mistakes, and avoid loneliness.

*Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* will expand the denomination's mentoring system, helping new pastors set a solid foundation for ministry. It will make mentoring a part of seminary and early ministry experience, as well as a valuable lifelong resource.

The mentoring program will include:

- mini-retreats for seminary seniors and those entering ministry by alternative routes
- mentors for seminarians
- planning for lifelong learning and accountability
- annual retreats for pastors in their first five years of CRC ministry
- biennial conferences to give better training to regional pastors—those who supervise mentor-mentee pairs
- annual matching grants that will let some classes hire regional pastors to provide extra mentoring for other pastors.

## PEER LEARNING

How can pastors stay close to God when they're so busy with church? One way is to pray, learn, and grow in groups with other pastors.

*Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* will accept a variety of proposals to fund group activity and learning in clusters of four to eight pastors. Applicants may be in mid-career or in rural churches or second-generation Korean. Their churches may be in crisis or expanding a building or contemplating cell-based ministry.

Peer learning groups can plan worship, jointly attend a conference or seminary course, or visit churches together. Applicants will explain what unites them, who will coordinate their group, how they'll learn, and how they'll hold each other accountable.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

The right sort of continuing education can improve the ministry skills of pastors, strengthen pastor-congregation ties, and nurture pastoral life. *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* will provide funding to agencies, classes, and congregations for sponsoring continuing education events.

The program encourages creativity and variety in educational topics and settings. Sponsoring groups will propose topics and explain how the learning will be absorbed and shared, both at the event and beyond.

**A NOTE TO CHURCH COUNCILS: *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* funds are available to help your pastors. Encourage them to become involved!**

## AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE SUSTAINING PASTORAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM ARE:

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- Christian Reformed Home Missions
- Christian Reformed Pastor-Church Relations
- CRCNA Denominational Office

**All pastors, congregations, and classes in the United States and Canada are eligible for assistance.**

For more information contact:  
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S U S T A I N I N G  
**Pastoral**  
E X C E L L E N C E

Flourishing  
*Sustaining Pastoral*  
pastors.  
*Excellence is a program to*  
Healthy  
*support and strengthen*  
congregations.  
*pastors—so they can help*  
We need both.  
*build vital congregations.*

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