

AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF CANTORS
National Commission on Professional Congregational Relations
(Formerly the National Commission on Cantorial-Congregational Relations)

The Scope, Functions and Procedures of the NCPCR

The NCPCR is a joint commission of the **Union for Reform Judaism** and the **American Conference of Cantors**. Each institution appoints an equal number of members (4) to the Commission. The function of the NCPCR is to attempt to resolve disputes between Cantors and their congregations and to recommend preventive measures that will help congregations and Cantors function harmoniously together.

HOW DOES THE NCPCR BECOME INVOLVED?

When disputes arise, either the Cantor or the president of a given congregation calls one of the Chairpersons or the Directors of the NCPCR. Sometimes issues are resolved at that level. Either a Cantor or a congregational president (on behalf of the congregation) can invite the NCPCR to send a team into a congregation. We always encourage all parties to make it a joint request. If all parties are not willing partners in the process, it makes the work of an NCPCR team very difficult. (Refer to GUIDELINES FOR CANTORIAL CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, Section V, page 18.)

ROLE OF THE NCPCR'S CHAIRPERSON/DIRECTOR

The Chairpersons, one each from the URJ and the ACC, and the directors confer on all cases. One of the four however, assumes primary responsibility for a given case, assembles a team, schedules a mutually convenient date, and works with the team and the congregation until the work of the NCPCR has been completed.

SELECTION OF A TEAM

After a team is requested, the Chairpersons and Directors decide which Cantor and lay leader from the NCPCR will be asked to serve on the team. The Chairperson/Director (the one who has assumed responsibility for the case) then contacts the potential team members to ascertain whether or not they are available. The names of the potential team are shared with the Cantor and president of the congregation in order to make sure that neither party objects to the involvement of a specific team member. Usually, there are no objections. If either party does object, a replacement is found.

DATE SELECTION FOR A TEAM VISIT

A mutually convenient date is set for the visit. Usually a day and one-half (1 1/2) to two (2) days is sufficient. Sometimes it is necessary for a team to return for a second visit. We attempt to allow as little time as possible to elapse between the request for a team and the actual visit.

FUNCTION OF THE TEAM

To both parties, we stress that the Team's purpose in visiting is to listen objectively and to make recommendations that will be helpful in resolving the existing differences. We stress that the Cantor on the Team does not represent the Cantor in the congregation and the lay person on the Team does not represent the lay leadership of the congregations. We indicate that the members of the team will be objective listeners and will make objective recommendations.

DEFINING THE ISSUES

We ask the Cantor and the president of congregation to attempt to agree on the issue on which the team should focus. For example one case, the Team was asked to make recommendations as to whether or not the Cantor should continue serving the congregation. If so, what could both parties do in order to make relationship a more productive one? If not, what should be an equitable way for the separation to occur?

MEETINGS DURING THE VISIT(S)

The president and the Cantor are asked to indicate which groups should meet with the team. Usually, teams meet with the Rabbi, officers, board of the congregation as well as the Ritual Committee. Sometimes they meet with "special interest" groups, temple staff, etc.

There are two basic formats for meeting:

1. To meet separately with each group and then allow time during the visit for recalling group meeting with additional groups.
2. Perhaps to have one meeting which all parties are present. Time is set aside for each of the concerned parties to voice concerns, followed by adequate time for responses. The Team then meets and processes information. It then decides; whether separate meetings with individual groups are necessary.

URJ REGIONAL DIRECTORS AND ACC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The URJ Regional Director and the ACC Executive Director are kept informed and are consulted during this process. The URJ Regional Director and the ACC Executive Director also receive copies of the NCPCR's recommendations to help the Cantor and/or the congregation follow through on those recommendations.

NCPCR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The NCPCR Team will send a report and its recommendations to the NCPCR Chairs and the Directors. The NCPCR will then send the official recommendations to the Cantor and the president of the congregation, the Team, the URJ Regional Director, and the ACC Executive Director. After the recommendations are sent, the Team will then set up a telephone conference call with the president of the congregation and the Cantor in order to discuss and to clarify the NCPCR's recommendations and to help the Cantor and/or the congregation to follow through on the recommendations. (Refer to GUIDELINES FOR CANTORIAL CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, Section V, page 9.)

TEAM'S TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The Team makes its own travel arrangements. This should include renting an automobile at the airport for travel from the airport to the hotel and the congregation, etc. (In order to preserve objectivity, the parties meeting with the Team do not provide transportation, do not provide or join the Team for meals, nor provide sleeping quarters.) Further, the Cantor and the congregation shall not reimburse the Team for any costs incurred.

Thus far all of the above has been negotiated by the NCPCR Chairperson/Director who has assumed responsibility for the case. Before the visit, a letter will be sent to the President and the Cantor of the congregation by the Chairperson outlining arrangements for the visit. During the visit, he/she will be available to the Team for consultation.