

 GUIDELINES

Pastor-Parish Relations

*Connecting the
Pastor, Staff,
and Congregation*

Betsey Heavner
General Board of Discipleship

PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS

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Some paragraph numbers for and language in the Book of Discipline may have changed in the 2012 revision, which was published after these Guidelines were printed. We regret any inconvenience.

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Called to a Ministry of Faithfulness and Vitality

You are so important to the life of the Christian church! You have consented to join with other people of faith who, through the millennia, have sustained the church by extending God's love to others. You have been called and have committed your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to a position of leadership. This Guideline will help you understand the basic elements of that ministry within your own church and within The United Methodist Church.

Leadership in Vital Ministry

Each person is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, and that ministry takes place in all aspects of daily life, both in and outside of the church. Your leadership role requires that you will be a faithful participant in the **mission of the church**, which is to partner with God to **make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world**. You will not only engage in your area of ministry, but will also work to empower others to be in ministry as well. The vitality of your church, and the Church as a whole, depends upon the faith, abilities, and actions of all who work together for the glory of God.

Clearly then, as a pastoral leader or leader among the laity, your ministry is not just a "job," but a spiritual endeavor. You are a spiritual leader now, and others will look to you for spiritual leadership. What does this mean?

All persons who follow Jesus are called to grow spiritually through the practice of various Christian habits (or "means of grace") such as prayer, Bible study, private and corporate worship, acts of service, Christian conferencing, and so on. Jesus taught his disciples practices of spiritual growth and leadership that you will model as you guide others. As members of the congregation grow through the means of grace, they will assume their own role in ministry and help others in the same way. This is the cycle of disciple making.

The Church's Vision

While there is one mission—to make disciples of Jesus Christ—the portrait of a successful mission will differ from one congregation to the next. One of your roles is to listen deeply for the guidance and call of God in your own context. In your church, neighborhood, or greater community, what are the greatest needs? How is God calling your congregation to be in a ministry of service and witness where they are? What does vital ministry look like in the life of your congregation and its neighbors? What are the characteristics,

traits, and actions that identify a person as a faithful disciple in your context? This portrait, or vision, is formed when you and the other leaders discern together how your gifts from God come together to fulfill the will of God.

Assessing Your Efforts

We are generally good at deciding what to do, but we sometimes skip the more important first question of what we want to accomplish. Knowing your task (the mission of disciple making) and knowing what results you want (the vision of your church) are the first two steps in a vital ministry. The third step is in knowing how you will assess or measure the results of what you do and who you are (and become) because of what you do. Those measures relate directly to mission and vision, and they are more than just numbers.

One of your leadership tasks will be to take a hard look, with your team, at all the things your ministry area does or plans to do. No doubt they are good and worthy activities; the question is, “*Do these activities and experiences lead people into a mature relationship with God and a life of deeper discipleship?*” That is the business of the church, and the church needs to do what only the church can do. You may need to eliminate or alter some of what you do if it does not measure up to the standard of faithful disciple making. It will be up to your ministry team to establish the specific standards against which you compare all that you do and hope to do. (This Guideline includes further help in establishing goals, strategies, and measures for this area of ministry.)

The Mission of The United Methodist Church

Each local church is unique, yet it is a part of a *connection*, a living organism of the body of Christ. Being a connectional Church means in part that all United Methodist churches are interrelated through the structure and organization of districts, conferences, and jurisdictions in the larger “family” of the denomination. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes, among other things, the ministry of all United Methodist Christians, the essence of servant ministry and leadership, how to organize and accomplish that ministry, and how our connectional structure works (see especially ¶¶126–138).

Our Church extends way beyond your doorstep; it is a global Church with both local and international presence. You are not alone. The resources of the entire denomination are intended to assist you in ministry. With this help and the partnership of God and one another, the mission continues. You are an integral part of God’s church and God’s plan!

(For help in addition to this Guideline and the *Book of Discipline*, see “Resources” at the end of your Guideline, www.umc.org, and the other websites listed on the inside back cover.)

The Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

The ministry entrusted to this committee is in its name: relations. In every size congregation, the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) must focus on building strong relationships between the staff and the congregation, and between the congregation and the district superintendent (DS). Finding a balance between building relationships and handling administrative tasks can be difficult, so the ministry of this committee is crucial for this aspect of a vital and effective congregation. You have been elected to this committee for Kingdom work: We pray in the Lord's Prayer that God's will be done and Kingdom come. Strong relationships lead to ministry that impacts Christian disciple-making so that God's will may be done for the transformation of your community and our world. This Guideline will outline the specific administrative tasks of the S/PPRC and describe the ministry of building relationships through communication and attention to caring for the staff and congregation.

The administrative function of the S/PPRC includes both leadership and management. Leadership is the role of "keeping an eye on the big picture." Even in the midst of meetings, celebrations, or crises, the S/PPRC members must remember they are part of the body of Christ with a mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. On the S/PPRC, you operate under God's leadership. Keeping an eye on the big picture means putting aside personal positions and desires in order to move closer to God's vision.

Management is the role of tending to daily activities so that details are taken care of and strategies are implemented. Large churches may have staff for day-to-day staff oversight. In some organizations, staff management functions are taken care of by a personnel office or human resources department. Management includes holding both staff and congregation accountable for carrying through with plans and promises, and dealing with both the celebrations and disappointments inherent in any human family and church.

Your ministry of administration and relationship building, plus leadership and management, is a big responsibility. This Guideline suggests practical ways to manage your responsibilities by assigning tasks to a quarterly calendar, though you may organize in whatever way makes sense for your context and church. Adapt the suggestions for your community while always keeping the big picture in mind.

United Methodist congregations give the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee the responsibility for administering the relationship between staff, congregation, and the district superintendent so that the mission of the Church moves forward. This summary of specific tasks for the S/PPRC is listed in (§258.2g) in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (with added suggestions from the Task Force on Clergy Health and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women).

- Encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor and staff and their families, including advocating for a healthy work/life balance.
- Promote unity in the churches.
- Confer with the staff on the effectiveness of ministry and impediments to effectiveness, including conflict of interest, and sexual misconduct.
- Confer with the staff about effective use of their gifts, skills, time, and priorities.
- Conduct annual staff evaluations.
- Teach the congregation about itinerancy, steps into ordained ministry, the value of diversity in staffing, and the ministerial education fund.
- Write job descriptions for staff.
- Confer with staff about continuing education and spiritual formation.
- Confer with the district superintendent about the clergy leadership for the congregation.
- Recommend staff positions to the church council.
- Create written personnel policies and sexual misconduct policies for the congregation.
- Consult on matters of staff support including housing, vacation, insurance, pension, and other matters outlined in the *Discipline*.

Administrative Responsibilities

The S/PPRC has three primary responsibilities related to administration: pastoral and staff evaluations; maintaining a connection with the district superintendent; and communication among pastor/staff, congregation, and DS. Responsibilities related to personal support, benefits, and policy will be considered in another section.

ANNUAL STAFF EVALUATIONS

Your district superintendent will ask annually for your recommendation for the most appropriate appointed leader for your community. In most instances, you will be asked to complete an evaluation form. This Guideline recommends annual evaluation of all staff based on setting expectations at the beginning of the year and working with staff through the year to meet or modify the expectations. See the first and fourth quarter calendar suggestions starting on page 17.

Glossary for S/PPRC

- **Board of Ordained Ministry**—As part of the United Methodist connec-tional system, there are district and conference boards of ordained ministry that have primary responsibility for enlistment and support of clergy leaders for congregations.
- **Candidates**—Persons exploring licensed and ordained ministry.
- **Charge**—One or more churches organized under the *Discipline*, with a charge conference and to which a bishop may appoint a pastor. A charge of two or more churches may be called a circuit, a multi-point charge, or cooperative parish.
- **Charge Conference**—The meeting (conference) of a congregation in which ministry is reported to the district superintendent and business for administration and funding of future ministry is conducted. The charge conference shall meet annually, and between meetings the church council carries out the ministry decisions.
- **Clergy**—Elders and deacons who are appointed by the bishop.
- **Confidentiality**—Generally means that committee members will not talk to persons outside the committee about information shared in SPRC meetings. The term “confidential” refers to a stewardship in which access to information is carefully limited. Confidentiality does not mean secrecy, in which information is shared informally but not officially; nor does it mean silence, in which information is never divulged under any circumstances. Rather, responsible stewardship of information requires limiting access and divulging only on a need-to-know basis, through appropriate channels. The SPRC must also abide by state and federal laws regarding access to or protection of personnel files of employees and mandatory reporting of abuse or other reportable offenses that come to the attention of the committee. A pastor who is obligated to report something learned in confidence must have the support of the SPRC.
- **Discipline**—*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes the form of organization and governance of The United Methodist Church. It is the most current statement of the way we agree to live our lives together. The *Book of Discipline* is organized by paragraph rather than page, chapter, or section. The paragraphs are numbered consecutively within each section, but numbers may be skipped between sections to allow for future additions. There is a table of contents and a topical index. The paragraphs in the 200 section relate to the local church; the 300 section relates to the ministry of the ordained.
- **DS**—District superintendent

- **Itinerant ministry**—The United Methodist system of sending ordained ministers to serve the church and community where appointed by their bishop. This system follows the example of Jesus’ sending disciples as described in Luke 9 and 10.
- **Lay staff**—Persons employed by the congregations for specific tasks.
- **MEF**—The Ministerial Education Fund, taken as a special offering, supports the enlistment, training, and support of ministerial leaders.
- **Pastor**—The person appointed by the bishop to lead the congregation; also called senior pastor or lead pastor.
- **Minister**—The *Discipline* says that all Christians are called by their baptism to be servant ministers. However, job descriptions should only give this title to licensed or ordained clergy under appointment and not to lay staff. For example, a music minister is an ordained person appointed by the bishop while a music director is hired by the congregation. This clarity about titles is important for risk management under Safe Sanctuary[®] policies.
- **PPRC**—The common acronym for Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.
- **SPRC**—The common acronym for Staff-Parish Relations Committee. This term is preferable even in small churches to remind both the staff and congregation that this committee works with full-time and part-time staff; both those appointed by the bishop and employed.
- **Sexual misconduct**—A continuum of unwanted sexual or gender-directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship (paid or unpaid). It includes sexual harassment, gender harassment, sexual abuse, and use of pornography.

CONNECT WITH YOUR DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

The district superintendent relies on the S/PPRC for information about the ministry needs in the mission area where your church is located and the leadership gifts needed to carry out the ministry. In the United States, bishops and cabinets are increasingly describing appointments as “mission fields.” You are the connection for the DS to understand both the community surrounding your church and also the vision of your congregation for reaching out in ministry to that community. The chairperson of the S/PPRC should initiate a relationship with the district superintendent. This Guideline has suggestions in the section for the chairperson’s ministry responsibilities.

THREE-WAY COMMUNICATION

Strong relationships help build clear communication channels, mutual caring, and deep trust among people so that the congregation lives out an inspiring, meaningful ministry that forms disciples who make a difference

in their community and in the world. Good communication, like building relationships, always involves two parties. The S/PPRC is the link that facilitates the communication among staff, congregation, and district superintendent. The committee speaks clearly and plainly about the hopes and dreams of the congregation to the staff in concrete, practical ways so that the staff knows how to spend their time. Also, the committee reminds the congregation of the hopes and dreams they have expressed and how the staff is working toward these goals.

Who Is on the S/PPRC?

The *Book of Discipline* requires every congregation to have a committee on staff/pastor-parish relations (in a multi-point charge, each congregation shall have at least one member on the S/PPRC). The staff/pastor-parish relations committee members are proposed by the committee on nominations and elected by the charge or church conference. The *Discipline* provides for a rotation system to ensure continuity on the committee. It requires that at least five and not more than nine members be elected for terms of three years each, in three classes. One member must be a young adult and all members must be professing or associate members of the church or charge. Members of the committee may succeed themselves for one three-year term.

The S/PPRC should be the most diverse group in the church. Each person should represent or relate to various constituencies in the church. This built in diversity will generate deep conversation about leadership qualities. At the same time, committee members will develop skills for communicating with church members about leadership.

In addition to elected committee members, the *Discipline* also requires that a lay member of the annual conference and the lay leader be members of the S/PPRC. These leaders are exempt from the three year term. No employee of the church or a member of the pastor or staff member's immediate family may serve on the committee, nor may any affiliated ordained clergy persons. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. S/PPRC members must be laypersons, other than the appointed staff. The S/PPRC of a charge where there is more than one church must have at least one representative from each church. The committees of charges in a cooperative parish shall meet together to consider professional leadership.

S/PPRC members should be Christian spiritual leaders who demonstrate regular worship attendance, small group participation, Bible study, and regular generous giving. These practices are essential for committee members to bring integrity to the leadership of this ministry.

The committee shall meet at least quarterly. Additional committee meetings may be called by the bishop, the district superintendent, the pastor, any other person accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. It may not meet without the knowledge of the pastor or the district superintendent. In addition, the committee shall meet in a closed session, and all information shared in the committee shall be confidential. Read the definition of “confidentiality” in the glossary, noting the distinction between confidentiality and secrecy. When the pastor or any member of the staff who is under consideration is not present and that person’s employment is to be discussed, that person must be informed prior to the meeting and immediately thereafter be brought into consultation either by the committee or the district superintendent.

The First Responsibility of S/PPRC Members

The *Discipline* uses five pages to list the responsibilities of the S/PPRC. However, this section first addresses the character and habits of committee members. “People serving on this committee must be engaged in and be attentive to their Christian spiritual development so as to give proper leadership in the responsibilities with which the committee is entrusted” (§258.2).

The apostle Paul wrote to church officials and officers in the congregation he started at Philippi, offering this instruction: “I pray that your love will keep on growing and that you will fully know and understand how to make the right choices” (Philippians 1:9, CEV). May you offer this prayer for each other.

This first responsibility may be the hardest part of your leadership because you will constantly be pulled toward administrative tasks. Both the staff and congregation will turn to you frequently to resolve an issue, heal a misunderstanding, solve a problem, or create a new ministry position. You will also have requests from outside the church such as visits and phone calls from the district superintendent or issues related to the staff involvement in the community where your church is located.

You must resolve, both individually and corporately, to hold fast to this first responsibility. In doing so, you model Christian leadership for the staff and for the congregation. Develop your personal spiritual practices and commit together to pray and listen for God’s guidance during meetings.

Many district superintendents recommend the book *Watching over One Another in Love* for the S/PPRC (see Resources). Get copies of this book for each member of the committee, then read and discuss a few pages each time you meet.

The Ministry of the Committee Members

An explanation of the work you will do on behalf of the church may be couched in “job description” language. You will do a job, certainly; but more importantly, you are engaged in ministry.

- Prepare for your leadership by reading the appropriate paragraphs in the *Discipline* and studying this Guideline. As you read, think about your own gifts and skills that will contribute to the tasks of this committee.
- Prepare yourself for every meeting by reading materials you get before the meeting and asking questions about the agenda.
- When the committee meeting schedule is set, place these dates in your personal calendar. When you cannot attend, notify the chairperson.
- Do all you can to promote positive relationships among staff and congregation, communicating with attentiveness to confidential issues.

The Ministry of the Chairperson

The S/PPRC chairperson is nominated by the church nominating committee and elected by the charge conference. This officer works in partnership with other congregational lay and staff leaders on the church council to discern God’s direction for the focus of your congregation. The chairperson brings knowledge of the gifts and skills of the staff to conversations with other leaders in the church. For example, when you attend the church council meeting, you represent the staff vision and dreams for church ministry and you listen to the conversations for implications about staffing and refocusing job descriptions. Also, when you meet with staff, you represent the ministry hopes and concerns of the congregation and other leaders. Your insights from the congregation help the staff set priorities for the time and actions. These leadership conversations will shape the agendas you set for the meetings of the S/PPRC. More than a “job,” you are engaged in ministry.

EQUIP YOURSELF FOR THIS LEADERSHIP ROLE

- Begin with prayer. Ask God to be with you, to guide your thinking and actions, and to increase your understanding of the way your skills will be used to lead the staff/pastor-parish relations committee.
- Read this Guideline and the current Disciplinary sections to understand the responsibilities of the S/PPRC.
- Make an appointment with your pastor(s) and district superintendent to talk about expectations for the S/PPRC. The goal is to build a partnership for working together.
- Meet with the previous chairperson to learn how the committee worked in the past and how to handle any unfinished business.
- Get copies of policies, congregational job descriptions, and procedures that have guided the committee in the past.

- Develop a calendar of meetings in consultation with the pastor, other people who will attend, and the church calendar. As soon as meetings are set, inform other members of the S/PPRC.

HELP FOR THE POSITION

People who can help you are the district superintendent; annual conference program staff people; ordained and lay leaders in your church; and people in the community outside your church who are skilled in communication, mediation and peacemaking, law, benefit programs, and social needs. Other sources of help are your annual conference board of ordained ministry, the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD), the General Council on Finance and Administration, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. See the Resources suggested at the back of this Guideline.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PASTOR AND/OR DS

Most annual conferences have standard rules, expectations, and procedures established for issues relating to all clergy, staff, parsonages, benefits, and perhaps other issues. Conferences have different processes in place for practical details of clergy moves. Prepare yourself by asking these questions:

- What are conference parsonage standards?
- What are conference expectations for continuing education and spiritual formation?
- How does the S/PPRC in a congregation recruit, nurture, and support candidates for certification and ordained ministry? When does this oversight of candidacy move to the district or conference board of ministry? What is our congregational responsibility when the boards of ordained ministry are directing the candidate?
- What are conference policies related to sexual misconduct and building safe sanctuaries for all people?
- What are conference policies for ministerial evaluation? Are there common forms and procedures?
- What conference policies apply to lay employees?
- What else do I need to be aware of as I work with the staff and congregation in my local church?

PROVIDE TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

Your first task as chair is to help the committee know their job (remember—ministry). Help the committee members understand the scope of their responsibilities and how their work contributes to the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This committee does not supervise staff, but helps the staff prioritize their work. They also

support the staff so they can focus on the ministry of your church in your community.

Find out if training will be offered in your district or annual conference. Training modules are available for the S/PPRC on the GBOD website (see Resources). Take time in a meeting to reflect on the training information and ask: What was helpful? What applies to your situation? What questions are there?

There is a brief training outline suggested in this Guideline under the first quarter calendar for the committee.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

Meetings of S/PPRC will have a huge impact on the congregation, committee, and staff. It is crucial that the meetings, while confidential, be conducted in an open, supportive, flexible, participative, and trustworthy manner.

Prepare. Notify/remind committee members and staff of the meeting date, time, and place at least a week in advance. On the meeting notice, include the names of everyone on the committee as a reminder of who they are working with. Plan the agenda, including worship relevant to the business of the meeting; and coordinate with others who will make presentations. It's usually helpful to mail the agenda and minutes prior to the meeting.

Elect a vice-chairperson and a secretary: set ground rules. There are suggestions of procedures in *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences*, by Gilbert R. Rendle (see Resources). Stress the absolute necessity for confidentiality as it relates to what goes on in the committee—not only the actions taken, but also the discussions preceding the actions. It is very important to discuss this when you are establishing how you will work together. It is very difficult to introduce this concept when there is tension over an issue. Remember that your administrative task of working with personnel is not the same as the program ministries of other committees. It is helpful to reflect on the difference between confidentiality (private matters shared in trust) and secrecy (something hidden or concealed).

Start and end meetings on time. This is a sign of respect for everyone's time. If business takes longer than expected, negotiate extending the meeting or continue business to the next meeting. Begin with worship to focus attention toward God. You will find suggestions appropriate for your meetings on the GBOD website (see Resources). Use Scripture, music, and other

worship elements as you feel led to help the committee consider how the congregation and the pastor/staff can work together. Ask God for guidance in planning and decision-making.

Have a time of learning and education for the committee related to the task and agenda items. This might be a selected part of this Guideline or the *Book of Discipline*. You might have information to share from the district superintendent or a bishop's newsletter. Select a topic that will prepare the committee for work ahead.

Hear reports from liaisons to the pastor/staff. Any reports should be made after prior discussion with the staff members concerned. Staff members should have the opportunity to share recent joys or disappointments, plans that are progressing for the future, and the most pressing concerns.

Review the decisions and recommendations made during the meeting and clarify who is responsible for the actions. What needs attention? What needs to be communicated to the congregation and/or the staff? How will you communicate to the congregation and who will be responsible for completing the communication? It is important for the S/PPRC to conclude every meeting with this question: How do the decisions we've made help our congregation fulfill the mission and vision we have?

Conclude with a brief evaluation of the meeting. How has the meeting helped to advance the mission and vision of your church? What issues have been raised for future agendas? How have committee members experienced God's love and guidance in this meeting? Spend some time in prayer.

An Overview of the Year

The *Book of Discipline* says this committee must meet at least quarterly. The calendar below arranges the functions and responsibilities of the S/PPRC into quarters and suggests a flow for the committee work. Remember that your location, church size, traditions, culture, and history will influence the way your committee operates. You are free to manage and arrange these tasks in a way that works for your church and context. Churches of all sizes need to pay attention to those things that bring new vitality and growing faith to your congregation.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>January–March</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation for committee work • Set expectations as basis for evaluations in 4th quarter • Establish relationships with congregation, other leaders, staff, ordained deacons, affiliated clergy • Set pattern to identify ministry candidates • Plan for dealing with rumors and conflict 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>April–June</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor strategies to meet expectations, adjust as appropriate • Parsonage, housing issues • Legal review • Policy review • When the pastor changes
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>July–September</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review written job descriptions and staffing needs • Review salary and benefit packages • Continuing education plans • Monitor strategies to meet expectations, adjust as appropriate • Leadership development 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>October–December</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual staff evaluations based on expectations set in the first quarter • Make reports to charge conference • Complete unfinished business • Annual consultation with district superintendent

Sample forms, articles, and examples for this committee are available at the General Board of Discipleship website. (See Resources.)

First Quarter: January–March

Orientation for Committee Work

Provide training or review for all committee members using this Guideline and suggestions in the resources section at the end. See “The Ministry of the Chairperson” starting on page 12 and the suggested Committee Orientation on page 18.

At an early meeting, establish ground rules for your work together. It is tempting for the congregation (or the committee) to perceive S/PPRC as the “complaint department.” Your role, as you will see, is interpretation and support. You are encouraged to make decisions by consensus and discernment. Discuss the importance of confidentiality of sensitive information while communicating openly to help the congregation understand the efforts of staff toward discipleship goals. Review the glossary definition of confidentiality.

Set a calendar for meetings. Elect a vice or co-chairperson and a secretary.

Establish Expectations with Staff

Establishing expectations with staff members in the first quarter of the year has several advantages. First, the expectations form a basis for evaluation at the end of the year in which you can evaluate the degree to which the expectations have been met. Another advantage is that the basis for evaluations moves beyond personalities and work style to focus on ministry. A congregation benefits from setting expectations because everyone will need to discuss and clarify the goals for the community. The process of naming expectations helps everyone be realistic about time requirements to achieve dreams and helps set priorities for time management. As the S/PPRC facilitates setting priorities, they can help the congregation recognize the gifts and skills of the staff and work with the nominating committee to find volunteer leaders for priority ministry that the staff has neither the time nor gifts to handle.

Most districts now have evaluation forms to fill out at the end of the year for charge conference. Ask for those forms at the first of the year, recognizing that the specific details may be modified by the district or conference through the year. You may even have suggestions that will clarify or improve the charge conference forms! One district superintendent said in a telephone interview, “S/PPRC can fill out an annual assessment as a check list or they can seize the opportunity for a real conversation that focuses on the unique setting of the congregation.”

Committee Orientation:
A One-Hour Training Model for S/PPRC

Supplies: one or more copies of the *Book of Discipline*, a Bible, at least one Guideline (one copy per person is preferable), a calendar of church events for the year ahead, a candle and lighter.

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Welcome everyone and indicate new members. Point out the reasons for diversity on this committee. Express the hope of working together well in order to build relationships that accomplish God's purposes for your congregation. Invite people to introduce themselves and tell when and why they joined the congregation.

Goal of This Orientation and Introduction of the *Discipline* (15 minutes)

Goals are sharing an overview of the S/PPRC's ministry, developing a plan for the year, and establishing details for meetings.

Show the *Book of Discipline* to the group. Explain what it is, how it is organized, and how it is to be used. (See ¶258.2. and the glossary on pp. 8-9 of this Guideline.) Read the sentence at the beginning instructing people on the committee to grow as Christians. Launch a ritual for your meetings by lighting a candle to remind everyone of God's presence. Read Scripture to set the tone for your work, such as Psalm 127:1; Psalm 133; Isaiah 43:18-19; or Philippians 1: 3-6, 9-11. Allow a moment of quiet for people to reflect on Scripture, then place the open Bible next to the burning candle.

Administrative Responsibilities (20 minutes)

Note the responsibilities for this committee in the *Discipline*, which are summarized into 3 primary areas in this Guideline. Introduce this Guideline to the committee members. Point out the calendar (page 16) as one way to cover the responsibilities of this group. Remind people that all these tasks fulfill the important ministry of caring for one another and building up the relationships in the body of Christ. Point out the glossary and resources, and allow time for people to see the helps available in the Guideline.

Details for Your Committee (10 minutes)

Set a meeting calendar that coordinates with other church events.

Agree on assignments. (Will individuals be liaison to specific staff? Will individuals gather information for committee tasks? What commitments will you make for prayer, for reporting to the congregation?)

Closing (5 minutes)

Evaluate this orientation: Ask members these questions and allow time for answers: What went well? What did you learn? What do you need?

Repeat the Scripture you read before. Close with a prayer thanking God for God's promises in the Scripture, and asking God's guidance on the committee, the congregation, and individuals.

In small congregations, the S/PPRC probably works directly with a pastor and perhaps part-time staff to establish direction and goals and to talk about the way these goals can be met. Remind everyone that strategies are like experiments for meeting a goal—some will work and some will fail. Through the year, discuss with staff and with the congregation how the strategies are working. Change strategies as needed.

Some congregations will have the opportunity to be the first charge for a pastor. You can help the new pastor by setting two or three goals as priorities to help the pastor learn to allocate time. The S/PPRC needs to take the lead to check with the pastor on how well the goals are being met. Some congregations provide the first appointment for a series of pastors. These congregations may understand that their mission and ministry is to nurture effective pastors for a lifetime of service.

In larger congregations, the senior or lead pastor supervises staff and works on development of ministry goals and strategies with staff. In small or large congregations, the S/PPRC is the bridge between the congregation and the pastor.

Here's an example of the way one congregation involved everyone in setting expectations. Working closely with the church council leaders and pastor, the S/PPRC asked people to write the top three things for the pastor to do, and asked the pastor to cite what he or she felt was most important. Using both the congregational and pastoral priorities, they worked with the pastor to develop a plan and set priorities for the year. The S/PPRC shared the plan with the congregation for a continuous loop of building relationships and defining their ministry.

You can adapt this example for the ministry of your congregation. You might substitute another staff position for "pastor." Or you might ask people to write the top three things a staff person should do to increase discipleship. Frame the request whatever way makes sense for your congregation.

Widely varying expectations will open the way for the church council to have more conversation about the current direction of the congregation.

An important part of building relationships is for the S/PPRC to report back to the church council and congregation what they had prioritized and the plan to work toward these goals. During the year, the S/PPRC can report progress on the work plan. The committee must also support the staff when individuals voice concern about what the staff is (or isn't) doing. You must speak up to remind the congregation and individuals about the priorities that have been set and the strengths of the staff, then work to address concerns.

Establish Relationships with Congregational Leaders

We often say church is like a family, referring to both the good friends with whom we spend time and the brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we worship and confide. Just like a family, church leaders share overlapping responsibilities and decision-making. For example, the S/PPRC shares responsibility with trustees for any staff housing the church owns and with the finance committee on developing budget that includes salary and benefit expenses. You work with the nominations committee to identify leaders for ministries that the staff cannot cover. In larger churches, staff responsibilities and expectations may be shared or delegated to a business administrator, a youth or children's council, a nursery school director, or music director.

The church council has responsibility for coordinating the ministry. The S/PPRC chair will attend church council meetings to report the work of the committee and to coordinate with other leaders. In a small church, leaders see each other frequently for fellowship and conversation about church issues. In a large church, the church council meeting may be the place that leaders connect with each other.

Build Relationships with Deacons and Affiliated Clergy

Deacons in full connection may have a primary appointment in your congregation and lead in equipping people for ministry through Christian education, music, parish nursing, professional counseling, administration, and other ministries. Increasingly, the bishop appoints deacons to an agency, a school, a social service provider, a health care setting, or some other setting where the deacon carries the love of the church into the world.

Deacons appointed beyond the local church have a primary appointment, salary support, and assessment outside the local church. However, they are accountable to a charge conference and relate to the S/PPRC. When they relate to your congregation, this is called a secondary appointment. They will make an annual report to your charge conference. The S/PPRC helps the congregation know about and understand the ministry of the deacon. The S/PPRC assists the deacon to incorporate his or her skills and gifts in the ministry of the congregation, while recognizing the deacon's primary appointment and time commitment is outside the congregation.

Ordained deacons lead God's people in living daily in the community as Christian disciples. The ministry of deacons is described in Acts 6:1-7. When the church was thriving and growing, the disciples recognized the need for leaders to connect the body of Christ with the needs of the world. Read and reflect on this Scripture. Where does the community outside our church need to know the healing love of Jesus Christ? Who among us are living as deacons? What are similarities and differences between Christian service and civic clubs that do good works? Are there people in our congregation who should be encouraged to explore ordination as a deacon?

You may also have ordained elders who relate to your congregation, but have their primary appointment outside the church. Initiate conversations with these deacons and elders to learn about their ministry and to help the congregation understand how the congregation's ministry is extended through their work into the world.

Launch Staff Support

According to the *Book of Discipline*, the S/PPRC is responsible for "encouraging, strengthening, nurturing, supporting and respecting the pastor and staff and their families." You may want to assign a committee member to each staff person to build one-on-one relationships. It's usually best for the chairperson to build this relationship with the lead pastor. S/PPRC support extends throughout the year; not just at called meetings or in crises.

Pastors and staff need friendly advisers: people to suggest how best to handle some of the joys, concerns, and issues of the parish. This function of counsel determines, in large measure, the degree to which the shared vision can be achieved. The S/PPRC members are chosen because they have the ability, by way of the Holy Spirit, to discern what the pastor (and staff) need, what the church needs, and how to bring these needs together for ministry. The information and feedback of the S/PPRC, along with the church

council, is essential for developing the ministry direction of the congregation and pastor. The joys and concerns can be shared as appropriate during S/PPRC meetings. The committee may set particular times and events for staff appreciation.

An issue that is gaining national attention is the holistic well-being of the pastor, staff, and their families. Church work typically includes irregular hours, evening and weekend activities, seasons of exceptional busyness, and unpredictable crises and interruptions, which all take a toll on everyone concerned.

The S/PPRC has a critical role in supporting the staff and their families in maintaining healthy self-care and balance. Talk with the staff about their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being and the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Communicate with the congregation to interpret the need and benefits of a healthy lifestyle and habits for the pastor and staff. The S/PPRC should encourage, if not require, the pastor and staff to take Sabbath time each week, use their vacation days, pursue continuing education opportunities, and make sufficient time for their families. One added word: the church may have ministry going on 24/7, but no staff person can keep that schedule. If S/PPRC is serious about ensuring time for self-care, the strategies, calendar, priorities, and assignments to the pastor must also support that.

Build Intentional Communication Plans

You can tell that good communication is a critical skill for the members of this committee. Listening and responding to the church and community is very important. People may approach you with sensitive information or come with deeply felt convictions. Some people need help to express what they really want to say, and you might gather opinions in interviews and surveys. The S/PPRC should use active listening skills to make certain different voices are clearly understood. (Remember; you're not just a complaint department.)

Body language is an important part of communicating. Be aware of gender and cultural differences in styles of communicating. We often reveal more about what we are thinking by our actions than by our voices. Be alert to what people are saying with their posture, gestures, hands, eyes, heads, arms, and legs. This is especially important in cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. See resource suggestions at the end of this Guideline. Resources may be available in your community through sponsors of crisis hot lines or a school's communication department.

A Checklist for Good Communication

- Encourage the other person to stay in the present, the here-and-now. Acknowledge ways that past activities are a strong foundation for current ministry, but stay away from the “we used to do it” scenario.
- Begin statements with “I believe,” “I feel,” and “In my opinion.” Encourage others to do the same.
- Ask what the other person is feeling, if appropriate. Remember that some people find discussion of feelings offensive or irrelevant. Be aware of your own feelings as well.
- Repeat what you hear to ensure accuracy. Ask questions for information and clarity.
- Build trust by finding what you can agree on, then move on to any differences.
- Accept; do not judge. This does not necessarily mean reaching an agreement.
- Suggest opportunities for in-depth conversation (at home, on a walk, at lunch, and so forth).
- Provide ways people can share new ideas. One congregation supplies pew racks with a card saying, “I wish our congregation would ____.” People are encouraged to submit ideas by filling out a card and putting it in the offering plate.

Rumors begin when people hear or observe a few facts and then fabricate the rest of the story. When any rumors begin to circulate, it is essential to communicate facts quickly. The way to stop rumors is to communicate openly and honestly what you can. Rumors may develop over large and small issues. Most importantly, develop a plan for dealing with rumors before you have larger incidents to deal with! Most issues will be handled within the scope of the communication plan you establish in your ground rules. Stick to the facts and remember your covenant of confidentiality.

Talk about how you will handle major incidents and rumors surrounding them, especially if an incident brings media attention. Remember, the quicker the facts are made known, the quicker the rumors will die. The chairperson and committee members should all be clear about:

- who speaks on behalf of the congregation
- when you involve the district superintendent, bishop, or conference staff
- the annual conference plan for responding to the media
- how you handle the media

Your annual conference communicator can help you develop a plan for working with the media, writing appropriate messages, and managing interviews.

Conflict is another area where good communication is important. Remember that conflict is normal in communities and families. It is simply two different ideas in the same place at the same time. The important part of conflict management is bringing those conflicts into the open where they can be clarified.

Conflict, handled properly, can strengthen the church. People learn they can trust each other, be heard, and be vulnerable in ways often not possible outside the body of Christ. Know when to ask for outside mediation. Earlier is better! See suggestions in the Resources list.

There is a story in Acts 15 of a church in conflict over membership requirements. Read this story to open one of your meetings, asking people to listen for examples of the communication tips listed above.

Identify New Church Leaders

The *Book of Discipline* says the S/PPRC is “to enlist, interview, evaluate, review, and recommend annually to the charge conference lay preachers and persons for candidacy for ordained ministry, and to enlist . . . [candidates] for missionary service.” Many pastors can tell a story of having a person in their home congregation suggest to them that God might be calling them to church work. Though this is suggested in first quarter activities, you are charged *throughout* the year to notice people whom God may be calling into professional ministry.

The United Methodist Church recognizes several forms of ministry by ordaining, consecrating, certifying, licensing, and commissioning individuals. These are deacons, elders, local pastors, deaconesses, missionaries, and certified personnel. All of these people have committed themselves to specialized training for ministry. They, along with the lay servants, certified lay ministers, and other laity in the local congregation, make up the ministry of the church. You may not have all of these forms of ministry present in your congregation, but it is the responsibility of the S/PPRC to teach the congregation about leadership possibilities and processes.

The S/PPRC interviews and recommends candidates to the charge conference. Recommending a person for candidacy is holy business and should not be done lightly. When individuals come to the committee because they sense a call from God to professional ministry, you are helping them discern a vocational call. John Wesley’s questions for examiners are listed in ¶310

and the S/PPRC responsibility during steps into candidacy are in ¶310. Reflect on your observation of and experience with the person you are interviewing. Pray before the interview, pray with the candidate, and support the person who is determining God's direction for his or her life. You can choose to recommend, not recommend, or wait until you see evidence of a more faithful or fruitful life. You may encourage any potential candidates to develop their skills and faith for strong Christian leadership in a secular vocation.

The pastor, district superintendent, and district and conference boards of ordained ministry have resources to help you with the process of recommending candidates. Your job is to identify whom God might be calling and nurture and support their vocational search.

When candidates are approved by the charge conference, the S/PPRC leads the congregation in supporting and encouraging these candidates through the years of training and formation for leadership. Set up a system for enlisting and supporting people who feel a call to full time church work.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (See inside back cover) provides materials to help you teach your congregation.

Second Quarter: April–June

The suggestions for the first quarter involved orientation for the S/PPRC committee and relationship building on several levels. For the second quarter, turn attention to the business of doing business.

Monitor and Develop Strategies

Effective assessment at the end of the year begins with a clear understanding between the S/PPRC, congregation, and the staff members about the expectations of the staff. In this quarter help the staff establish their disciple making strategies and the committee's participation in those strategies. It is the role of S/PPRC to support each staff person with the agreed-upon priorities regarding time, finances, and energy. The S/PPRC will meet with staff occasionally to ask which strategies are working and, if necessary, to adjust the strategies.

For example: A pastor has a goal of improving preaching and the S/PPRC agrees with the pastor's decision to set aside one day a week for sermon preparation. Several strategies are to be implemented to support that goal: the pastor does not take calls that day and/or turns off the phone, someone else covers emergencies, the pastor works at a place protected from interruptions, and he or she spends time that day with a preaching coach or mentor.

It is very important for S/PPRC to interpret to the congregation what impact the plan has on congregational life and the specific support needed. In this example, the S/PPRC must let people know who will cover the telephone, what alternate number to call, and who to contact in an emergency.

Parsonage and Housing Issues

The *Discipline* calls for an annual review of church owned parsonages by the pastor, chair of S/PPRC, and chair of trustees. The *Clergy Housing Handbook* (and perhaps your annual conference) has checklists and policies for parsonage standards, especially as related to inventory, maintenance, and repairs (see Resources). Arrange a mutually agreeable time for the parsonage tour. While trustees are responsible for care of the property, the S/PPRC is responsible for the care and support of the parsonage family. Encourage the parsonage family to notify you of issues before they become problems.

Increasingly, churches are providing a housing allowance for clergy. Whether you have a parsonage or provide a housing allowance, ask yourselves if the housing support provides accommodations similar to other professionals in the church family and the community.

Legal Responsibilities

Legal responsibilities with employed and appointed staff include church, state, and federal law for lay and clergy staff. Make sure you are in compliance with federal wage and hiring laws, laws related to workman's compensation, and taxes. The legal department of the General Council on Finance and Administration has helpful information on their website. (See the inside back cover.)

Church Policies

The *Discipline* says that the S/PPRC shall recommend to the church council a written statement of policy and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not subject to appointment by the bishop. Review policies and assumptions that are already in place so you can update what you have or create a written policy. A sample policy is available on the GBOD website.

Consider these issues in developing a church personnel policy:

- **Hiring Issues:** Introductory or probationary period, hiring of relatives, evaluation
- **Compensation:** When/how often is payday; time-keeping
- **Benefits:** Insurances, vacation, overtime, retirement
- **Supervision:** Work rules, appearance on the job, harassment and misconduct, safety (especially when/if alone in the building), dealing with problems
- **Rules and regulations:** Meal and break time, smoking, use of phone and computers, office hours/work hours, receiving gifts from church members and others

Congregations often have unwritten rules where insiders know “the way we do it.” It is a form of hospitality to have written policies. Sometimes, groups may operate in conflict with one another! For example, many annual conferences require that congregations have written a “Safe Sanctuary”[®] policy related to risk management with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and a policy on sexual misconduct. General Conference has directed every congregation to have a policy for preventing sexual misconduct. New policies are being developed for safe use of the church's internet in the office and in classrooms. Trustees may have policies for safe use of property and the management of assets. There may be unwritten policies related to the use of church equipment and property. You may have or need to develop procedures for the safe use of new equipment or technology. Even though the issue is essentially the same—safety—different groups have policies and practices that relate to their specific needs.

The church council may assign one group to bring together all your church policies. Keep this as simple as possible; easy to read and understand. It is good to have policies reviewed by a lawyer who is familiar with local laws. There are several sample policies and help for developing policies on agency websites. See resources listed in this Guideline.

When the Pastor Changes

Clergy appointments are made annually in The United Methodist Church, so you may have a new pastor or a returning pastor. About one-fourth of United Methodist churches experience a pastoral change each year. The *Book of Discipline* requires the S/PPRC to teach the congregation about itinerancy and the value of diversity in staffing. The United Methodist system of moving pastors from church to church is unlike most other denominations in which congregations “call” a pastor. Our practice is called “itinerancy.”

Our system of annual appointments of pastoral leaders connects all United Methodist congregations with a pool of ordained and commissioned individuals who have a wide variety of gifts and graces for leadership. Ideally, this itinerant system allows both pastors and congregations to thrive in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This cooperative system allows United Methodists to retain qualified pastoral leaders for local churches on a continual basis. The S/PPRC is responsible for modeling and ensuring fairness, justice, and appreciation for those who facilitate God’s work in the name of the church. The S/PPRC plays a vital role, along with district superintendents, bishops, and pastors in this appointive process. The S/PPRC represents the voice of the congregation as you consult with the district superintendent.

WHEN A CHANGE IS ANNOUNCED

When the bishop announces an appointment change, plan opportunities to celebrate the ministry of the pastor and congregation during your life together. The S/PPRC can model for the congregation a healthy acceptance of and the process for grieving the loss of a pastor (and his or her family). Work through feelings of anger, hurt, loss, and fear of failure. Do not dump previous feelings and frustrations on the new pastor; let her or him begin with a clean slate.

You should not be surprised if your new minister is a woman or a member of an ethnic group different from the majority of the congregation. Welcome this new minister to the congregation and community. There are resources suggested for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. The

S/PPRC members need to be the leaders who call the congregation to hospitality and support of the new pastor. The S/PPRC is charged with setting the tone of acceptance, cooperation, and support of the new pastor—whatever the race, ethnicity, gender, or age. Affirm the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to all God’s people and celebrate our oneness in God.

When the pastor changes, the first step is announcing the change to the congregation. In most instances, the departing pastor or the S/PPRC chair makes the announcement to the congregation at an appropriate time. Sometimes, the announcement is made first by the bishop or district superintendent. The S/PPRC committee must maintain confidentiality and respect local and conference traditions in making an announcement.

Everyone will have feelings about a change, and those feelings will be expressed in a variety of ways. In the best of situations, the departing pastor provides pastoral care by connecting past ministry to future possibilities. The pastor or chair of S/PPRC needs to tell people the reasons for the change in a way that both keeps confidences and also expresses discernment of God’s call and direction for the pastor and congregation. In the transition, take care to affirm the ways in which the congregation is making healthy personal adjustments to the change. Assure everyone that God is guiding them into the future.

The S/PPRC members also lead the congregation away from blaming. Congregations can get stuck, making comments like “they took our pastor,” or “everything was going so well.” If the pastor leaves under difficult circumstances, blaming comments may center on damage done or losses incurred. Think about possible responses if you overhear such comments. Ideally, the committee will consider strategies for healing and restoration *before* an announcement is made.

When a family adds or loses a member, the family is not exactly the same, and so it is with the congregation when the pastor changes. However, some things endure—for example, commitments to one another, commitments to ministry, values about what is important. Remember that you already have a structure in place! At the same time, new leaders and new ideas may emerge. A new pastor provides an opportunity for both pastors and people to pause for reflection and evaluation of the ministry in your location.

INVITING A FORMER PASTOR TO RETURN

Former pastors can still be friends, but the professional pastoral relationship is with the newly appointed leader. It is a matter of clergy ethics and boundaries that former pastors do not encroach or interfere, either in person or by

way of media. (Remind everyone—pastors and congregation—that contact through the internet or other electronic means should be considered public!) Ask your district superintendent about the conference policy related to pastors returning to do weddings, funerals, or visitations. As a rule, these life passages should be shared between the congregation and the new pastor. The incumbent pastor is the proper person to invite a former clergy or staff person to return for pastoral functions. If there is any difficulty, appeal to the DS for help.

HANDLING THE TRANSITION

The S/PPRC can provide opportunities for congregational members to write letters and make other expressions of appreciation to the exiting pastor. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* has services of farewell and for welcome of a pastor.

The S/PPRC is involved in the physical move from one appointment to another, though the details vary in different locations. Ask questions if you are not sure how this will take place and how costs are covered. You are responsible along with trustees for preparing space for the new person. Usually this involves cleaning, painting, and sometimes updating housing and office space.

The PPRC should consult with the incoming pastor for the first Sunday's worship. Make a plan for the pastor to meet congregational and other community leaders during the first few weeks. Take the lead in discussing congregational support for balancing personal and professional activities. You should discuss plans for continuing education, plans for Sabbath and family time, and expectations for healthy habits. You will also want to discuss ministry expectations.

RECOGNIZE ALL THE STAFF

The S/PPRC is the cheerleading squad for the staff of your church throughout the year. The first Sunday of the new appointment year is a good time to celebrate the appointment and recognize all the staff in worship where you can acknowledge and affirm the gifts they share in leading the congregation. Other opportunities to celebrate the staff may be on birthdays or anniversaries, Christmas, for specific accomplishments, or for community achievements.

Pay attention to creating a pleasant work environment for the staff and to providing the tools and equipment for the job. The S/PPRC leads the congregation in celebrating the work of the staff. Acknowledge specific examples of ways the staff builds the mission and vision of the church.

Third Quarter: July–September

The third quarter suggestions relate to professional ministry: job descriptions, supervision, compensation, continuing education, and spiritual renewal.

Review Job Descriptions and Strategies

The *Book of Discipline* provides an exhaustive list of responsibilities and duties for the appointed pastor that is performed “within the context of the appointment.” This means that not every item receives equal weight; the context of the appointment helps you prioritize. The S/PPRC worked with the pastor during the first quarter to set expectations in light of congregational needs and pastoral strengths. During this quarter, review the list to stay on track with expectations; it may stimulate new and creative ministry in your setting. If the pastor is new, this will be his or her “first quarter.”

The S/PPRC is charged by the *Discipline* to develop written job descriptions for staff in cooperation with the senior or lead pastor. First start with a statement of the *results* expected from this position and ministry. Then follow with the ministry *responsibilities*. (For example, “The Children’s Ministry Director is responsible for a comprehensive Christian formation plan for children from birth to teens.”) The staff person and supervisor will develop specific *strategies* as they set priorities and goals. (For example, Sunday morning classes for children, after school opportunities, and vacation Bible school.) You can look at examples of job descriptions on the GBOD website.

Even if the position and/or staff person have been in place, it’s a good idea to brush off the description each year to update as necessary. If the congregation is growing or changing, the positions descriptions need to keep pace. Recommendations for new staff positions are made to the church council.

While developing ministry descriptions falls in the realm of S/PPRC, be sure to invite input from people who work in, who participate in, or who are affected by that special area, such as music, youth ministry, or an age level. Generally, staff are hired to do ministry *with* rather than *for* an age level or group of people.

Developing a job description will help you clarify your goals and create a position for missional reasons rather than momentary convenience. For example, hiring a summer youth director when you can’t find a volunteer covers that ministry until September, when you are then faced with the

same unresolved staffing issue. Be clear about the way the position (or the abrupt ending of a position) will contribute to your congregation's mission of making disciples.

CONTINUE TO MONITOR STRATEGIES

You identified expectations in the first quarter and set your goals and strategies more firmly during the second quarter. Near the end of this quarter, meet with staff to evaluate how their ministry plan is progressing. Here are some questions to consider for each of the strategies:

- Did the strategy meet its goal?
- What outcomes do we need to build on?
- What has been learned for future strategies?
- What examples of growing discipleship have we seen? Are there implications for future ministry?
- What strategies do we have for follow up?
- How does this strategy relate to the priority we have for the year?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As you work with people in the congregation and discuss on-going or new ministries with staff, be alert to persons who are growing in faith and showing leadership skill. You may have recommendations for the nominating committee of people whose skills and gifts can complement the staff. (Review information about leadership development under first quarter responsibilities.)

Supervision of Staff

As the number of staff people increase, be clear about who reports to whom. It's important to establish that the S/PPRC has direct involvement with the appointed staff and a consultative role related to non-appointed staff. The senior pastor provides day-to-day supervision of staff. In a large church, the senior pastor may delegate supervision to the head of a department. The S/PPRC can assign a liaison for each staff person or staff group to support and encourage their work and to increase communication with the congregation.

S/PPRC may need to work with staff on issues of work style, personality, or generational differences. Issues may be resolved through the relationships that have been developed among S/PPRC, staff, and congregation and may include some outside interventions such as training, a speaker, or mediation.

Salary and Benefits Review

Each year the S/PPRC recommends salary, benefits, insurances, vacation, housing, and continuing education for all appointed and non-appointed staff.

After consultation with the finance committee, this recommendation goes to the church council. The church council presents the financial recommendations to the charge conference, which votes to approve or amend.

Show your care of the pastor and staff by working with them to develop a salary and benefit package that meets their unique needs within the ability of the church or charge to pay it. There are several things to consider.

- The chair of S/PPRC should consult with the finance committee chair about the overall budget for salaries and benefits and give advance notice of any recommended changes.
- Every annual conference session sets the minimum salary for pastors in various categories. The lay member of annual conference on your committee will have the information or know where to find it.
- The district superintendent is generally the presiding officer at charge conference, and he or she may need to be consulted on salaries for the appointed staff, particularly if there is a change of pastor.
- If you are developing a compensation package for a new position, gather information about salary and benefits for a comparable position from other churches in the annual conference and in your community. Review wage and employment laws. Consider the level of responsibility you expect from the person in this position.

Other aspects of support for all employees may not need annual approval at charge conference, but should be reviewed by your committee.

1. Working conditions, including working space, office helpers (volunteers), equipment, and hours.
2. Business expenses such as cell phones, internet connection, mileage and travel expenses when on church business.
3. Annual conference session attendance allowance, continuing education for both clergy and employed staff, moving expenses.
4. Social Security, Worker's Compensation, insurance, opportunity for the pension program, and vacation allowances. Some conferences have vacation policies for clergy.

Review the benefits for all staff to make sure they comply with your stated policies and with the United Methodist Social Principles. Full- and part-time employees must be treated fairly and justly; and full time employees, at least, should receive benefits appropriate to their position and responsibility. Make recommendations to the finance committee for adjustments.

The *Discipline* requires provision of adequate housing for pastors, either by a parsonage or a housing allowance. Housing is not considered part of compensation (although there are federal tax implications).

Continuing Education and Spiritual Formation

If the staff, ordained *and* lay, are to be effective in their ministry, they must have opportunities for continuing education to expand their knowledge and skills and for spiritual formation to foster a growing relationship with God.

Ordained elders and deacons are required to report at charge conference on their continuing education and spiritual formation of the past year and plans for the new year. Many churches provide continuing education funds in addition to salary. Many annual conferences have standards, requirements, and guidelines for continuing education. Your pastor, conference staff, and district superintendent will have details. Talk with the clergy staff to develop a plan for meeting, or exceeding, these standards and guidelines.

If your pastor's plan calls for financial aid beyond your congregation, it may be possible to obtain it from the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF). One-fourth of this fund is retained in each annual conference and is administered by the conference board of ordained ministry for theological education, enlistment, and continuing education. The MEF is an apportioned fund. Your committee should tell the congregation about this fund and support 100 percent remittance to the MEF.

Talk with other staff people about their own continuing education. Building maintenance staff can benefit by taking advantage of seminars offered in your own community or nearby. Many annual conferences provide workshops for secretaries, Christian educators, youth ministers, directors of music, choir directors, and organists. Professional organizations for United Methodists provide resources and workshops for musicians, educators, youth ministers, church secretaries, and church administrators.

All ordained leaders are allowed one week each year and one month during one year of each quadrennium (the four years between General Conferences) for continuing education and spiritual formation. This is not a vacation, but a time of learning that will enhance the ministry of the pastor and the congregation. Furthermore, a pastor who has held a full-time appointment for at least six years is permitted to request an educational leave of up to six months while continuing to hold an appointment. The pastor will need to have a careful discussion with the committee and the district superintendent if he or she is seeking such a plan. One part of such a plan is determining alternative pastoral leadership while the leave is in effect and the financial obligations that may go along with that leadership.

Fourth Quarter: October–December

S ometime during the final quarter, your charge conference will be scheduled. At that time, you will “review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council” (§247.3)

Annual Staff Evaluations

The *Book of Discipline* requires the S/PPRC to provide at least annual evaluation for the pastor and staff in an on-going effort toward effective ministry and to identify continuing education needs and plans. The United Methodist Church is focusing specific attention on evaluation and assessment, as reflected in conversations about effective ministry and vital congregations. (See, for example, www.umvitalcongregations.com.) Bishops and district superintendents are developing processes to make more effective appointments for the mission of Christ in your community.

The goal of assessment and accountability is to evaluate and improve ministry under the guidance of God and to build positive relationships and strong communication skills. Agree on the steps for improving ministry. Decide who else, if anyone, will receive information from individual assessments and how the assessment will be interpreted by your committee. Assessment can be assigned to subcommittees who work with the pastor and staff members to complete the evaluation of their area of ministry.

One evaluation tool evaluation is the pastor’s report to the charge conference, which asks for specific membership and baptism statistics (perhaps the “dashboard” or “metric” that the annual conference is asked to record). The suggestions for lay evaluations will also be helpful for the ordained staff.

Members of the church council or other working groups may provide feedback, particularly as staff have carried out their responsibilities in that ministry area, but the evaluation process is the work of S/PPRC. In any case, make sure that the evaluation is not driven by unhappiness or conflict; these issues are best addressed in other ways. Focus the conversation on mission and ministry, not personalities or feelings, as “I like (or don’t like) this person.”

All evaluation processes should include these elements: ongoing self-assessment, group assessment, feedback, recommendations for growth, and plans for implementing those recommendations. In order to do an assessment, you will have to be clear about the goals and strategies that had been established and about the measures that indicate if and how well those strategies have been accomplished. In other words, how can you tell if the ministry goals have been achieved, beyond the obvious signs, such as attendance? If the ultimate goal of any ministry endeavor is to make disciples of Jesus Christ

for the transformation of the world, how will you recognize “disciples” and “transformation”? Questions such as these may get you started:

- How did we do with the goals set at the first of the year?
- Is our congregation in the same place we were then? What signs indicate a difference?
- Are new issues emerging in our congregation or community?
- What new ministry areas have staff or the congregation identified?
- What continuing education have you completed and how does that relate to your work?
- What new training will help you in the next year?

There are additional suggestions for evaluation processes in the book *Watching Over One Another in Love*, the “Guide to the Guidelines” booklet in this series and on the GBOD website. One DS, in an interview with superintendants from each jurisdiction, offers this list of evaluation “Do’s and Don’ts.”

DO remember that every individual is of great worth in God’s sight.	DON’T belittle or demean any person’s character or worth in any way.
DO assume the best about a person’s motives and intentions.	DON’T believe the worst interpretation of things until you have all the facts.
DO keep clearly in mind that the purpose of evaluation is improvement.	DON’T get sidetracked in a non-productive complaint session.
DO express your feelings and perceptions honestly, without trying to soften them.	DON’T ignore the feelings of others by sharing yours abusively.
DO affirm everything you can affirm about a person without lying or equivocating.	DON’T forget that pastors often have fragile egos that need tender care.
DO be honest and share negative feedback when necessary.	DON’T hide your true feelings in an effort to protect the pastor’s ego.
DO speak directly to the person you are sharing feedback about.	DON’T say anything behind a person’s back that you would not say to his or her face.
DO laugh occasionally during the process—especially at yourself.	DON’T take the task so seriously that it becomes a burden and a chore.
DO use the evaluation process as a springboard for growth in all areas.	DON’T treat it as another paperwork requirement to be disposed of quickly.

The S/PPRC is responsible for the assessment of lay staff and appointed clergy. Here is a model that one church follows for lay staff evaluations:

- Start by asking staff members for a report of their accomplishments, and celebrate them.
- Review the ministry goals set earlier in the year, including those set by the charge or church conference, in light of the nature and function of a congregation (as stated in the *Discipline*). Then review the strategies you have previously set to reach these goals. Has the staff person done the strategies he or she agreed to do? Have the strategies been effective in reaching the ministry goals? How do you know? Do the strategies for this staff person need to be continued or changed?
- Review the position description, help the staff person assess time management for the position, review the church resources available for the ministry (financial, volunteers involved, other supplies). This will help you develop a realistic work plan for the future and allow you to advocate for more effective ministry.
- Assess the staff person's need for continuing education. Encourage each person to ask for help, as necessary, to accomplish the strategies set for the coming year. For instance, the church office staff may need special training to be able to use new equipment to its full potential. The S/PPRC should be prepared to help them obtain this training as continuing education. Church Christian education-related staff hired from within the congregation may need more formal training in Bible and theology or educational theory and application. Solicit the needs of the staff and the pastor and find ways to fill those needs. (Look for the excellent self-guided study materials for the Local Church Discipler/Educator in www.gbod.org/education in the "DIY Training" tab.)
- Review with the staff the plan for division of responsibilities for the various areas of ministry. If a change is needed, the S/PPRC must determine who will carry the added responsibilities. Remember that both paid and volunteer staff can carry out strategies for reaching the ministry goals of the congregation.
- Conclude the assessment by restating the past accomplishments, the future strategy details, changes in position description, the measures or standards that describe success, and the steps you have agreed on. Pray for the staff person and the mission of your congregation.

Follow up staff evaluations with a committee discussion of the staffing for the ministry of the congregation. Ideally, staffing is developed within the context of the local church and is not financially driven. The S/PPRC must be wise stewards of the congregation's resources while providing staffing for the congregation's ministry goals.

Charge Conference Preparation

The S/PPRC is not required by the *Discipline* to report at charge conference, but they have responsibility for first submitting recommendations to the church council on matters related to staffing needs and deployment, salaries and benefits, and so on, as has been described. (These recommendations should be worked out and agreed to by finance and the council BEFORE charge conference. This is a very public place to negotiate salary and benefits.) The chair may be called upon at charge conference to report briefly. Be prepared with a list of tasks accomplished, the highlights of projects you are working on for next year's committee, your reflections on the work of the committee, and if necessary, rationale for decisions related to salary and benefits. Ask the pastor and staff for input. Consider ideas to improve the work of building relationship between staff and congregation and accomplishing your responsibilities.

Annual Consultation with the District Superintendent

The district superintendent utilizes knowledge of the local church's vision and mission to represent the church in the appointive process. Annually, the S/PPRC will be asked to convey the local church's leadership needs and ministry context to the district superintendent. Clarity in consultation leads to the best possible match for clergy leadership. The consultation process between the S/PPRC and district superintendent is confidential. Talk with the DS about the appropriate time to request a change, if one is needed. Remember that the bishop makes the final appointment.

Sometimes the district superintendent is able to visit each church only once a year. Put the DS on the mailing list for the parish newsletter, letters that go out to the membership, and even the Sunday bulletins. You may want to invite him or her to come to a meeting with the committee to share times of rejoicing at meeting goals or celebrating events such as anniversaries. Open lines of communication, again, are the key.

A Closing Word

An effective, faithful, and thoughtful S/PPRC can make a huge difference in the professional life of the pastor and other staff. As you work together in love and honesty you are in the perfect position to offer appropriate support and accountability to the spiritual leaders of the congregation so that they can support and guide the congregation. May God bless you in this crucial ministry.

Resources

** Indicates our top picks

GENERAL

Holy Bible (there are many translations)

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012).

The United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992. ISBN 978-0-687-03572-4). See especially Section VII, “Occasional Services” and Section IX, “Services Relating to Congregations and Buildings.”

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Healthy Disclosure: Solving Communication Quandaries in Congregations, by Kibbie Simmons Ruth and Karen A. McClintock (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-56699-346-3).

Speaking Faith: The Essential Handbook for Religion Communicators (Dallas: UMR Communications). The new edition includes a bonus CD-ROM with worksheets, samples, and extra resources. Order through www.religioncommunicators.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=71976.

SUPERVISION

Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders, by Karen A. McClintock (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004. ISBN: 1-56699-295-8).

Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers: Best Practices and Ethical Decisions, by Joy Thornburg Melton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2009. ISBN 978-0-88177-560-0).

***Watching over One Another in Love: A Wesleyan Model for Ministry Assessment*, by Gwen Purushotham (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, revised 2010. ISBN 978-0-938162-72-8).

TOOLS FOR COMMITTEE MINISTRY

Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences, by Gilbert R. Rendle (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1999. ISBN 978-1-56699-209-5).

***Leading Meetings: What Every Leader Needs to Know*, by Betsey Heavner (www.upperroom.org. Revised 2010; available as PDF).

WEBSITES

General Board of Discipleship has a training module for S/PPRC, sample church policy, devotional materials for church committees, and practical tools for changing pastors. www.gbod.org/committee_resources

General Board of Finance and Administration Legal Manual includes policies and information on compensation, sexual misconduct, and numerous other legal and personnel issues. www.gcfa.org/gcfa-legal-manual

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a chart of steps of candidacy for clergy and lay leadership, educational material for MEF, publications for candidacy and supervision. www.gbhem.org in the “Ministry” tab.

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women has a congregational toolbox and local church policy sample.

- www.umsexualethics.org/Home.aspx
- *Clergy Housing Handbook* (www.gcsrw.org)

Mediation and Conflict Resolution. Articles, information on mediation centers and services, and congregational study “Engage Conflict Well” are available through www.justpeaceumc.org.