

PASTOR-PARISH COMMITTEE

also known as:

MINISTER'S AID SOCIETY
PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
PASTOR-PARISH MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE
PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE
PASTORAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Vision

The Pastor-Parish Committee supports and maintains an open relationship between the pastor and members of the congregation. It helps the pastor and members of the church share ideas, hopes, dreams, and interpretations of mission. It monitors the quality of the relationship between the pastor and the congregation. It lets the pastor know what people in the church are thinking. It gives a framework for dealing with conflict creatively.

How the Committee Can Best Do Its Work

- ❖ Meet regularly, perhaps quarterly, always with the pastor present.
- ❖ Be ready to meet “on-call” when the pastor feels the need to talk, or when there are urgent concerns the committee needs to discuss.
- ❖ Always act within an atmosphere of confidentiality.
- ❖ Provide opportunity for the pastor to reflect in confidence about personal concerns, hopes, ambitions, and frustrations.
- ❖ Be alert to the pastor's concerns between meetings.
- ❖ Be clear that this committee is not a personnel committee. The personnel committee and the pastor-parish committee should not be the same committee, nor have members in common, for their tasks are different. A personnel committee oversees and evaluates the effectiveness of the pastor's work and determines the pastor's financial compensation.
- ❖ Remind the congregation regularly of its existence and function.

Tasks

1. Seek to understand the pastor's perspective, hopes, and needs.
2. Convey to the pastor their understanding of the congregation's life.
3. Assist pastor and congregation in a review of their mutual ministry

Responsibilities (related to tasks, above)

1. Seek to understand the pastor's perspective, hopes, and needs.
 - ❖ Demonstrate concern and support for the pastor's family life, personal life, spiritual life, health, financial condition, and general well-being.
 - ❖ Support the pastor's ministry beyond the local church, in the community and denomination
 - ❖ Encourage the pastor to develop and participate in programs of continuing education which will enhance his/her ministry.

(continued)

(RESPONSIBILITIES, continued)

- ❖ Encourage the pastor in developing sabbatical plans.
 - ❖ Advocate, as necessary for changes in the pastor's compensation package.
 - ❖ Plan celebrations of personal and professional milestones.
2. Convey to the pastor their understanding of the congregation's life.
- ❖ Work for improved communication, interpretation and understanding between the congregation and the pastor.
 - ❖ Identify areas of potential conflict between the pastor's ministry and that of the congregation and assist in developing alternative solutions and possibilities for avoiding destructive conflict.
 - ❖ Openly and honestly communicating feelings and reactions of church members to the pastor, and developing responses as appropriate.
3. Assist pastor and congregation in a review of their mutual ministry.
- ❖ Help the congregation understand and value its task.
 - ❖ Clarify the pastor's position description, mutual expectations of pastor and congregation, and what has priority in the ministry.
 - ❖ Review the mutual ministry of pastor and congregation.

How the members of this committee should be chosen:

People with the following characteristics would be good on the committee:

- Attuned to the congregation, available to listen, ready to hear
 - Visible in the life of the church
 - Supportive of the pastor
 - Mature in their faith
 - Able to see many sides of an issue
 - Not afraid of conflict
 - Not conflict-makers
 - Trustworthy
 - Able to maintain confidentiality
- ❖ It is a common practice for members of the search committee which called the pastor to serve as the Pastor-Parish Committee for the first year or so, with 2 members leaving and being replaced annually thereafter.
 - ❖ A committee of 5-7 members is a workable size.
 - ❖ This committee must not include members who are hostile to the pastor; thus it is important that there not be bylaws provisions stipulating that particular officers serve on the committee. Members should not be elected by congregational vote.
 - ❖ As is the case with a U.S. President selecting a Cabinet, the pastor needs to select members of the Pastor-Parish Committee, in consultation with a trusted advisor or advisors, such as the church Moderator or vice-Moderator, head Deacon, etc.).

Resources

Committee on the Ministry, Section D—Congregations in Covenant, offers a 1st year consultation on the mutual ministry of pastor and congregation and is available for special consultations at any time. Contact Rev. Deborah Streeter: 831-624-6072; <dstreeter@ncnuc.org >

“Why You Should Develop a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee,” video, Roy Oswald, Alban Institute, #AL247, \$29.00; phone: 800 846 1318 ext. 244. Or contact the Conference Office to borrow a copy: 510 247 8990, office@ncnuc.org

(“Pastoral Relations Committee,” produced by the Office for Church Life and Leadership, is currently out of print).

The Pastor and the People: Building a New Partnership for Effective Ministry, Lyle Schaller, Abingdon, 1986.

“Maintaining Vitality while serving in a Parish Ministry,” \$3.00, available from United Church Resources: 800 325 7061.

“Sabbatical Leave: Suggestions for Local Churches and Their Pastors,” \$3.50, available from United Church Resources: 800 325 7061.

"Evaluating Ministry," Principles and Processes for Clergy and Congregations, Jill M. Hudson, AL133 \$13.00, phone: 800 846 1318, ext. 244

"User Friendly Evaluation," Improving the Work of Pastors, Programs and Laity" AL163 \$16.00, phone 800 846 1318 ext. 244