

Chicago Northwestern District

2019 LEAD

Ministry in Motion

Staff-Parish Relations Committee Workshop

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District Superintendent

Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee Job Description

Result Expected

An effective committee builds a strong positive relationship between staff and congregation so that the congregation makes disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This committee will work with the lead pastor and other staff to fulfill legal and ethical responsibilities related to staff.

Spiritual Gifts and Qualifications Helpful for the Job

Individuals on this committee should have one or more of these spiritual gifts: exhortation (encouragement), wisdom, discernment, administration, shepherding, helping, servanthood, and leadership. This committee should be diverse in age, experience, and interests, bringing all interests of the ministry to the attention of the staff. Some experience in human relations, personnel management, and communications is helpful. These individuals must listen well to both staff and people of all ages in the congregation, while keeping a focus on the mission of the church. This committee must be able to maintain confidentiality.

- *See Lewis Center Effective and Ineffective Staff-Parish Relations Committees*

Responsibilities of the Chairperson

The chair is the congregation's primary connection with the district superintendent and bishop related to the appointed leadership of the congregation. This individual leads the committee by preparing and communicating the agenda for meetings, leading the meetings, and following up on actions by assigning responsibility for implementation. This person should become familiar with United Methodist resources and organizations.

Responsibilities of the Committee

- Committee members maintain a healthy and growing personal spiritual life. They engage in biblical and theological reflection about the mission of the church and biblical leadership.
- This committee encourages, strengthens, nurtures, supports, and respects the pastor(s) and staff and their families. They confer regularly about the personnel conditions and issues that affect the congregation's total ministry, including healthy life-work balance. They help the staff set priorities.

- This committee communicates openly and regularly with the pastor(s), staff, and congregation.
- In consultation with the lead pastor and with awareness of the strategy of the church leadership team, this committee recommends needed staff positions and develops and approves written job descriptions and titles for staff.
 - *See Job Descriptions from Edison Park UMC*
- This committee recommends compensation, travel, housing, and other financial matters to the church council through the finance committee.
 - *Note our conference expects the church to offer \$5000 for pastors under full-time appointment.*
- In consultation with the pastor(s), the committee recommends to the church council a written statement of policy and procedures for hiring, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff members who are not subject to episcopal appointment (procedures must comply with local and state laws).
 - *See Edison Park UMC Employee Handbook*
- This committee is responsible for carrying out, through appropriate agencies, proper screening (including background checks) for lay employees and volunteer staff.
 - *Safe Sanctuaries*
- This committee weighs several factors as it meets with the district superintendent and/or the bishop in an advisory capacity related to clergy leadership. Committee members consider the age and stage of the congregation. They must have an understanding of the feelings and desires within the congregation about the pastor's leadership and appointment. They also consider the culture and needs of the community around the church.
 - *See Rule of Christ for conflict management*
- This committee provides an annual evaluation of the pastor(s) and other staff for ongoing effective ministry.
 - *See Edison Park evaluation form for staff*
 - *See Lewis Center Theological Foundations for Evaluation, Types of Evaluation, and Giving and Receiving Feedback.*

- This committee enlists, evaluates, and annually recommends candidates for professional ministry to the charge conference.
 - See *UVC criteria for evaluation of candidates*.
- The work of the committee may include sub-teams (such as a parsonage committee or a volunteer staff committee). The committee on nominations and leadership development may help identify people for these groups.
- The committee works with the pastor and district superintendent to develop a church profile that reflects the needs, characteristics, and opportunities for mission of the charge consistent with the church's statement of purpose. The profile will be reviewed annually and updated as per paragraphs 427 and 428 in the *Book of Discipline*.

Getting Started

1. Work to understand the mission and vision of your congregation and your leadership role in advancing toward the vision for ministry.
2. Learn what life is like for people in your community. Gather information by being attentive to the congregation and the neighborhood. Ask questions and listen deeply.
3. Set aside time for prayer. Express your concerns, joys, and observations to God. Listen for God's direction for your leadership and your congregation.
4. Convene a meeting of the committee to get acquainted, share hopes and concerns, and begin to plan work for the year. There are responsibilities for each quarter outlined in ***Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation: Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, 2017-2020***.
5. Participate in training experiences and spiritual growth opportunities.

People and Agencies That Can Help

- Your pastor(s), adults in your church (especially for mentoring and identifying candidates for ministry vocations), your district/conference board of ordained ministry, your bishop, your district superintendent, and conference staff.
- InfoServ, the information service for the church, provides current information about United Methodist resources, programs, and staff services. Email: infoserv@umcom.org; Website: infoserv.umc.org.

Web and Print Resources

- ***The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016*** (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016)
- Center for Health, www.wespath.org/center-for-health/
- Discipleship Ministries, www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/church-leaders; toll free, 1-877-899-2780, or email info@discipleshipministries.org
- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, www.gbhem.org
- ***Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation, 2017-2020: Pastor-Parish Relations*** (Cokesbury, 2016)
- *Interpreter*, www.interpretermagazine.org
- Safe Sanctuaries®, www.umcdiscipleship.org/safesanctuaries
- Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations archived webinars at www.umcdiscipleship.org/webinars
- *What Every Leader Needs to Know*, bookstore.upperroom.org (small booklets useful for individual study or as an outline for a one-hour workshop) – ***Spiritual Leadership*** by Michael Bealla; ***Leading Meetings*** by Betsey Heavner; ***Mission and Vision*** by Carol F. Krau; and ***Leading in Prayer*** by Betsey Heavner

Theological Foundations for Evaluation

“Evaluation is one of God’s ways of bringing the history of the past into dialogue with the hope of the future.... We are called into new growth and new ministries by taking a realistic and hopeful look at what we have been and what we can still become.”

— *Theological and Theoretical Foundations for Evaluating Ministry*, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1990

Scripture

The wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures offers foundations for evaluation.

- “Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future.” (Proverbs 19:20)

Jesus invited evaluation of his ministry.

- “He asked them, ‘Who do you say I am?’” (Mk 8:27-29; also Mt 16:13-23; Lk 9:18-22)

The Bible calls us to grow toward “perfection.”

- Jesus challenged listeners to “Be perfect ... as [God] is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)
- From Paul: “Not that I have...already been made perfect, but I press on....” (Phil. 3:12)
- Also from Paul: “Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith...that you may become perfect.” (II Cor. 13: 5, 9)

Truthful, loving communication can result in growth.

- “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into...Christ.” (Eph. 4:15)

Wesleyan Heritage

“Going on to perfection” is a familiar theme in Wesley’s sermons and writings.

- *Growth and development* are essential not only to human existence but also to faith.
- *Faith as a lifelong process* — a continual journey of growing into salvation. (I Peter 2:2)

Class Meetings are foundational to the early Methodist Movement.

- Class meeting as a time for *reflecting on one’s faith journey*
- Class meeting as a loving, supportive, and nurturing environment in which *to evaluate one’s growth in faith*
- Class meeting questions designed to encourage *giving and receiving honest feedback*

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Rule of Christ
A Biblical Process for Dealing with Concerns

Step One: Look at Yourself (Matthew 18: 8-9)

Jesus tells us to take time to examine our role in the conflict. Ask yourself these questions:

- Can I let it go? (If the answer is yes, there is no need to confront the other person.) If not...
- What may the other person perceive that I have contributed to this problem?
- What does God see?

Journal on these questions to gain insight for the next steps. At this point, you may see things in your own behavior that needs changing. Resolve to do that. Think through what it is you hope to communicate with the person with whom you are in conflict, and what you would like to see as an outcome.

Step Two: One on One (Matthew 18: 15)

The purpose of the second step is to resolve the conflict....not to get mad or to get even. Remember to:

- Speak for yourself by starting your sentences with “I”
- Work hard to understand the other person’s point of view
- Work together to create solutions

If not resolved by a one-on-one conversation....

Step Three: Get Some Objective Help (Matthew 18:16)

Others can help the two parties see possibilities. You can invite someone to come with you as you meet with the other person to help mediate or facilitate the process. Or you can involve the SPRC to assist in you resolving this concern. To do that:

- Make sure you have done steps 1 and 2 first.
- Write a one page summary of your concern and give it to the SPRC.
- The SPRC upon reviewing the concern will work with you in resolving the issue.

If not resolved by involving the SPRC...

Step Four: Take It to the Church (Matthew 18: 17a)

Use the resources of the Church. This might be the time to bring in the Conflict Transformation Team or to be in contact with the District Superintendent.

If not resolved by outside help from the wider church...

Step Five: Shake the Dust (Matthew 18: 17b)

There are some issues that cannot be resolved. The church should remember its mission. Let go of the anger and disappointment at the unresolved issues and move on with your ministry.

Step Six: God is There (Matthew 18:20)

Remember God’s powerful promise to be with us in the midst of our problems.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback IS:

- Sincere and plain-speaking
- Self-revealing on the part of evaluators
- Humbly invited, humbly offered
- Conversation contains useful insights
- Dialogue *with* a pastor
- Personal and interactive
- Tool for improvement
- Ongoing process in the midst of ministry
- At its best, love in action

Feedback IS NOT

- Winning a point or coercing another
- Passing rumors
- Hiding behind what someone else says
- Advocating a theological perspective
- Something done *to* a pastor
- Weapon to be used against an enemy
- Defending one's self or others
- Saving up complaints for a one-time session
- Objective truth

Asking for and Receiving Feedback

- Specify the feedback you seek and why you are asking.
- Be sure those giving feedback understand what they are being asked to do.
- Have adequate time and a setting where you will not be interrupted.
- Assume positive motive and intention on the part of those giving feedback.
- Invite feedback givers to offer specific observations from their own experience.
- Repeat and rephrase comments to be sure you understand what they meant to say.
- Be aware of your feelings, breathing, physical comfort.
- Call for a break if needed.

Giving Feedback

- Have adequate time and a setting where you will not be interrupted.
- Be clear about confidentiality.
- Agree what can be shared from evaluative session.
- Avoid ganging up as a group on the one receiving feedback.
- Assume positive motive and intention on the part of the one receiving feedback.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Give specific details.
- Invite questions for clear understanding.
- Did the person hear what you meant to say?
- Divide the feedback itself and conclusions from feedback into different sessions.

Adapted from: Art Gafke, *Ministry Assessment Process: Giving and Receiving Feedback*, General Board of Higher Educational and Ministry

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Types of Evaluation

Formative Feedback

- This type of feedback takes place “along the way” when no decisions must be made.
- The purpose is to help the person improve, develop, and grow.
- The success of the person is the purpose of this feedback.
- Participants become partners in the fruitfulness of the person receiving feedback.
- It helps identify issues early so the person can address them.
- It helps to clarify what is working and what is not.

Summative Feedback

- How well is person doing? Are they advancing church’s overall mission?
- This type of feedback takes place when formal evaluation is needed or when decisions are to be made concerning annual reviews, continued employment, salary, etc.
- There usually is a record of these evaluations.
- This feedback deals with how well the person is doing in advancing the church’s mission or the mission of a specific ministry for which the person is responsible. Performance and skills are considered.
- Progress on issues named in previous evaluations is discussed.
- The purpose is to make decisions regarding how well-suited a person is to the ministry needs of the particular church.
- This review leads to conclusions and sometimes specific action steps.
- Helpful for making decisions regarding the fit between the church and pastor

Suggested evaluation formula: 90% formative + 10% summative

How to know if your formative and summative proportions are correct: If any concerns or issues come up for the first time in the formal or summative evaluation sessions, there is a problem. There needs to be more conversation and feedback “along the way.”

Two Purposes of Evaluation

- Examine the effectiveness of the church in achieving its mission.
- Examine the effectiveness of the pastor (staff) in leading the church toward the fulfillment of the mission.

Some Steps in Evaluation

- Gather appropriate information.
- From a thoughtful assessment of the information, decide what feedback will be shared, by whom, and how.
- Present the affirmations and areas for growth.
- Thank those from whom information was sought and indicate that it was helpful in the recently completed review.

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Effective and Ineffective Staff-Parish Relations Committees

Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective SPRCs

Effective

Meet regularly and often

Prepare for meetings

- Have an agenda
- Stay focused on agenda and identify topics for future meetings
- Allow adequate time

Establish partnership with pastor

- Keep pastor informed
- Take pastor into confidence
- Maintain “We are in this together” attitude
- Provide support and understanding

Ineffective

Conduct annual evaluations only

- Withhold regular feedback
- Allow issues to build too long
- Related to salary and appointment decisions more than to growth

Allow too little time and care

- Insufficient time to do task well
- Insufficient care in getting input and preparing for evaluation

Behave unfairly

- Bringing unevaluated complaints
- Bringing anonymous complaints
- Giving all sources equal credibility
- Not putting issues in perspective

What SPRCs and Clergy Most Need from Each Other

SPRCs Most Need from Clergy

Cooperation and receptivity

- Willing to listen with open mind
- Attempt to understand members’ needs and concerns
- Attempt to make some changes
- Openness to improvement ideas

Clear and open communication

- Pastor’s vision for ministry
- Candid assessment of what is going on in the church
- Information about issues and needs

Clergy Most Need from SPRCs

Honest feedback

- Balanced, objective, thoughtful, and candid feedback
- Treated as adults who can take criticism

Personal concern and support

- Advocate for pastor

Communication with the congregation

- Education of congregation
- Feedback from and to congregation

Based on a comparison of staff-parish relations committees deemed effective by both the SPRC chair and the pastor and those deemed ineffective by the chair and pastor

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Urban Village Church

Ordained Ministry Candidates Prerequisites for SPRC Review

Thank you for your interest in pursuing a call to ordained ministry! Urban Village's Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is excited to meet with you to learn more about your call, vision, and next steps. The local church's SPRC discernment is an important step in the United Methodist Church's candidacy for ordained ministry process. To proceed with this step, please do the following:

1. **Discern with Site Pastor** - Ensure you have met with your Site Pastor to help you discern your call. Your Site Pastor must approve your candidacy before you can meet with SPRC. To approve candidacy, Urban Village expects candidates to have a proven track record of leadership and commitment to ministry.
2. **Schedule Meeting with SPRC** - Email Urban Village's SPRC Chair to schedule a time for you to meet with SPRC. If it works with your schedule, the SPRC Chair will incorporate your candidacy discernment into the next SPRC meeting. Otherwise, a special meeting will be scheduled.
3. **Write your Call Statement and Answers to Wesley's Questions** - Please write responses to both of the following prompts and send your submissions to the SPRC Chair. Both responses should not exceed two pages each (max of 4 pages total). Use 1 inch margins, size 12 font, and single space.
 - a. **Call Statement** - Why do you feel called to ordained ministry? What do you feel called to? How have you already begun living into your call to ministry?
 - b. **Wesley's Historic Questions** - Write responses to each of Wesley's Historic Questions below. Your responses should demonstrate evidence in your current and past ministries that you fulfill the requirements of Wesley's Historic Questions.
 - i. Do you know God as pardoning God? Have you the love of God abiding in you? Do you desire nothing but God? Are you holy in all manner of conversation?
 - ii. Have you gifts as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have you a clear, sound understanding; a right judgement in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do you speak justly, readily, clearly?
 - iii. Have you fruit? Have you been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are you a believer edified by your service?

At your SPRC discernment meeting, you can expect members of SPRC to ask clarifying questions about your written submissions and learn more about your ministry and beliefs beyond what you have written. To prepare, spend some time thinking about the following:

- Your faith tradition and experience with the United Methodist Church and broader Christian Church
- Ways you have demonstrated God's grace, justice, love, and mercy in leadership positions
- How you have wrestled with your sense of call
- How you would articulate the core beliefs of your faith
- Why this journey is meaningful to you