



Spanish Fort

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SPRC Committee

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1. THE BIG PICTURE

PURPOSE

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). The SPPRC is the administrative unit in the local church, where staff and congregation are integrated to focus on the mission of the church. The SPPRC is the governing board in an advisory capacity...NOT to manage the staff. 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.

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).

Tasks:

- 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

2. MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

MEMBERSHIP

The Book of Discipline requires every congregation to have a committee on staff parish relations. The staff 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. All members must be professing or associate members of the church.

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 SPRC. 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. SPRC members must be laypersons, other than the appointed staff. SPRC 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.

ORGANIZATION

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.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

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.

- 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.

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.

- Encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor and staff and their families, including advocating for a healthy work/life balance.
- Examine candidates for ministry and, when approved, recommend them to the Charge Conference.
- Confer with the staff on the effectiveness of ministry and impediments to effectiveness, including conflict of interest, and sexual misconduct.
- Conduct annual staff evaluations.
- Teach the congregation about itinerancy, steps into ordained ministry, the value of diversity in staffing, and the ministerial education fund.
- Review & revise 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.

The SPRC gives management to the pastor and staff, but it also gives leadership to ensure the mission and vision of your congregation, inspired by God, is in alignment as you carry forth. You give leadership to the vision but you also have to manage this along the way. If you are just about managing it, you lose the mission. If it's all about the vision, somebody needs to take care of the details.

4. POINTS OF EMPHASIS

#1. CONFIDENTIALITY

Issues are discussed during meetings, not between meetings

- All matters under discussion are kept in strict confidence, i.e., a "safe" place
 - All input brought to the meeting is held in confidence but is "owned" input
 - If you cannot keep confidence, then have the integrity to resign from the Committee.
 - Joint statements owned & shared by all members
 - Careful reporting to Church Council of each meeting
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#2. WHEN FOLKS COMPLAIN (SEE ADDITIONAL RELATED ADDITIONAL POLICIES)

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

A complaint cannot be brought on behalf of another person. The SPRC member should encourage the church member to address their complaint directly with the subject of the complaint or, when appropriate, their supervisor. If the church member declines to do so, or if the church member indicates the matter remains unresolved after doing so, the SPRC member should invite the church member to write down their complaint, sign it and date it. If the church member declines to do so, the SPRC member should advise the church member that only written, signed complaints will be considered by the SPRC.

If the church member presents a written, signed complaint, the SPRC member should present it to the chair. If the chair determines that the complaint implicates the pastor's job performance or fitness for employment (or, in the case of a non-pastor staff member, involves sufficiently egregious circumstances), it will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will advise the pastor or subject staff member of the complaint and its contents.

The chair will invite the church member to attend the next SPRC meeting and present their complaint, in which case the church member will be excused after doing so. If the church member declines to attend, the SPRC will nevertheless consider the complaint but may discount the complaint accordingly. After hearing from the pastor or subject staff member and conducting such further investigation, if any, as it deems appropriate, the SPRC will determine whether the complaint has merit and, if so, what if any, corrective action is appropriate. The chair will advise the church member of the SPRC's resolution.

#3 PASTORAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Response Form

Complete one form for each pastor appointed to your church.

*** This form can be completed and submitted online at www.awfumc.org/sprcform

Church/Charge _____ Date of Meeting _____

Pastor's Name _____

Chair of Committee _____

Email of Chair _____

Cell Phone _____

Members Present: _____

Number of members absent. _____

After prayerful conversation and consultation, our committee (check one):

____ Our committee would like to meet with the District Superintendent for a consultation.

____ We do not feel a need to meet with the District Superintendent at this time.

Signature of Chair _____

Signature of Pastor _____

On a separate page, please share the committee's responses to the following questions:

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

1. How have you offered your pastor and his/her family support and encouragement?
2. What is the mission of your church? How has the committee supported the pastor in fulfilling the mission of the church?
3. List three strengths of your pastor (preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration...).
4. List one or more areas of ministry in which your pastor needs to grow in the coming year? How have you discussed these areas with your pastor?
5. How can your district superintendent represent your church to the Cabinet for the 2025-2026 appointment year?

This form, or the electronic version, is due no later than January 1, 2025.

Return via email to: ds.sheilabates@gmail.com

Or mail to: UMC District Office, 6333 Piccadilly Sq Dr, Mobile, AL 36609

Or complete online at: www.awfumc.org/sprcform

Check one:

____ Our committee would like to meet with the District Superintendent for a consultation.

____ We do not feel a need to meet with the District Superintendent at this time.

Signed: Staff/Pastor-Parish Committee Chair Signed: Pastor Date: _____

#4 EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE DYNAMICS

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
 - “We are in this together” attitude
 - Provide support and understanding.

Ineffective

- **Conduct annual evaluations only**
 - Withholds regular feedback
 - Lets Issues 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
 - Doesn't put issues in perspective

5. RESOURCES

Pastor-Parish Relations: Concerning the Pastor, Staff, and Congregation

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/v39s0nvueyta39m/Guidelines%20-%20SPR.pdf?dl=0>

AWF Website (Conference Resources)

<https://www.awfumc.org/resources>

6. FAQ'S

1. Who determines what staff positions are required in the local church?

Committee (SPRC) is given broad oversight and responsibility in church staffing matters. The SPRC shall "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." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

"It is the responsibility of the [SPRC] committee to communicate with the committee on nominations and leadership development 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." (Paragraph 258.2)

2. To whom are staff responsible?

The SPRC shall "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." (Paragraph 258.2.g [4])

3. Who determines the job description for staff?

The SPRC is to "develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for associate pastors and other staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor." (Paragraph 258.2.g [7])

4. Who sets staff salaries?

It is the responsibility of the church council to "recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations). (Paragraph 252.4.d)

5. Shall staff receive benefits? Who sets the benefits of staff?

"The [SPRC] committee shall further recommend to the church council a provision for adequate health and life insurance, and severance pay for all lay employees."
(Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

6. What about retirement benefits?

"[The SPRC] 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."
(Paragraph 258.2.g[12])

7. What about continuing education?

The SPRC shall "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?"
(Paragraph 258.2.g [8])

8. What about professional certification?

The SPRC is to "encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization." (Paragraph 258.2.g [8])

"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." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

9. Are there guidelines for changing the employment status of staff? Who hires and fires staff?

"The [SPRC] 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." (Paragraph 258.2.g [12])

10. When does the SPRC meet? May the staff member attend?

"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." (Paragraph 258.2.e)

"The committee shall 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." (Paragraph 258.2.e)

The committee shall meet in closed session, and information shared in the committee shall be confidential." (Paragraph 258.2.e)