

## Consultation

Consultation is a helping process emerging from:

- ! A personal relationship established between –
- ! A person or persons who are trying to solve a problem or develop a plan (the church), and
- ! Another person or persons who are trying to help in these efforts (the consultant).

## The Consultant

The consultant's responsibilities are to help the church:

- ! See the situation fully and realistically.
- ! Consider alternative solutions to the problem.
- ! Find and use appropriate resource.
- ! Make the most of potential ability.

Consulting is basically a data gathering enterprise in which problems are defined and plans developed on the basis of the best current appraisal of all available data. Once the data is collected, the consultant's functions are:

- ! Reflective: The consultant helps the church see the issues surrounding the situation and to identify feelings about them.
- ! Diagnostic: The consultant helps the church analyze implications of the data thus gathered by examining the situation, and reassessing the stated problem.
- ! Suggestive: The consultant helps the church develop an appropriate plan of action to deal effectively with the problem.

## The Role of the Consultant

The role of the consultant requires some of the same skills as other leadership roles.

But it differs:

- ! From the supervisory role, in that the consultant is not directly responsible for the work of the church or for the outcome of the consultation.
- ! From the counseling role, in that the consultant focuses on a problem or plan related to the church's particular leadership responsibilities.
- ! From the training role, in that the consultant functions within the context of an actual rather than a practice situation.

The consultant may be described as one who is:

- ! Helpful – who helps others to help themselves.
- ! Informed – who has a broad knowledge of the subject area.
- ! Objective – who has an unbiased point of view.
- ! Trained – who has specialized skill as a consultant.
- ! Supportive – who focuses on the people involved.
- ! Unconflicted – whose advice may be either accepted or rejected.

The consultant needs the following skills and attitudes to implement the helping process:

- ! Listening
- ! Empathy
- ! Flexibility
- ! Confidence
- ! Objectivity
- ! Mutuality
- ! Experimentation
- ! Timing

## **Consultative Relationship**

An effective consultative relationship is a shared quest requiring certain kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and skills on the part of both parties which must be recognized and provided, and which depend upon the nature of the problem to be solved or action to be taken and on the duration and direction of the relationship.

For the relationship to be successful:

- ! The church must trust the consultant and be willing to maintain the relationship as difficult issues are addressed.
- ! There must be a clear understanding on the part of all concerned that the relationship is temporary. The focus of the consultation is on one particular problem or plan. When that task is finished the relationship must be terminated.
- ! Both the consultant and the church must recognize the need for clear working standards and their mutual responsibility to maintain them.