

## Resources for Pastoral Relations Committees

### Effective and Ineffective Pastoral Relations Committees (PRC)

#### Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective PRCs

<b>Effective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>
<p>Meet regularly and often</p> <p>Prepare for meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have an agenda</li><li>• Stay focused on agenda and identify topics for future meetings</li><li>• Allow adequate time</li></ul> <p>Establish partnership with pastor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep pastor informed</li><li>• Take pastor into confidence</li><li>• "We are in this together" attitude</li><li>• Provide support and understanding</li></ul>	<p>Conduct annual evaluations only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withholds regular feedback</li><li>• Lets issues build too long</li><li>• Related to salary and appointment decisions more than to growth</li></ul> <p>Allow too little time and care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insufficient time to do task well</li><li>• Insufficient care in getting input and preparing for evaluation</li></ul> <p>Behave unfairly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bringing unevaluated complaints</li><li>• Bringing anonymous complaints</li><li>• Giving all sources equal credibility</li><li>• Doesn't put issues in perspective</li></ul>

#### What PRCs and Clergy Most Need from Each Other

<b><i>PRCs Most Need from Clergy</i></b>	<b><i>Clergy Most Need from PRCs</i></b>
<p>Cooperation and receptivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Willing to listen with open mind</li><li>• Attempt to understand members' needs and concerns</li><li>• Attempt to make some changes</li><li>• Openness to improvement ideas</li></ul> <p>Clear and open communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pastor's vision for ministry</li><li>• Candid assessment of what is going on in the church</li><li>• Information about issues and needs</li></ul>	<p>Honest feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balanced, objective, thoughtful, and candid feedback</li><li>• Treated as adults who can take criticism</li></ul> <p>Personal concern and support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advocate for pastor</li></ul> <p>Communication with the congregation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education of congregation</li><li>• Feedback from and to congregation</li></ul>

Based on a comparison of pastoral relations committees deemed effective by both the PRC chair and the pastor and those deemed ineffective by the chair and pastor.

Lewis Center for Church Leadership  
Wesley Theological Seminary [www.churchleadership.com](http://www.churchleadership.com)

# When Folks Are Complaining

When a church member voices a concern to you about the pastor or paid staff:

1. Encourage him/her to speak to the pastor (or staffer) directly.
  - a. If they have already done so but are dissatisfied, you may encourage them to further direct conversation or reflection upon other positive responses and forgiveness.
  - b. If the person can't or won't speak to the pastor AND the issue seems important, then...
2. Have the person write down their concern, date and sign it.
  - a. If they decline, tell them that you cannot carry verbal concerns to the committee.
3. Convey the written concern to the chair of the S/PPRC.
  - a. The chair or secretary should write an acknowledgment: 'We received your concern and will discuss it at our next meeting.'
4. The chair should inform the pastor &/or staff person of the written concern.
5. At the next regular or called S/PPRC meeting, the whole committee decides if:
  - a. The concern has merit and deserves further attention, or
  - b. The concern has no merit and deserves no action. If not, then write a note thanking the person for their input and informing him/her that the Committee will remain aware.
6. The Committee discusses legitimate concerns with the pastor/staff person for a full understanding of situation. Together, decide on a course of action and follow up.
7. The whole committee decides if a joint statement is needed to the church or the individual who initiated the concern. All members are obliged to share only the approved, joint statement without additions or deletions.
8. The S/PPRC may receive individual's letters only, not petitions from groups. When trying to gain a sense of the entire congregation, S/PPRC should not conduct polls, but should make known (via newsletter, bulletin) who the S/PPRC members are so the general membership can approach them. Each S/PPRC member should keep a discreet list of who approaches them and give it to the Chair. The Chair can then determine if a few individuals are unduly influencing S/PPRC opinions.
9. S/PPRC is responsible for addressing situations with the pastor and any paid staff. The Lay Leadership/Nominating Committee is responsible for addressing situations with elected members of the congregation.

## A COVENANT OF LEADERSHIP

### *Our Promises to God:*

We promise to pray, alone and together, to thank God and to ask for God's help in our lives and in our work for our church, and we promise to listen to God's answer to us.

### *Our Promises to Our Church Family:*

We promise to demonstrate our leadership and commitment to our church by our example.

We promise to support our church's pastors and staff, so their efforts can be most productive.

We promise to try to discover what is best for our church as a whole, not what might be best for us or for some small group in the church.

### *Our Promises to Each Other on [the Governing Board]:*

We promise to respect and care for each other.

We promise to treat our time on [the board] as an opportunity to make an important gift to our church.

We promise to listen with an open, nonjudgmental mind to the words and ideas of the others in our church and on [the board.]

We promise to discuss, debate, and disagree openly in [board] meetings, expressing ourselves as clearly and honestly as possible, *so* we are certain the [board] understands *our* point of view.

We promise to support the final decision of [the board], whether it reflects our view or not.

Adapted from *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*  
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# Duties of Committee (§258.2g)

## Communication

- Confer and counsel with pastor & staff, advising them of ministry conditions
- Continually interpret to people the nature and function of ministry
- Counsel pastor & staff on relationships with congregation, priorities, skills, goals
- Interpret to congregation: preparation for ordained ministry, Ministerial Education Fund

## Personnel Issues

- Develop and recommend to Council staff positions and job descriptions for staff other than pastor
- Recommend to Council personnel policies and monitor compliance
- Consult: pulpit supply, compensation, vacation, insurances, pension, housing -- making recommendations to Council.
- Enlist, interview, evaluate, review, recommend: Lay Speakers, Candidates for Ministry and missionary service
- Consult: continuing education, renewal
- *New in 2012:* "To encourage, monitor, and support clergy and lay staff pursuit of health and wholeness." (§258.2g(16))

## Parsonage Issues

- With Trustee and Pastor, make annual review of parsonage
- *New in 2012:* "The committee will follow up to assure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health of the pastor or pastor's family." (§258.2g(16))

## Annual Evaluation

- Provide annual evaluations for pastor & staff to encourage effective ministry (April to June)

## Appointment Issues

- Confer with pastor & cooperate with pastor, DS, and bishop in securing clergy leadership when it becomes evident that the best interests of the church and pastor will be served by a change.
- Such conferring and cooperating with DS and bishop are advisory only.

# Duties of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee

## ¶ 258.2, 2012 Book of Discipline, The United Methodist Church

2. There shall be elected annually by the charge conference in each local church a **committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations** who are professing members of the local church or charge or associate members (¶ 227), except in cases where central conference legislation or local law provides otherwise. People serving on this committee must be engaged in and attentive to their Christian spiritual development so as to give proper leadership in the responsibilities with which the committee is entrusted.

In conducting its work, the committee shall identify and clarify its values for ministry. It shall engage in biblical and theological reflections on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of the local church.

The committee shall reflect biblically and theologically on the role and work of the pastor(s) and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities. The committee shall assist the pastor(s) and staff in assessing their gifts and setting priorities for leadership and service. It is the responsibility of the committee to communicate with the committee on lay leadership and/or the church council when there is a need for other leaders or for employed staff to perform in areas where utilization of the gifts of the pastor(s) and staff proves an inappropriate stewardship of time.

a) The committee shall be composed of not fewer than five nor more than nine persons representative of the total charge. One of the members shall be a young adult and one member may be a youth. In addition, the lay leader and a lay member of the annual conference shall be members. No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee.

b) In order to secure experience and stability, the membership shall be divided into three classes, one of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The lay member of the annual conference and the lay leader are exempt from the three-year term. To begin the process of rotation where such a process has not been in place, on the first year one class shall be elected for one year, one class for two years, and one class for three years. Members of the committee shall be able to succeed themselves for one three-year term. When vacancies occur during the year, nominees shall be elected at the church council (or alternative church structure).

c) In those charges where there is more than one church, the committee shall include at least one representative from each local church.

d) The committees on pastor-parish relations of charges that are in cooperative parish ministries shall meet together to consider the professional leadership needs of the cooperative parish ministry as a whole.

e) The committee shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the bishop, the district superintendent, the pastor, any other person accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. The committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor and/or the district superintendent. The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself.

The committee may meet with the district superintendent without the pastor or appointed staff under consideration being present. However, the pastor or appointed staff under consideration shall be notified prior to such meeting with the district superintendent and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter.

The committee shall meet in closed session, and information shared in the committee shall be confidential.

f) In the event that only one congregation on a charge containing more than one church has concerns it wishes to share, its member(s) in the committee may meet separately with the pastor or any other person accountable to the committee or the district superintendent, but only with the knowledge of the pastor and/or district superintendent.

g) The duties of the committee shall include the following:

- (1) To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor(s) and staff and their family(s).
- (2) To promote unity in the church(es).
- (3) To confer with and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on the matters pertaining to the effectiveness of ministry; relationships with the congregation; conditions that may impede the effectiveness of ministry; and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry.
- (4) To confer with, consult, and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on matters pertaining to priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time and priorities for the demands and effectiveness of the mission and ministry of the congregation.
- (5) To provide evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastor(s) and staff in an ongoing effective ministry and for identifying continuing educational needs and plans.
- (6) To communicate and interpret to the congregation the nature and function of ministry in The United Methodist Church regarding open itinerancy, the preparation for ordained ministry, and the Ministerial Education Fund.
- (7) To develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for associate pastors and other staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor. The term associate pastor is used as a general term to indicate any pastoral appointment in a local church other than the pastor in charge (see ¶ 339). Committees shall be encouraged to develop specific titles for associate pastors that reflect the job descriptions and expectations.
- (8) To consult with the pastor and staff concerning continuing education and spiritual renewal, to arrange with the church council for the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth, and to encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization.
- (9) To enlist, interview, evaluate, review, and recommend annually to the charge conference lay preachers and persons for candidacy for ordained ministry (see ¶¶ 247.8 and 310), and to enlist and refer to the General Board of Global Ministries persons for candidacy for missionary service, recognizing that The United Methodist Church affirms the biblical and theological support of persons regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, or disabilities for these ministries. Neither the pastor nor any member of the committee on pastor-

parish relations shall be present during the consideration of a candidacy application or renewal for a member of their immediate family. The committee shall provide to the charge conference a list of students from the charge who are preparing for ordained ministry, diaconal ministry, and/or missionary service, and shall maintain contact with these students, supplying the charge conference with a progress report on each student.

(10) To interpret preparation for ordained ministry and the Ministerial Education Fund to the congregation.

(11) To confer with the pastor and/or other appointed members of the staff if it should become evident that the best interests of the charge and pastor(s) will be served by a change of pastor(s). The committee shall cooperate with the pastor(s), the district superintendent, and the bishop in securing clergy leadership. Its relationship to the district superintendent and the bishop shall be advisory only.<sup>9</sup> (See ¶¶ 430-433.)

(12) To recommend to the church council, after consultation with the pastor, the professional and other staff positions (whether employee or contract) needed to carry out the work of the church or charge. The committee and the pastor 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 episcopal appointment as ordained clergy. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss nonappointed personnel. When persons are hired or contracted, consideration shall be given to the training qualifications and certification standards set forth by the general Church agency to which such positions are related. The committee shall further recommend to the church council a provision for adequate health and life insurance and severance pay for all lay employees. In addition, the committee shall recommend that the church council provide, effective on and after January 1, 2006, 100 percent vested pension benefits of at least three percent of compensation for lay employees of the local church who work at least 1040 hours per year, are at least 21 years of age, and have at least one year of permanent service. The church council shall have authority to provide such pension benefits through either a denominational pension program administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits or another pension program administered by another pension provider.

(13) To recommend to the charge conference, when the size of the employed staff of the charge makes it desirable, the establishment of a personnel committee. This committee shall be composed of such members of the committee on pastor-parish relations as it may designate and such additional members as the charge conference may determine.

(14) To educate the church community on the value of diversity of selection in clergy and lay staff and develop a commitment to same.

(15) Members of the committee on pastor-parish relations (or staff-parish relations) shall keep themselves informed of personnel matters in relationship to the Church's policy, professional standards, liability issues, and civil law. They are responsible for communicating and interpreting such matters to staff. Committee members should make themselves available for educational and training opportunities provided by the conference, district, and/or other arenas that will enable them to be effective in their work.

(16) To consult on matters pertaining to pulpit supply, proposals for compensation, travel expense, vacation, health and life insurance, pension, housing (which may be a church-owned parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of parsonage if in compliance with the policy of the annual conference), and other practical matters affecting the work and families of the pastor and staff, and to make annual recommendations regarding such

matters to the church council, reporting budget items to the committee on finance. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The committee will follow up to assure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health of the pastor or pastor's family. The chairperson of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the chairperson of the board of trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance.

(17) To encourage, monitor, and support clergy and lay staff pursuit of health and wholeness.



# Calendar Flow

## First Quarter:

- Organize Committee (select a vice-chair, secretary)
- Train new S/PPRC members
- Discuss and complete Appointment "Preference Form" (with pastor present)
- Review job descriptions for other lay and clergy staff
- Look at S/PPRC Goals and meeting dates for year

## Second Quarter:

- Annual Pastoral Evaluation (between April and June): results are due in the district office by June 1 annually
- Parsonage Review -- not optional
  - Trustees and/or Parsonage Committee
  - Church's property, pastor's home
  - Keep it up like your own home.

## Third Quarter

- Budget work:
  - Salary
  - accountable reimbursement/travel
  - continuing education,
  - any other budget items that relate to paid staff
- Review action items from spring time evaluation of pastor and staff.

## Fourth Quarter

- Look at Church Goals for coming year
  - impact on staff priorities, training, division of tasks
- Appointment Review Process for clergy
- Look at long range plan for pastor and staff continuing education
- S/PPRC evaluates its own work in past year
  - How did we do?
  - What did we neglect?
  - Where did we shine?