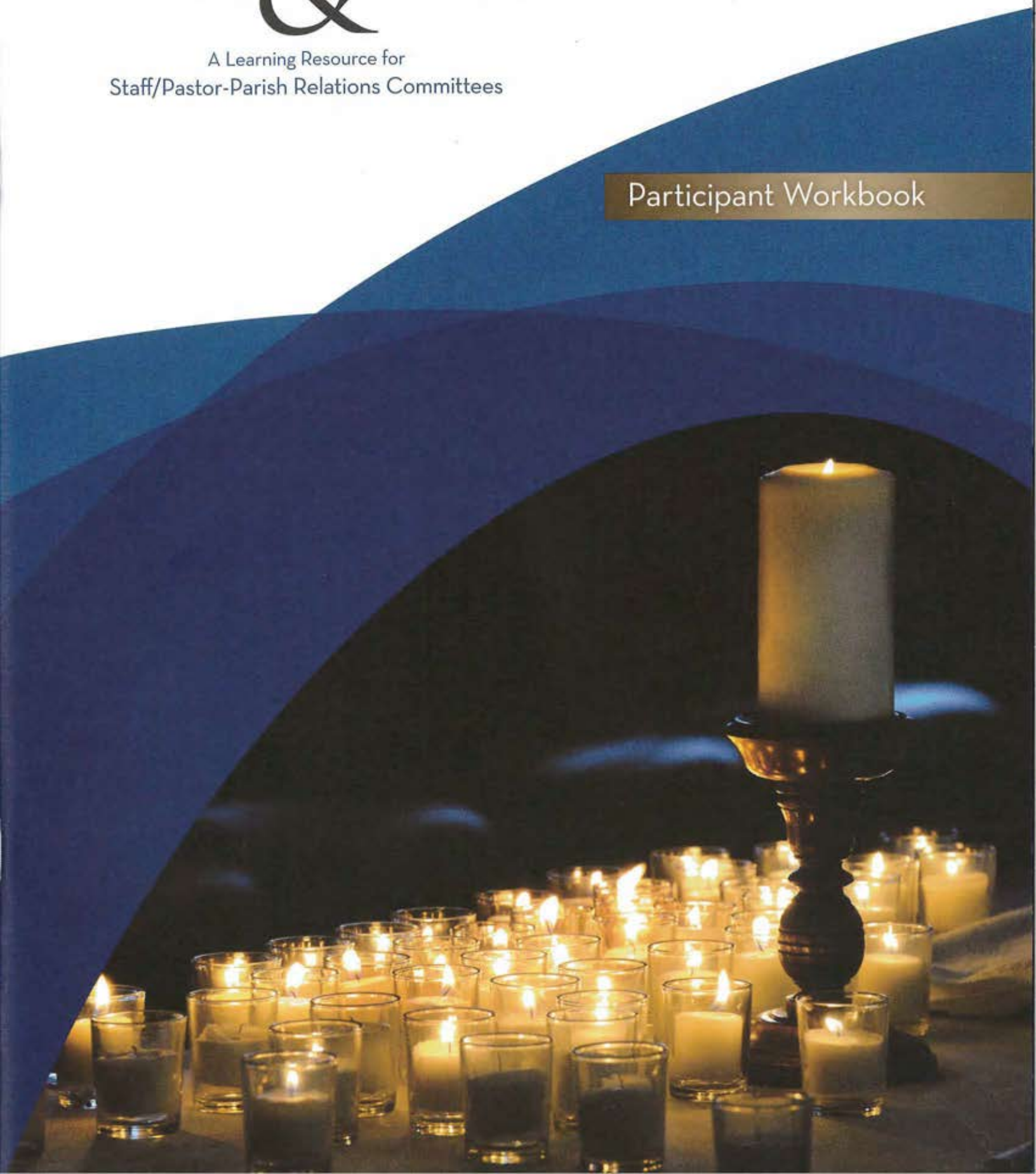


Pastor & Parish™

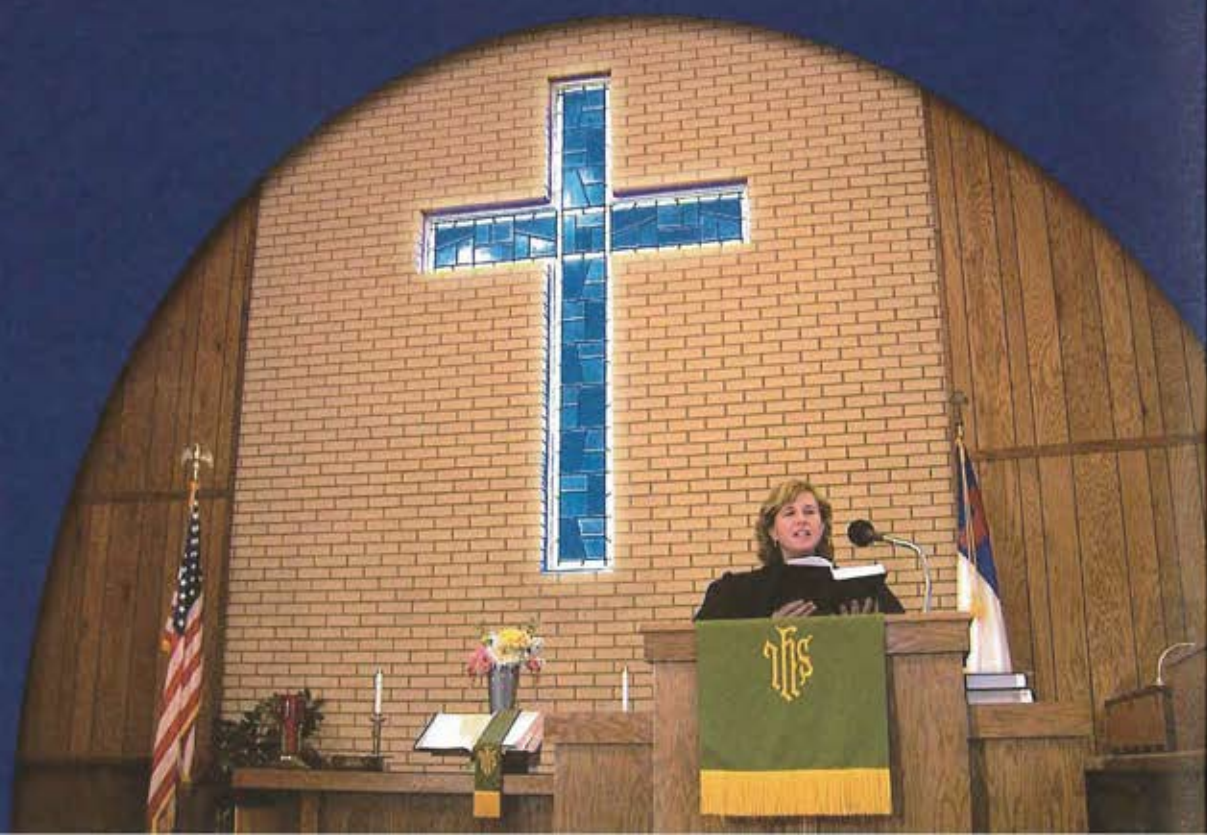
A Learning Resource for
Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committees

Participant Workbook



Depending on the size of your church, your committee may refer to itself in one of two ways. United Methodist churches served by multiple clergy generally call this group the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), whereas congregations served by one pastor often use the term Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC).

We have chosen to use the broader term of SPRC throughout this series. In places where we refer to 'your pastor' for simplicity, you should consider the point to extend to all clergy.



Pastor & Parish™

In agreeing to be part of this program, you have taken a critical step in the ongoing growth and development of your congregation.

The United Methodist Church describes the Staff-Parish Relations Committee as being “the administrative unit in a local church, where staff and congregational interests are integrated to focus on the mission of the church.”

Pastor & Parish™ is a theologically-framed formational activity for SPRCs that encourages discussion within your committee about the unique character of your church. It will help you identify ways for committee members to work in partnership with your pastor, other staff, and the congregation in strengthening your local church.

Participant Workbook

What to Expect	3
Session 1: Baptism	4
Session 2: Discipleship	6
Session 3: Sacred Bundle	8
Session 4: Truthful Naming	11
Session 5: Stewardship of the Pastor	16
Session 6: Covenant for Ministry	19
Next Steps	23
Notes	24

About the Duke Clergy Health Initiative

The Duke Clergy Health Initiative was formed in 2007 when the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences of the United Methodist Church partnered with Duke Divinity School and The Duke Endowment to seek solutions to their growing concerns about declining clergy health and increasing health costs.

Findings from our early research established a clear picture of clergy health and the factors affecting it. We now know with certainty that United Methodist clergy in North Carolina are more likely to suffer from obesity, chronic disease, and depression than other comparable state residents. We also have a better understanding of the factors in the lives of clergy that expose them to greater risks of poor health. One key driver of well-being is the quality of the relationship that a pastor has with the members of his or her congregation.

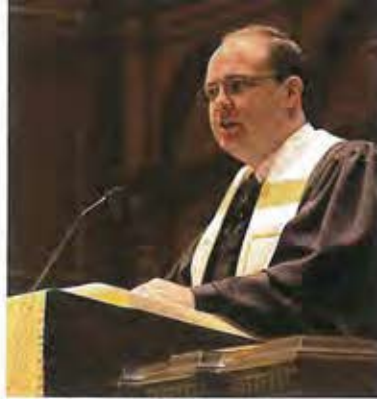
In 2010, we enrolled more than 1,100 North Carolina-based United Methodist clergy in Spirited Life, a multi-year wellness program and behavioral health study. Through it, pastors learn to manage stress; care for their bodies in a healthy, mindful way; and find spiritual renewal.

We hope that the skills you will learn in Pastor & Parish will augment your pastor's efforts to care for himself or herself and will enable your SPRC to build the quality of its leadership.

To learn more about the Clergy Health Initiative and our research findings, visit our website:
www.clergyhealthinitiative.org.



What to Expect

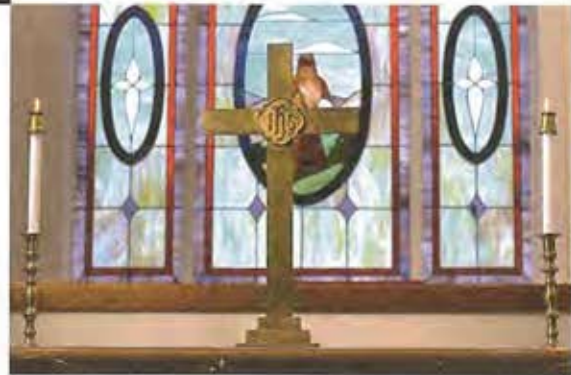


Pastor & Parish is a six-session small group learning experience. It is an opportunity for your SPRC to grow in community with one another in a forum separate from your regular committee meetings.

Each of the sessions is meant to last about an hour. During each session, you will view a short video and then individually answer several questions in this workbook. Your group's facilitator will guide you in a discussion of these ideas, which you can continue to explore on your own through additional readings. By discussing candidly in this safe space what your church does well and how it might improve, you will increase the effectiveness of your committee.

This series is unique among training resources for SPRCs in that it ties the committee's responsibilities back to their spiritual beginnings. At the conclusion of this course, you will have the opportunity to craft a covenant to capture what your SPRC has learned and use it to guide your committee's ministry as you work with your pastor to preserve and develop your church's unique character.

Should you wish to delve more deeply into any of the topics presented in Pastor & Parish, links to articles, books and additional resources are available online at www.pastorandparish.com.



Pastor & Parish™

Session 1

Baptism

Your presence on this committee is, before anything else, a ministry in response to your baptism. The baptism we receive signifies not only God's gift of grace, but also our covenant with God to strengthen the local church by carrying on Christ's work until He comes again.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage committee members to see their work on the SPRC as a ministry in response to the sacrament of baptism

Remembering Our Baptism

Do you remember – or have you been told – details about your baptism? How old were you? When and where did it take place? Who performed the sacrament? Were other important people in your life present? Are there photos to commemorate the event?

Not everyone who attends a United Methodist church was raised in the Methodist tradition. How might your baptism have differed from others on your committee? List your recollections below and share some of them with the group.

*So if anyone
is in Christ,
there is a new
creation:
everything old
has passed away;
see, everything
has become new!*

2 Corinthians 5:17

As members of the church, we all are called to ministry in some way.
What does your baptism into the church mean for the way you live your life?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

In the space below, write the names of the members of your SPRC and your pastor. Pray for each of them by name every day, asking for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as they go about their ministries. Be sure to pray for yourself, too!

Study "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters," the hymn that introduced this session's video. Sing or read it several times over a few days, asking the Holy Spirit to open new understanding for you. What images in the lyrics speak powerfully to you? Why? What kind of congregation does the hymn long for?



HYMN

Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters

United Methodist Hymnal, #605

*Wash, O God, our sons and daughters,
where your cleansing waters flow.*

*Number them among your people;
bless as Christ blessed long ago.*

*Weave them garments bright and
sparkling; compass them in love and light.*

*Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit,
Holy Dove and heart's delight.*

*We who bring them long for
nurture; by your milk may we be fed.*

*Let us join your feast, partaking
cup of blessing, living bread.*

*God, renew us, guide our footsteps;
free from sin and all its snares,*

*One with Christ in living, dying,
by your Spirit, children, heirs.*

*O how deep your holy wisdom!
Unimagined, all your ways!*

*To your name be glory, honor!
With our lives we worship, praise!*

*We your people stand before you,
water-washed and Spirit born.*

*By your grace, our lives we offer.
Recreate us; God, transform!*

*Used by permission of Augsburg-Fortress (music)
and The United Methodist Publishing House (lyrics)*

Session 2

Discipleship

The word apostle comes from a Greek verb meaning "to send." To be baptized is to *consent to be sent*, in the name of Jesus Christ. Often God's call to discipleship involves getting up and moving from the comfortable and the familiar, and journeying out in faith.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to partner with their pastor in developing fresh, vibrant ministry appropriate to the mission of the parish

The SPRC should:

- Work with the pastor to discern God's plan for the congregation
- Assist in sharing that vision
- Support the pastor

Examining Our Path

As disciples, we are sent out to share the good news and to make sure that the good news is being received. This requires discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. Consider the experiences and tendencies of your congregation when answering the questions below. Then share some with the group.

Are the comforts of the familiar restraining your congregation's ability to explore new forms of worship or witness? If yes, what are some of these restraints?

How might your committee assist the pastor in recognizing opportunities for your congregation to journey out in faith?

If the place your congregation is being sent requires a shift in the ways your church seeks to fulfill its mission, how might the SPRC support your pastor in making that transition?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

Consider the opportunities your congregation offers for its members to advance the mission of the United Methodist Church, "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." What is your church doing well? What could you do better?

*Then I heard
the voice of the
Lord saying,
'Whom shall
I send, and who
will go for us?'
and I said, 'Here
am I; send me!'*

Isaiah 6:8



Mission of the United Methodist Church:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world

Session 3

Sacred Bundle

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to recognize and share congregational memories, taboos, and traditions that define their church's culture, but may not be readily apparent to a new pastor

An important part of your committee's work is to recognize the contents of your congregation's sacred bundle and to interpret them for the pastor. Unless your pastor understands them, he or she cannot minister effectively.

Interpreting your Congregation's Sacred Bundle

In the space below, name something from your congregation's sacred bundle that you feel defines or shapes your church, but that your pastor may not know. Agree amongst your group that everyone's responses will be kept in confidence. Then share your response with the group.



How do you decide what should remain in the sacred bundle, and what should be acknowledged, but let go? And how might you support the pastor in communicating that decision?

Some Native American cultures
had an object they called a
sacred bundle. It served as the
people's portable history.

But in the hands of a skilled narrator, these artifacts could tell where a people had come from, their journey across the years, their triumphs and tragedies, their heroes and prophets, their joys and sorrows.

9

Session 3 continued

Sacred Bundle

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

*But speaking
the truth in love,
we must grow
up in every way
into him who
is the head,
into Christ.*

Ephesians 4:15

The writer of Ephesians encourages the church to speak the truth in love within its walls so that its mission to those outside may be strengthened. Reflect upon how your committee might ensure that its members "speak the truth in love" every time you meet.

Session 4

Truthful Naming

Conflict in the church is not necessarily bad, for it means that passion and energy are present. But to move past the conflict, a church must learn to redirect this passion and energy into ministry and mission. This begins with truthful naming.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

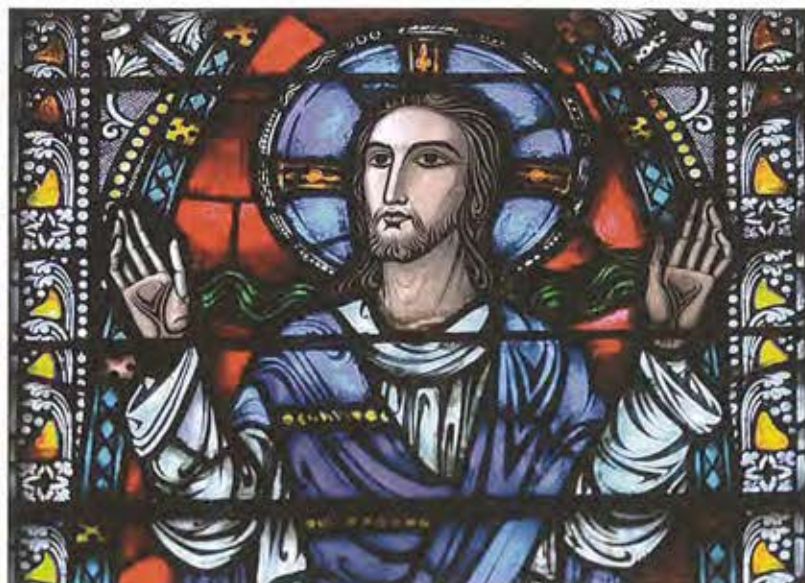
To equip SPRC members with tools for dealing responsibly with conflict that arises in the local church

Naming Issues Honestly

The stories on the following pages describe congregations facing conflict due to changes the churches are experiencing.

Your leader will guide you in selecting a scenario to discuss. Spend a few minutes answering the questions that follow the scenarios, and then share some of your insights with the group.

Continued on page 12.



Truthful Naming

Scenario 1: Carruthers UMC

Carruthers UMC is fortunate to be in a fast-growing community, and in the last two years, many new families have begun to join the church. CUMC has historically been a close-knit, rural congregation where everyone knew everyone, but now that sense of community is in transition.

Sally Brownstone has served for years as Sunday School superintendent as well as a teacher, and has taken pride in getting to know all of the children in the church. Usually good-natured and cooperative, Sally has, over the last year, become argumentative and has opposed nearly everything the pastor and other leaders have done to respond to the congregation's growth. She has spoken unfavorably of the pastor's leadership every time there has been an opportunity and now has begun to suggest that "we may need a change." Because they love and respect her, others in the congregation have begun to agree.

At a church council meeting, Sally intends to criticize the pastor's plans to add another Christmas Eve service to accommodate all of the families with younger children. As Sally begins to distribute copies of her list of concerns around the table, a young woman Sally has known from infancy says, "Aunt Sally, what's bothering you? I was baptized and raised here at Carruthers, and it is painful to see all this bitterness and conflict. Can you tell us all what the real problem is?"

Stunned, Sally is silent for a moment, and then she begins to cry. "I can't know the names of all the children anymore," she says. "There are just too many."

Scenario 2: Avalon UMC

Avalon UMC is a medium-sized, urban parish with a history of missional outreach to the community – the sort of local church that understands that ministry needs to extend "beyond the walls." The congregation's witness in the community has historically received broad support among its members, though there have occasionally been reasonable differences in opinion. Now, though, mission has led to divisiveness.

Because the number of homeless people in AUMC's neighborhood is increasing, some members of the congregation think the homeless should be able to pitch tents on the church's side lawn and have access to AUMC's restrooms 24/7, provided a mission volunteer is on hand. Others, citing city ordinances and liability risks, think the church's present ministry to the homeless – hot meals several days a week, counseling, and transportation to a free clinic – is sufficient.

At a council meeting, Sam Steadman, the finance chair, comments, "Tents and trash on the lawn will discourage people from coming to church on Sunday, not to mention frighten the office workers who use our walks to get to their jobs on weekdays. We need to remember that the present strength of our congregation is what makes mission possible in the first place."

A youth member of the council says, "Why don't we pray and wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit?" Sam sighs and responds, "Sarah, the Holy Spirit doesn't have to pay the bills."

Scenario 3: Hostetler UMC

Hostetler UMC used to have 1,300 members and a Sunday worship attendance of 450; now there are 800 members and a good Sunday finds about 325 in the pews across two services. While finances are strong and the congregation is well engaged in ministry, there is a growing sense that some change needs to happen.

The pastor, Jessica Moreau, is in her sixth year, is a strong preacher and good administrator, and is generally well liked, though a minority of members thinks she is “trying to change things too quickly.” At the congregation’s annual spring planning retreat, Jessica presents a plan to reorder one of the Sunday services from very traditional to a blended style. This would provide opportunities for more members to share in leading worship – especially the youth – and should prove attractive to people who know neither the Lord’s Prayer nor the Apostles’ Creed by memory.

While most people at the retreat receive Jessica’s plan warmly, a few wonder how Trevor, the long-time church organist and choir director, who is classically trained and devoted to traditional worship, will react. During lunch at the retreat, someone calls Trevor and gives him a report. Trevor responds that any change to the worship format will result in his immediate resignation. This is reported back at the afternoon session of the retreat, and gloom settles in.

Scenario 4: Piney Corners UMC

Piney Corners UMC is a close-knit congregation of 120 members, with a Sunday attendance of about 70. Every five years the United Methodist Women of PCUMC publish a new cookbook; they’ve been doing so for more than fifty years. PCUMC takes great pride in this project, for the considerable funds it raises go to mission.

The gathering of the recipes has traditionally been entrusted to the women of the Jennings family, descended from the founder of the congregation, who laid the cornerstone more than 150 years ago. The UMW cookbook seldom varies from the country cuisine favored by Piney Corners’ older members: heavy on butter, cream, cheese and red meat, with little thought given to other styles of cooking.

Some younger members have asked that next year’s cookbook include healthier recipes that are lower in sugar, salt and fat. A number of them have sent their favorite recipes to Melinda Jennings, assuming she would welcome variety. Sally Compton, pastor at Piney Corners for two years, submitted several vegetarian favorites of her own.

At a meeting of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, one of the members reads a letter from Melinda Jennings, resigning from her position as editor of the UMW cookbook and citing the pastor’s “interference” as the principal reason for her decision. “Sally,” asks the chairperson, “has Melinda spoken with you about this?” “No,” says Sally, “this is the first I’ve heard of her concerns.”

Continued on page 14.

Session 4 continued

Truthful Naming

*But when [Peter]
came to Antioch,
I opposed him
to his face,
because he
stood self-
condemned.*

[Galatians 2:11]

In the video for this session, one of the pastors suggests that she has found it easier to encourage her congregants to name things truthfully when she asks them to consider “How does that make you feel?” rather than “What do you think about that?” How might reframing the discussion in this way change the outcome in this scenario?

What would be the next steps in working through the conflict productively? What actions could make the conflict worse?

What responsibility does the SPRC have in situations of conflict, and to whom is the committee accountable?



What principles might your committee agree to adhere to when reconciling different points of view?



FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

What steps might you take to encourage yourself in the ongoing practice of naming issues truthfully?

Session 5

Stewardship of the Pastor

Christian stewardship is more than the financial support we offer the church - it is the reverent care for all the gifts we have received from God. Your pastor is one of those gifts.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to see the committee's relationship with its pastor as one of care and respect, not control or management

Honoring the Work of the Holy Spirit

The United Methodist Book of Discipline requires that the SPRC "reflect biblically and theologically on the role and work of the pastor and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities." (2012, ¶258) Consider the ways in which your committee can support your pastor in his or her work; then, share some of your responses with the group.

In what specific ways does your committee model Christian stewardship in its care of your pastor?



Is your pastor encouraged to set aside adequate time for Sabbath and vacation? Is there a willingness within your congregation to accept care from other clergy during your pastor's absence? What is the SPRC's role in providing support?

Does the congregation have a clear understanding of the pastor's connectional responsibilities and his or her need for continuing education? If not, how might the SPRC better communicate these to the congregation?

Does your committee share with your pastor what the group feels he or she is doing well and provide insight into areas where his or her further development could most benefit the church? How might you enrich this analysis and conversation?

If your pastor resides in a parsonage, is there thoughtful, gracious provision for the property's care? Is the pastor's family's privacy respected? What role might the SPRC play in advocating for a space that is truly the pastor's own?

The SPRC should assist the pastor and staff in:

- Assessing their gifts
- Maintaining holistic health and work-life balance
- Setting priorities for leadership and service

United Methodist Book of Discipline
(2012) ¶ 258

Continued on page 18.



Session 5 continued

Stewardship of the Pastor

*And the king will
answer them,
"Truly I tell you,
just as you did
it to one of
the least of
these who are
members of
my family,
you did it
to me."*

Matthew 25:40

Are there tasks currently performed by your pastor that might instead be done by a layperson, affording that person a new opportunity for ministry?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

The comfort that your pastor feels in asking for what he or she needs may vary depending on past experiences or the extent to which such requests seem welcomed by the congregation. What are some of the ways that you can encourage your pastor to care for himself or herself?

Session 6

Covenant for Ministry

When your SPRC crafts a covenant to guide its work, it submits to specific obligations and relationships that honor the promises made at baptism. Though these obligations and relationships may be challenging, they have the potential to be transformative in your congregation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to create a practical and spiritual covenant that will guide the committee in its ministry

Creating a Covenant for Your SPRC

On the following pages, you will find a sample SPRC covenant as well as a template for crafting your own. Notice that both are structured around the topics we covered in Pastor & Parish, beginning with baptism. Work through each clause as shown in the template. What ideas have emerged from your conversation and reflection that are meaningful to your work, in your church, with your SPRC?

The covenant you create should be written specifically for your parish setting, reflecting the journey you have taken during this study. This is something to consider carefully and treat with openness and generosity. You should revisit it periodically to ensure that it continues to guide your work.

Continued on page 20.



Session 6 continued

Covenant for Ministry

COVENANT TEMPLATE

*For God so loved
the world that
He gave His only
Son, so that
everyone who
believes in Him
may not perish
but may have
eternal life.*

John 3:16

We will:

Remember our baptism by...

Aid in the church's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation
of the world by...

Honor our church's sacred bundle by...

Practice truthful naming by...

And act as good stewards of our pastor by...

We do all these things prayerfully, to promote the life of faith in our committee, and the thriving of our pastor.

Continued on page 22.



What is a Covenant?

Although sometimes equated with an agreement or a contract, covenant in our faith tradition implies something much deeper because of what is at stake.

When God makes a covenant with us, He gifts us with forgiveness and eternal life, promising never to abandon us. That promise came at a cost, named in Jesus' utterance on the cross: "I thirst."

The expectation – at once simple and challenging – is that we will live our lives in service to Christ, carrying on His work until He comes again.



Covenant for Ministry

SAMPLE COVENANT

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee of Bedford Falls United Methodist Church, in thankful response to the grace of God poured out upon us in our baptisms, makes this covenant for ministry to guide us as we work with pastor George Bailey to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel in this parish. After prayer, study and reflection, we agree that we will...

- Pray daily for one another and for Reverend Bailey, by name, and that we will begin and conclude each of our committee meetings with prayer, remembering the covenant that God made with us at baptism.
- Be mindful that making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is the principal mission of our congregation, the church being Christ's own creation to carry on His work until his coming again.
- Conduct ourselves in our meetings so as to bring honor to the name of Jesus Christ and an increase to His Kingdom in our parish, keeping confidence when appropriate and practicing truthful naming, so that our reflection and decisions may be above reproach.
- Be careful stewards of pastor Bailey and his family, honoring George's connectional responsibilities and need for continuing education and attending to the family's needs for privacy, vacation and a safe and comfortable home so that all may flourish.
- Be generous in support and reserved in judgment, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and holding one another accountable for faithfulness to this covenant for ministry.
- To review annually and, when necessary, revise this covenant, so that it may continue to serve the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Bedford Falls congregation, the larger connection of the United Methodist Church, and be pleasing in the sight of the One who has called us into ministry, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Extending the Impact

While Pastor & Parish is not intended to address the day-to-day business of the SPRC, it is likely that the topics you have discussed together will have an impact on how you approach the operations of the committee in the months and years to come.

Enhancing the SPRC's planning and process

Your group may have identified some practical items of business to address that fall outside of the spiritual intent of the covenant, but which might bear good fruit.

- Perhaps the SPRC would like to establish a new mid-year planning retreat to address important but non-urgent concerns.
- Another way to address business with great intentionality would be to establish a process for agenda-setting that functions across the year, rather than month-to-month or meeting-to-meeting.

Sharing Pastor & Parish with new committee members or a new pastor

One of the aspects of Pastor & Parish that churches have found most valuable is its capacity to foster community within a committee and between SPRCs and clergy.

- Since the SPRC has a rolling membership, consider repeating the curriculum annually at the point when new members are joining the committee, affording them the opportunity to contribute to the SPRC's covenant.
- Likewise, going through the program with a newly appointed pastor offers clergy joining a congregation a wonderful lens into the church's character and the SPRC a way to get to know and connect with their new leader.

Encouraging your congregation to embrace the teachings of Pastor & Parish

While designed with the needs of the SPRC in mind, the theological concepts presented in Pastor & Parish could be beneficial for the wider congregation.

- Consider sharing one or more of the videos at an evening gathering, discussing how, as baptized individuals, we each have a call to serve as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share with other church leaders the covenant your SPRC has created, encouraging them to likewise reflect on their committees' responsibilities as a ministry in service to the local church.

Regardless of the specific actions you take, we encourage you to continue to engage in conversation with one another, drawing on the principles you've explored through this series.

Notes

Pastor & Parish is funded by a grant from

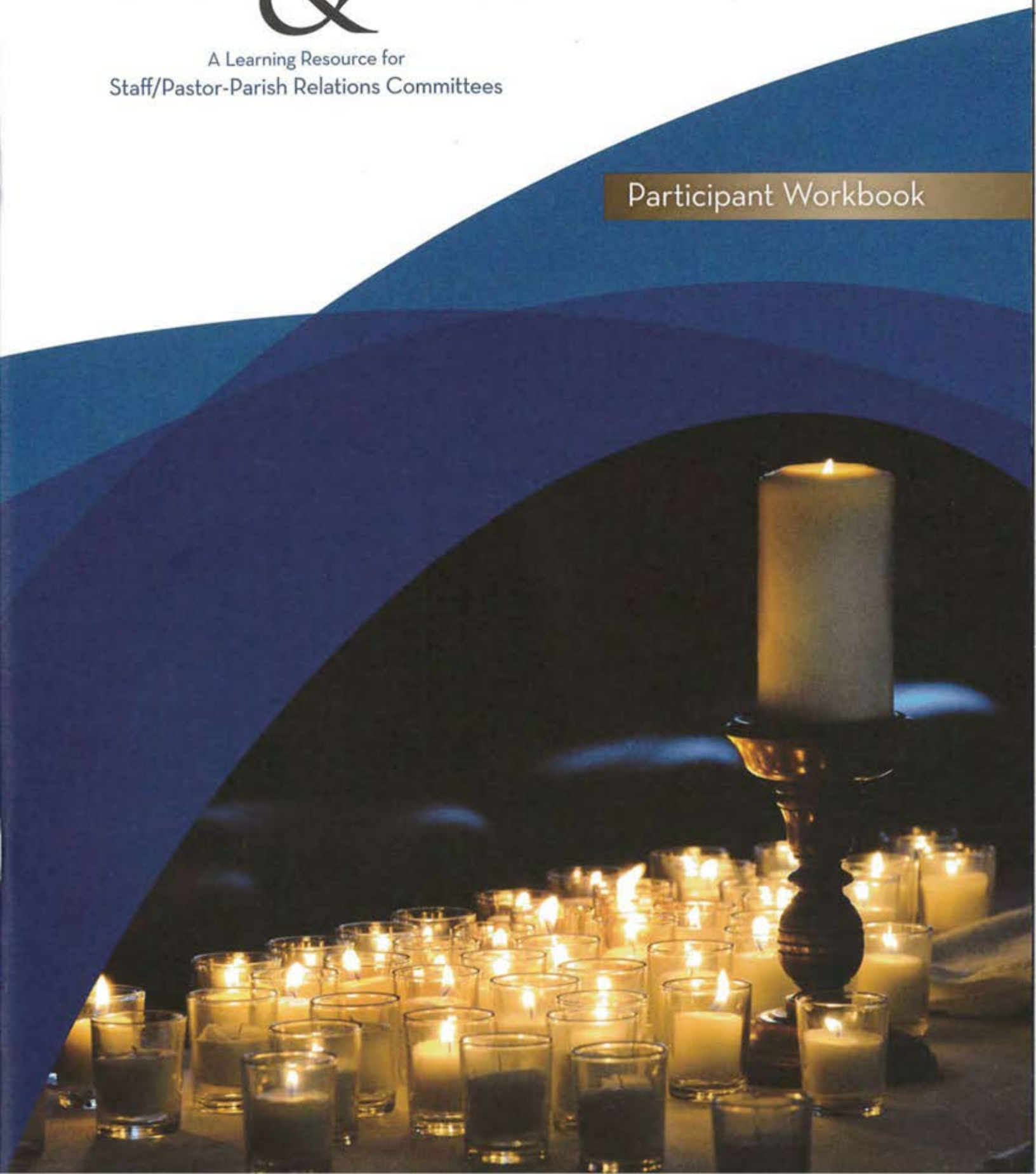
James B. Duke
THE DUKE ENDOWMENT



Pastor & Parish™

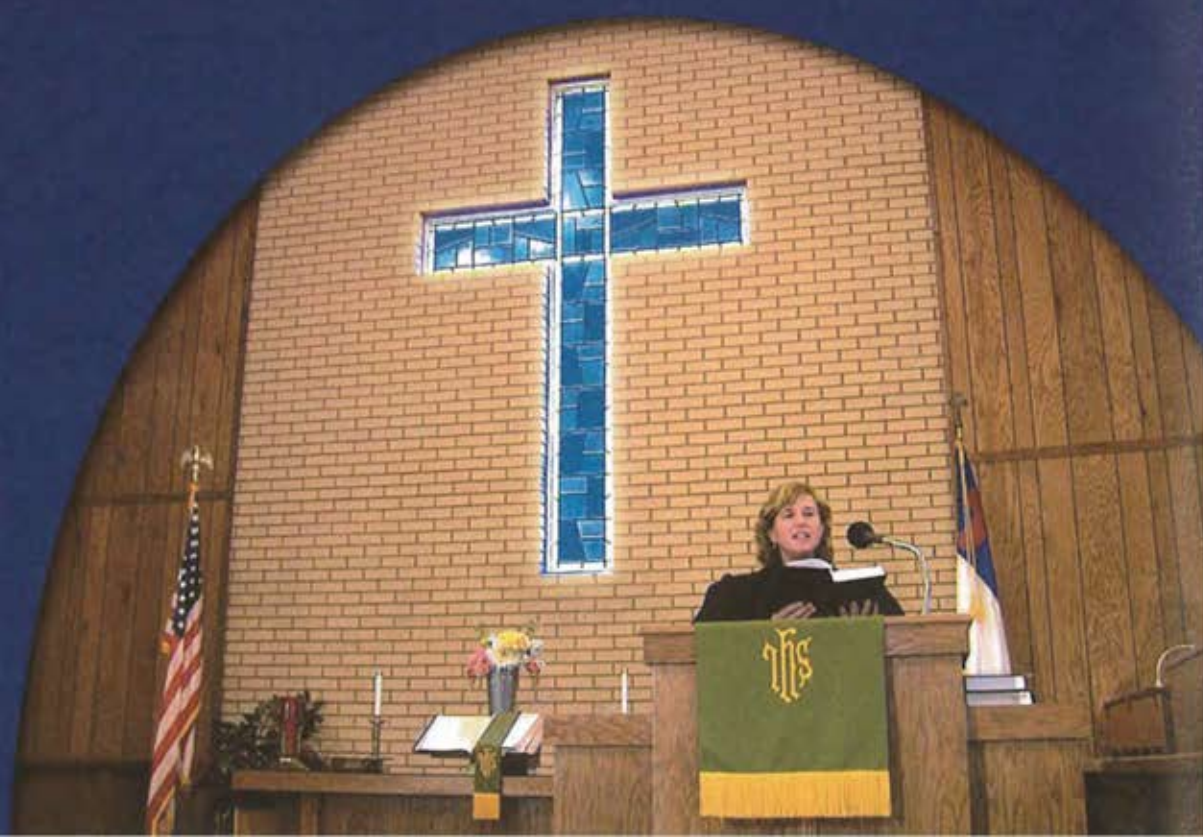
A Learning Resource for
Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committees

Participant Workbook



Depending on the size of your church, your committee may refer to itself in one of two ways. United Methodist churches served by multiple clergy generally call this group the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), whereas congregations served by one pastor often use the term Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC).

We have chosen to use the broader term of SPRC throughout this series. In places where we refer to 'your pastor' for simplicity, you should consider the point to extend to all clergy.



Pastor & Parish™

In agreeing to be part of this program, you have taken a critical step in the ongoing growth and development of your congregation.

The United Methodist Church describes the Staff-Parish Relations Committee as being “the administrative unit in a local church, where staff and congregational interests are integrated to focus on the mission of the church.”

Pastor & Parish™ is a theologically-framed formational activity for SPRCs that encourages discussion within your committee about the unique character of your church. It will help you identify ways for committee members to work in partnership with your pastor, other staff, and the congregation in strengthening your local church.

Participant Workbook

What to Expect	3
Session 1: Baptism	4
Session 2: Discipleship	6
Session 3: Sacred Bundle	8
Session 4: Truthful Naming	11
Session 5: Stewardship of the Pastor	16
Session 6: Covenant for Ministry	19
Next Steps	23
Notes	24

About the Duke Clergy Health Initiative

The Duke Clergy Health Initiative was formed in 2007 when the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences of the United Methodist Church partnered with Duke Divinity School and The Duke Endowment to seek solutions to their growing concerns about declining clergy health and increasing health costs.

Findings from our early research established a clear picture of clergy health and the factors affecting it. We now know with certainty that United Methodist clergy in North Carolina are more likely to suffer from obesity, chronic disease, and depression than other comparable state residents. We also have a better understanding of the factors in the lives of clergy that expose them to greater risks of poor health. One key driver of well-being is the quality of the relationship that a pastor has with the members of his or her congregation.

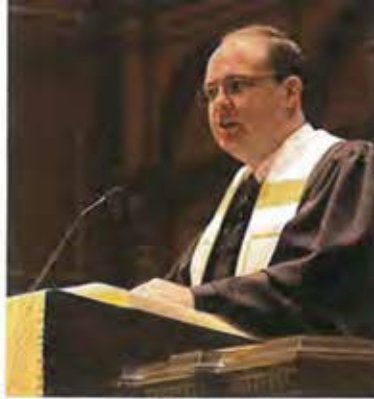
In 2010, we enrolled more than 1,100 North Carolina-based United Methodist clergy in Spirited Life, a multi-year wellness program and behavioral health study. Through it, pastors learn to manage stress; care for their bodies in a healthy, mindful way; and find spiritual renewal.

We hope that the skills you will learn in Pastor & Parish will augment your pastor's efforts to care for himself or herself and will enable your SPRC to build the quality of its leadership.

To learn more about the Clergy Health Initiative and our research findings, visit our website:
www.clergyhealthinitiative.org.



What to Expect

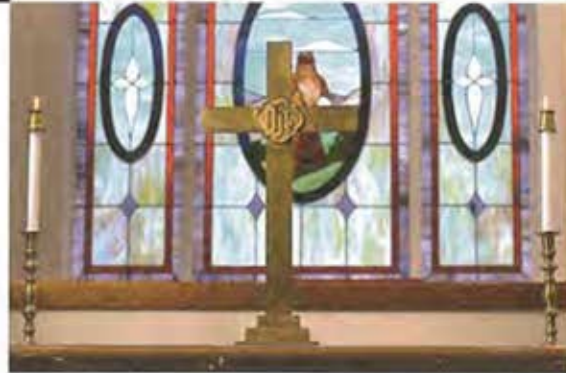


Pastor & Parish is a six-session small group learning experience. It is an opportunity for your SPRC to grow in community with one another in a forum separate from your regular committee meetings.

Each of the sessions is meant to last about an hour. During each session, you will view a short video and then individually answer several questions in this workbook. Your group's facilitator will guide you in a discussion of these ideas, which you can continue to explore on your own through additional readings. By discussing candidly in this safe space what your church does well and how it might improve, you will increase the effectiveness of your committee.

This series is unique among training resources for SPRCs in that it ties the committee's responsibilities back to their spiritual beginnings. At the conclusion of this course, you will have the opportunity to craft a covenant to capture what your SPRC has learned and use it to guide your committee's ministry as you work with your pastor to preserve and develop your church's unique character.

Should you wish to delve more deeply into any of the topics presented in Pastor & Parish, links to articles, books and additional resources are available online at www.pastorandparish.com.



Pastor & Parish™

Session 1

Baptism

Your presence on this committee is, before anything else, a ministry in response to your baptism. The baptism we receive signifies not only God's gift of grace, but also our covenant with God to strengthen the local church by carrying on Christ's work until He comes again.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage committee members to see their work on the SPRC as a ministry in response to the sacrament of baptism

Remembering Our Baptism

Do you remember – or have you been told – details about your baptism? How old were you? When and where did it take place? Who performed the sacrament? Were other important people in your life present? Are there photos to commemorate the event?

Not everyone who attends a United Methodist church was raised in the Methodist tradition. How might your baptism have differed from others on your committee? List your recollections below and share some of them with the group.

*So if anyone
is in Christ,
there is a new
creation:
everything old
has passed away;
see, everything
has become new!*

2 Corinthians 5:17

As members of the church, we all are called to ministry in some way. What does your baptism into the church mean for the way you live your life?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

In the space below, write the names of the members of your SPRC and your pastor. Pray for each of them by name every day, asking for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as they go about their ministries. Be sure to pray for yourself, too!

Study "Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters," the hymn that introduced this session's video. Sing or read it several times over a few days, asking the Holy Spirit to open new understanding for you. What images in the lyrics speak powerfully to you? Why? What kind of congregation does the hymn long for?



HYMN

Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters

United Methodist Hymnal, #605

*Wash, O God, our sons and daughters,
where your cleansing waters flow.*

*Number them among your people;
bless as Christ blessed long ago.*

*Weave them garments bright and
sparkling; compass them in love and light.*

*Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit,
Holy Dove and heart's delight.*

*We who bring them long for
nurture; by your milk may we be fed.*

*Let us join your feast, partaking
cup of blessing, living bread.*

*God, renew us, guide our footsteps;
free from sin and all its snares,*

*One with Christ in living, dying,
by your Spirit, children, heirs.*

*O how deep your holy wisdom!
Unimagined, all your ways!*

*To your name be glory, honor!
With our lives we worship, praise!*

*We your people stand before you,
water-washed and Spirit born.*

*By your grace, our lives we offer.
Recreate us; God, transform!*

*Used by permission of Augsburg-Fortress (music)
and The United Methodist Publishing House (lyrics)*

Session 2

Discipleship

The word apostle comes from a Greek verb meaning "to send." To be baptized is to *consent to be sent*, in the name of Jesus Christ. Often God's call to discipleship involves getting up and moving from the comfortable and the familiar, and journeying out in faith.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to partner with their pastor in developing fresh, vibrant ministry appropriate to the mission of the parish

The SPRC should:

- Work with the pastor to discern God's plan for the congregation
- Assist in sharing that vision
- Support the pastor

Examining Our Path

As disciples, we are sent out to share the good news and to make sure that the good news is being received. This requires discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. Consider the experiences and tendencies of your congregation when answering the questions below. Then share some with the group.

Are the comforts of the familiar restraining your congregation's ability to explore new forms of worship or witness? If yes, what are some of these restraints?

How might your committee assist the pastor in recognizing opportunities for your congregation to journey out in faith?

If the place your congregation is being sent requires a shift in the ways your church seeks to fulfill its mission, how might the SPRC support your pastor in making that transition?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

Consider the opportunities your congregation offers for its members to advance the mission of the United Methodist Church, "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." What is your church doing well? What could you do better?

*Then I heard
the voice of the
Lord saying,
'Whom shall
I send, and who
will go for us?'
and I said, 'Here
am I; send me!'*

Isaiah 6:8



Mission of the United Methodist Church:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world

Session 3

Sacred Bundle

An important part of your committee's work is to recognize the contents of your congregation's sacred bundle and to interpret them for the pastor. Unless your pastor understands them, he or she cannot minister effectively.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to recognize and share congregational memories, taboos, and traditions that define their church's culture, but may not be readily apparent to a new pastor

Interpreting your Congregation's Sacred Bundle

In the space below, name something from your congregation's sacred bundle that you feel defines or shapes your church, but that your pastor may not know. Agree amongst your group that everyone's responses will be kept in confidence. Then share your response with the group.



In the session on Discipleship, your committee discussed habits or traditions that may be inhibiting your congregation's ability to explore new forms of worship or witness. Some members might consider these traditions to be part of the church's sacred bundle.

How do you decide what should remain in the sacred bundle, and what should be acknowledged, but let go? And how might you support the pastor in communicating that decision?

Continued on page 10.



What is a Sacred Bundle?

Some Native American cultures had an object they called a sacred bundle. It served as the people's portable history.

Usually made from animal hide, the sacred bundle included everyday objects that seemed unremarkable to someone from outside the community.

But in the hands of a skilled narrator, these artifacts could tell where a people had come from, their journey across the years, their triumphs and tragedies, their heroes and prophets, their joys and sorrows.

Used by permission of the Kansas State Historical Society

Session 3 continued

Sacred Bundle

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

*But speaking
the truth in love,
we must grow
up in every way
into him who
is the head,
into Christ.*

Ephesians 4:15

The writer of Ephesians encourages the church to speak the truth in love within its walls so that its mission to those outside may be strengthened. Reflect upon how your committee might ensure that its members "speak the truth in love" every time you meet.

Session 4

Truthful Naming

Conflict in the church is not necessarily bad, for it means that passion and energy are present. But to move past the conflict, a church must learn to redirect this passion and energy into ministry and mission. This begins with truthful naming.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

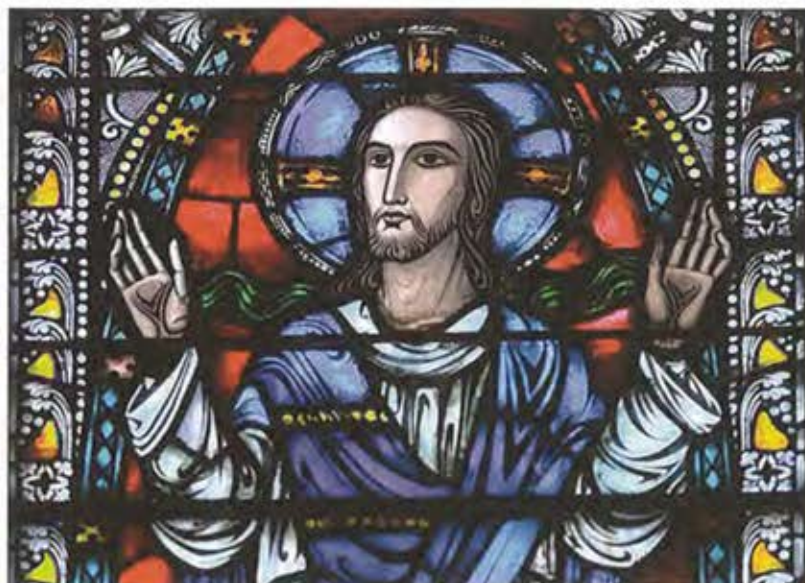
To equip SPRC members with tools for dealing responsibly with conflict that arises in the local church

Naming Issues Honestly

The stories on the following pages describe congregations facing conflict due to changes the churches are experiencing.

Your leader will guide you in selecting a scenario to discuss. Spend a few minutes answering the questions that follow the scenarios, and then share some of your insights with the group.

Continued on page 12.



Truthful Naming

Scenario 1: Carruthers UMC

Carruthers UMC is fortunate to be in a fast-growing community, and in the last two years, many new families have begun to join the church. CUMC has historically been a close-knit, rural congregation where everyone knew everyone, but now that sense of community is in transition.

Sally Brownstone has served for years as Sunday School superintendent as well as a teacher, and has taken pride in getting to know all of the children in the church. Usually good-natured and cooperative, Sally has, over the last year, become argumentative and has opposed nearly everything the pastor and other leaders have done to respond to the congregation's growth. She has spoken unfavorably of the pastor's leadership every time there has been an opportunity and now has begun to suggest that "we may need a change." Because they love and respect her, others in the congregation have begun to agree.

At a church council meeting, Sally intends to criticize the pastor's plans to add another Christmas Eve service to accommodate all of the families with younger children. As Sally begins to distribute copies of her list of concerns around the table, a young woman Sally has known from infancy says, "Aunt Sally, what's bothering you? I was baptized and raised here at Carruthers, and it is painful to see all this bitterness and conflict. Can you tell us all what the real problem is?"

Stunned, Sally is silent for a moment, and then she begins to cry. "I can't know the names of all the children anymore," she says. "There are just too many."

Scenario 2: Avalon UMC

Avalon UMC is a medium-sized, urban parish with a history of missional outreach to the community – the sort of local church that understands that ministry needs to extend "beyond the walls." The congregation's witness in the community has historically received broad support among its members, though there have occasionally been reasonable differences in opinion. Now, though, mission has led to divisiveness.

Because the number of homeless people in AUMC's neighborhood is increasing, some members of the congregation think the homeless should be able to pitch tents on the church's side lawn and have access to AUMC's restrooms 24/7, provided a mission volunteer is on hand. Others, citing city ordinances and liability risks, think the church's present ministry to the homeless – hot meals several days a week, counseling, and transportation to a free clinic – is sufficient.

At a council meeting, Sam Steadman, the finance chair, comments, "Tents and trash on the lawn will discourage people from coming to church on Sunday, not to mention frighten the office workers who use our walks to get to their jobs on weekdays. We need to remember that the present strength of our congregation is what makes mission possible in the first place."

A youth member of the council says, "Why don't we pray and wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit?" Sam sighs and responds, "Sarah, the Holy Spirit doesn't have to pay the bills."

Scenario 3: Hostetler UMC

Hostetler UMC used to have 1,300 members and a Sunday worship attendance of 450; now there are 800 members and a good Sunday finds about 325 in the pews across two services. While finances are strong and the congregation is well engaged in ministry, there is a growing sense that some change needs to happen.

The pastor, Jessica Moreau, is in her sixth year, is a strong preacher and good administrator, and is generally well liked, though a minority of members thinks she is “trying to change things too quickly.” At the congregation’s annual spring planning retreat, Jessica presents a plan to reorder one of the Sunday services from very traditional to a blended style. This would provide opportunities for more members to share in leading worship – especially the youth – and should prove attractive to people who know neither the Lord’s Prayer nor the Apostles’ Creed by memory.

While most people at the retreat receive Jessica’s plan warmly, a few wonder how Trevor, the long-time church organist and choir director, who is classically trained and devoted to traditional worship, will react. During lunch at the retreat, someone calls Trevor and gives him a report. Trevor responds that any change to the worship format will result in his immediate resignation. This is reported back at the afternoon session of the retreat, and gloom settles in.

Scenario 4: Piney Corners UMC

Piney Corners UMC is a close-knit congregation of 120 members, with a Sunday attendance of about 70. Every five years the United Methodist Women of PCUMC publish a new cookbook; they’ve been doing so for more than fifty years. PCUMC takes great pride in this project, for the considerable funds it raises go to mission.

The gathering of the recipes has traditionally been entrusted to the women of the Jennings family, descended from the founder of the congregation, who laid the cornerstone more than 150 years ago. The UMW cookbook seldom varies from the country cuisine favored by Piney Corners’ older members: heavy on butter, cream, cheese and red meat, with little thought given to other styles of cooking.

Some younger members have asked that next year’s cookbook include healthier recipes that are lower in sugar, salt and fat. A number of them have sent their favorite recipes to Melinda Jennings, assuming she would welcome variety. Sally Compton, pastor at Piney Corners for two years, submitted several vegetarian favorites of her own.

At a meeting of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, one of the members reads a letter from Melinda Jennings, resigning from her position as editor of the UMW cookbook and citing the pastor’s “interference” as the principal reason for her decision. “Sally,” asks the chairperson, “has Melinda spoken with you about this?” “No,” says Sally, “this is the first I’ve heard of her concerns.”

Continued on page 14.

Session 4 continued

Truthful Naming

*But when [Peter]
came to Antioch,
I opposed him
to his face,
because he
stood self-
condemned.*

Galatians 2:11

In the video for this session, one of the pastors suggests that she has found it easier to encourage her congregants to name things truthfully when she asks them to consider “How does that make you feel?” rather than “What do you think about that?” How might reframing the discussion in this way change the outcome in this scenario?

What would be the next steps in working through the conflict productively? What actions could make the conflict worse?

What responsibility does the SPRC have in situations of conflict, and to whom is the committee accountable?



What principles might your committee agree to adhere to when reconciling different points of view?



FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

What steps might you take to encourage yourself in the ongoing practice of naming issues truthfully?

Session 5

Stewardship of the Pastor

Christian stewardship is more than the financial support we offer the church – it is the reverent care for all the gifts we have received from God. Your pastor is one of those gifts.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to see the committee's relationship with its pastor as one of care and respect, not control or management

Honoring the Work of the Holy Spirit

The United Methodist Book of Discipline requires that the SPRC “reflect biblically and theologically on the role and work of the pastor and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities.” (2012, ¶258) Consider the ways in which your committee can support your pastor in his or her work; then, share some of your responses with the group.

In what specific ways does your committee model Christian stewardship in its care of your pastor?



Is your pastor encouraged to set aside adequate time for Sabbath and vacation? Is there a willingness within your congregation to accept care from other clergy during your pastor's absence? What is the SPRC's role in providing support?

Does the congregation have a clear understanding of the pastor's connectional responsibilities and his or her need for continuing education? If not, how might the SPRC better communicate these to the congregation?

Does your committee share with your pastor what the group feels he or she is doing well and provide insight into areas where his or her further development could most benefit the church? How might you enrich this analysis and conversation?

If your pastor resides in a parsonage, is there thoughtful, gracious provision for the property's care? Is the pastor's family's privacy respected? What role might the SPRC play in advocating for a space that is truly the pastor's own?

The SPRC should assist the pastor and staff in:

- Assessing their gifts
- Maintaining holistic health and work-life balance
- Setting priorities for leadership and service

United Methodist Book of Discipline
(2012) ¶ 258

Continued on page 18.



Session 5 continued

Stewardship of the Pastor

*And the king will
answer them,
"Truly I tell you,
just as you did
it to one of
the least of
these who are
members of
my family,
you did it
to me."*

Matthew 25:40

Are there tasks currently performed by your pastor that might instead be done by a layperson, affording that person a new opportunity for ministry?

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Continue to pray daily for everyone on your committee and for your pastor, naming each before God. What other prayers might you make, in light of what you've learned this week?

The comfort that your pastor feels in asking for what he or she needs may vary depending on past experiences or the extent to which such requests seem welcomed by the congregation. What are some of the ways that you can encourage your pastor to care for himself or herself?

Session 6

Covenant for Ministry

When your SPRC crafts a covenant to guide its work, it submits to specific obligations and relationships that honor the promises made at baptism. Though these obligations and relationships may be challenging, they have the potential to be transformative in your congregation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To encourage SPRC members to create a practical and spiritual covenant that will guide the committee in its ministry

Creating a Covenant for Your SPRC

On the following pages, you will find a sample SPRC covenant as well as a template for crafting your own. Notice that both are structured around the topics we covered in Pastor & Parish, beginning with baptism. Work through each clause as shown in the template. What ideas have emerged from your conversation and reflection that are meaningful to your work, in your church, with your SPRC?

The covenant you create should be written specifically for your parish setting, reflecting the journey you have taken during this study. This is something to consider carefully and treat with openness and generosity. You should revisit it periodically to ensure that it continues to guide your work.

Continued on page 20.



Session 6 continued

Covenant for Ministry

COVENANT TEMPLATE

*For God so loved
the world that
He gave His only
Son, so that
everyone who
believes in Him
may not perish
but may have
eternal life.*

John 3:16

We will:

Remember our baptism by...

Aid in the church's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation
of the world by...

Honor our church's sacred bundle by...

Practice truthful naming by...

And act as good stewards of our pastor by...

We do all these things prayerfully, to promote the life of faith in our committee, and the thriving of our pastor.

Continued on page 22.



What is a Covenant?

Although sometimes equated with an agreement or a contract, covenant in our faith tradition implies something much deeper because of what is at stake.

When God makes a covenant with us, He gifts us with forgiveness and eternal life, promising never to abandon us. That promise came at a cost, named in Jesus' utterance on the cross: "I thirst."

The expectation – at once simple and challenging – is that we will live our lives in service to Christ, carrying on His work until He comes again.



Covenant for Ministry

SAMPLE COVENANT

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee of Bedford Falls United Methodist Church, in thankful response to the grace of God poured out upon us in our baptisms, makes this covenant for ministry to guide us as we work with pastor George Bailey to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel in this parish. After prayer, study and reflection, we agree that we will...

- Pray daily for one another and for Reverend Bailey, by name, and that we will begin and conclude each of our committee meetings with prayer, remembering the covenant that God made with us at baptism.
- Be mindful that making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is the principal mission of our congregation, the church being Christ's own creation to carry on His work until his coming again.
- Conduct ourselves in our meetings so as to bring honor to the name of Jesus Christ and an increase to His Kingdom in our parish, keeping confidence when appropriate and practicing truthful naming, so that our reflection and decisions may be above reproach.
- Be careful stewards of pastor Bailey and his family, honoring George's connectional responsibilities and need for continuing education and attending to the family's needs for privacy, vacation and a safe and comfortable home so that all may flourish.
- Be generous in support and reserved in judgment, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and holding one another accountable for faithfulness to this covenant for ministry.
- To review annually and, when necessary, revise this covenant, so that it may continue to serve the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Bedford Falls congregation, the larger connection of the United Methodist Church, and be pleasing in the sight of the One who has called us into ministry, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Extending the Impact

While Pastor & Parish is not intended to address the day-to-day business of the SPRC, it is likely that the topics you have discussed together will have an impact on how you approach the operations of the committee in the months and years to come.

Enhancing the SPRC's planning and process

Your group may have identified some practical items of business to address that fall outside of the spiritual intent of the covenant, but which might bear good fruit.

- Perhaps the SPRC would like to establish a new mid-year planning retreat to address important but non-urgent concerns.
- Another way to address business with great intentionality would be to establish a process for agenda-setting that functions across the year, rather than month-to-month or meeting-to-meeting.

Sharing Pastor & Parish with new committee members or a new pastor

One of the aspects of Pastor & Parish that churches have found most valuable is its capacity to foster community within a committee and between SPRCs and clergy.

- Since the SPRC has a rolling membership, consider repeating the curriculum annually at the point when new members are joining the committee, affording them the opportunity to contribute to the SPRC's covenant.
- Likewise, going through the program with a newly appointed pastor offers clergy joining a congregation a wonderful lens into the church's character and the SPRC a way to get to know and connect with their new leader.

Encouraging your congregation to embrace the teachings of Pastor & Parish

While designed with the needs of the SPRC in mind, the theological concepts presented in Pastor & Parish could be beneficial for the wider congregation.

- Consider sharing one or more of the videos at an evening gathering, discussing how, as baptized individuals, we each have a call to serve as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share with other church leaders the covenant your SPRC has created, encouraging them to likewise reflect on their committees' responsibilities as a ministry in service to the local church.

Regardless of the specific actions you take, we encourage you to continue to engage in conversation with one another, drawing on the principles you've explored through this series.

Notes

Pastor & Parish is funded by a grant from

James B. Duke
THE DUKE ENDOWMENT



Duke Divinity School • 312 Blackwell Street, Suite 101 • Durham, NC 27701
Phone: 919-613-5350 • Fax: 919-613-5333 • www.clergyhealthinitiative.org

www.pastorandparish.com

Copyright © 2013 Duke Divinity School