

# WHO CARES FOR THE PASTOR?

*A Manual and Workbook  
for Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees*

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## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

This manual and workbook, the fruit of a lengthier dissertation/project at San Francisco Theological Seminary in quest of a Doctor of Ministry degree in 2000, has had an underground existence to date. After mentioning the manual/workbook in an article I wrote for the *Circuit Rider* in January 2002, it has been accessible to churches across the country by downloading from the web-site of the New York Annual Conference.

New to this edition is an attempt to acknowledge its ecumenical usage. Rather than clutter the copy with all the different titles of similar committees in the various denominations, for the most part I will use the United Methodist terms with the following key for non-UMs:

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee is the body that relates exclusively with the pastor(s). Many call it Staff/Parish-Relations Committee owing to responsibilities beyond working with pastors. In this document I shall reflect each of these realities by calling it the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations committee (P/SPRC). In your denomination this body may be called the Personnel Committee or Vestry or Committee on Ministry or Pastoral Relations Committee, or something similar.

The Church Council in United Methodist usage is the chief decision-making body of the local church, also known as Administrative Board or Council. You may know it as Vestry, or Session or General Board.

“Pastor” is the most common name for United Methodist clergy though many use the title, “Minister.” You may too. Or they may call your spiritual leader “Rector” or “Head-of-Staff,” “Priest-in-charge,” etc.

The material in this manual/workbook is copyrighted. I believe it is best used if each member of a P/SPRC has his/her own copy. Accordingly, permission is granted to copy for use within your church.

The energy for this project comes from more than 30 years of pastoral ministry where, although cared for very well in general, just enough bad stuff happened to interest me in making the way easier for others. I would not, could not have persevered either in the parish or with this effort were it not for the most encouraging person God ever made, my wife, Jeanne. If you find yourself grateful for the material herein, say a prayer of thanks for her.

I do appreciate feedback and suggestions for future revisions. You can send an E-mail to me at [denniswinkleblack@yahoo.com](mailto:denniswinkleblack@yahoo.com). As time permits, I also enjoy conducting workshops for local church P/SPRCs.

## INTRODUCTION

Who cares for the pastor? Probably most people do. But, possibly, only a few may really care in ways that the pastor notices. To care for your pastor is to include him or her in Jesus' command to his disciples "To love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34) Too often, churches believe they have cared sufficiently for their pastor just by paying a salary, providing housing and giving other benefits. Not that they *don't* care more than this, but they may presume that the annual conference through the bishop and district superintendent cares for the personal and professional needs of the clergy. And, to a considerable extent, they do. However, nothing is more important to a pastor than being appointed to a church that knows how to actively care about them and, if they have one, their family.

St. Paul wrote: "And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love" (I Thessalonians 5: 12-13 in Eugene Peterson, *The Message New Testament*). What this workbook seeks to do is help pastor/staff-parish relations committees (P/SPRC) care for their pastoral leaders, and maybe even occasionally overwhelm them with appreciation and love.

A pastor's main "tool" for ministry is him/herself. Thus, how they attend to their own spiritual, physical and emotional needs is crucial to their ability to serve God through pastoral ministry. Not least, their own contentment as a pastor and their happiness as a person depend on how well they care for themselves, and how well they are cared for by people who love them. Of course, the ultimate responsibility for self-care belongs to the pastor. However, because the community of faith gathered as your church also has an obligation to love all who are in it, including your pastor, your P/SPRC will want to use this manual as a regular part of your meetings. For your church's sake, yes -- every organization benefits from workers who are glad to be there. But, in addition, you'll want to add these exercises to your present agenda so that your pastor may continue healthy in body, hardy in soul and mind, and happy in the vocation to

which they have been called by Christ. It's a big job. But with God's help (and a few of your friends) you can do it.

### **YOU ARE PARTNERS WITH YOUR PASTOR IN MINISTRY**

Local church ministry is, or ought to be, a partnership between the pastor and laity. The success or lack of success in ministry is not the burden of the pastor only. Accordingly, the P/SPRC, on behalf of the congregation, plays a significant role in the partnership with the pastor. Your committee has two broad duties: 1) to help the pastor understand and be responsive to the needs of the congregation; and 2) to care for the appropriate personal and professional needs of the pastor. Traditionally, United Methodist churches have perceived their role mostly in terms of conveying what the congregation needs. Sometimes this factor of the congregation's needs has even had an adversarial quality to it. Additionally, caring for the personal and professional needs of the pastor often has gone under-served by the local church. Annual conferences do not have the day to day connection with pastors to know their needs and to express adequate concern. Partnerships abound in the United Methodist connection. When it comes to caring for some of the pastor's personal and professional needs, however, the partnership he or she enjoys with the caring people of your church is crucial.

### **PARTNERSHIP = HOSPITALITY + OPENNESS**

Because a pastor is appointed by a bishop to a church rather than being hired locally, a pastor usually arrives as an outsider and sometimes remains so throughout their tenure. After all, the leadership of some churches reason, just when we begin to get to know them they're moved! In a way, this will always be true: United Methodist pastors are a kind of itinerant missionary serving the whole of the United Methodist church, one appointment at a time. Nevertheless, while the pastor is part of your church community, embracing him/her as a brother or sister can only benefit everybody. Think about it: how do we treat visitors to our homes? We're welcoming, aren't we? The same hospitality needs to be shown by churches to pastors! Because it doesn't happen without planning, such hospitality needs to be *intentional*. This workbook will

help you care intentionally for your pastor.

Hospitality is only part of the formula. The pastor must be willing to be open about his/her appropriate pastoral and professional needs. If the church doesn't know what the pastor wants, it can't be helpful. Some pastors are more comfortable than others in sharing themselves as persons. If your pastor is more reserved, then you'll need to take this into consideration. However, don't presume because your pastor tends to be shy that he/she wouldn't want to join you in these exercises of partnership. Ask, and then do all you can to honor those wishes.

### **IT'S ABOUT A DIALOGUE**

Ultimately, your partnership with your pastor comes down to communication. The better your committee and the pastor communicate about the needs of the church and pastor the more your relationship will flourish. This workbook seeks to help the pastor and P/SPRC talk with one another about important matters. Because all of what we do is God's work, I invite you to invite God into your conversation and pray regularly for your pastor and your church. A prayer such as the one at the end of this section is a good prayer with which to begin.

### **TO BEAR IN MIND**

If your pastor is a woman and/or an ethnic minority, or if your pastor is part of a clergy couple you have multiple blessings and additional issues to address. This workbook seeks to reflect the needs of United Methodist pastors, in general. Specific needs beyond those noted here should be taken every bit as seriously. Also, churches with more than one pastor will need to respect the covenant that exists between pastors and the traditions of their congregations in their usage of this workbook.

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

The members of the P/SPRC should read what *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* says about the responsibilities of your committee. This is contained in paragraph 259.2 of the 2004 edition. You should also have copies of "Caring for Pastors and Staff" (available from Cokesbury) that expands on the *Discipline's* outline of duties. It also gives

many helpful suggestions including an example of a year's agenda for the committee.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS WORKBOOK**

If possible, your committee should meet bi-monthly in order to include the agenda of this workbook with the responsibilities set by the *Discipline*. To share at more than a surface level, you will need to allow sufficient time in your meetings for discussion. An alternative would be to retreat with the pastor for a day or an overnight each year to talk about all the concerns presented here. Discuss the possibilities with your pastor. In particular, the section on "Expectations" requires a substantial amount of time to work through. You surely will want to devote at least one meeting without other agenda to it. The benefits, however, of doing so make it worth the effort.

Before each meeting, you should copy the questions for discussion and give them to other committee members and the pastor so they may thoughtfully answer them. If the questions ask the committee to do some researching of church policy or practice, the chairperson should either do it or ask another member to do so. To assist you in incorporating these exercises in your yearly responsibility, an example of a year's agenda is enclosed at the end.

Here's a prayer adapted from the book *Your Pastor Is an Endangered Species* by H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman. Make it your personal prayer today, and then do that which God leads you.

"Lord of our church, thank you for the pastor who serves our church. We praise you for (pastor's name)'s insights, faith, sacrifices, training, devotion and faithfulness. Teach our church a thousand ways to show our love. Help us to let our pastor know how influential (pastor's name) is in our spiritual development so that (pastor's name) may keep the fire of Christ's love burning brightly for the sake of His church and the world. Amen.<sup>1</sup>"

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, *Your Pastor Is An Endangered Species* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996) 113.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

*I wonder if our church has realistic expectations for our pastor's ministry.*

*Does our pastor feel compelled to try to meet everybody's expectations?*

*How does our committee help church and pastor agree on expectations?*

*Does our pastor feel energized or overwhelmed by our church's expectations?*

It's said that most problems in marriage are caused by poor communication. So too with pastors and churches: failure to communicate leads to misunderstandings and often irreparable harm to the partnership. This is why agreeing on expectations is so important for pastors and P/SPRCs. What shall the pastor do with his/her time? What is a priority for the pastor's attention? You can be sure that if you review pastoral expectations annually, come to consensus about responsibilities and support your pastor in the face of criticism your relationship will thrive.

If you haven't already, look at paragraph 340 in *The Book of Discipline 2004*. This is your pastor's job description. Anybody want to trade jobs? It's exhaustive in scope and exhausting just to read. St. Paul tried to be all things to all people, but couldn't satisfy everybody -- he was martyred! No wonder your pastor may fail to meet everybody's expectations and occasionally find himself/herself in hot water.

Ideally, priorities for pastoral ministry should derive from a church's missional understanding, perhaps even from goals and objectives that are set annually by the church council. In other words, what the pastor does should reflect in time and energy what the congregation discerns God's will for them to be. In this ideal situation, then, the P/SPRC would work with the pastor to set duties and priorities accordingly.

Regrettably, many churches never get around to setting congregational goals, leaving their pastor to do his/her best to meet nebulous objectives. If this is the case with your church, you might want to encourage your church council to be intentional about setting the church's

missional agenda. In the meantime, your task is to help your pastor identify needs for his/her attention, and then defend him/her should he/she be challenged until you can meet again to decide if changes should be made.

In the back of this workbook is a list of questions about congregational expectations for your committee and pastor to discuss at least once a year. A good way to use it is to let your pastor complete his/her answers to the questions before a P/SPRC meeting. When the committee meets your pastor can explain his/her responses, members can dialogue about any differences in opinion, and come to a consensus. If there is disagreement, please give your pastor the benefit of the doubt: his or her calling, training and experience give him/her this privilege. Changes can always be made.

Following the above list of questions is a tool for the setting of priorities for your pastor. Here, too, it's helpful to let the pastor rank the needs first, with the committee affirming and challenging him/her as appropriate. Then, if "visiting active members" is at the bottom of the list and someone asks why the pastor doesn't visit everybody once a year, you can point out that the P/SPRC and pastor didn't have that as a priority. It may not convince the person making the complaint that this is the correct ranking, but it does broaden the burden of failing to meet expectations for the pastor.

Besides using the instruments in this manual, a yearly evaluation of the pastor and church ministry will help keep expectations realistic and appropriate. Church members are sometimes reluctant to formally evaluate their pastor -- they may feel either unqualified to do so or they fear hurting the pastor's feelings. The reality is that pastoral evaluation goes on all the time beginning during the Sunday service and in the parking lot afterward! Far better for the pastor to learn about his/her growth opportunities from trusted friends on the P/SPRC, and sooner rather than later. To lovingly evaluate your pastor is to give him/her a gift, a precious gift. It is also to serve your church faithfully.

If you do not have an evaluation tool, ask your district superintendent for one. The best ones include an evaluation not only of the pastor, but of the church as a whole. After all, the

pastor is but one part of the body. Nevertheless, for churches who only wish to help their pastor gauge how his/her ministry is being received, a modest, but effective means is comprised of three questions: 1) In what areas of ministry does our pastor exceed expectations? 2) In what areas of ministry does our pastor fall short of expectations? 3) How can we as partners in ministry work with our pastor to be more effective? Be sensitive to your pastor's ego, but be candid: your pastor wants to grow in gifts and grace.

Help your pastor agree on expectations, set priorities for his/her attention, and evaluate your pastor (and church) regularly, fairly, and compassionately. And never let your pastor think he/she is alone in ministry.

## **THE PASTOR AS A PERSON**

*I wonder how many hours our pastor works each week.*

*How can we help him/her avoid burnout?*

*How does his/her spouse or children feel about our church?*

*Does our church help our pastor to be healthy, hardy and happy?*

The following is from an exhausted pastor:

I am appalled at what is required of me. I am supposed to move from sick-bed to administrative meeting, to planning, to supervising, to counseling, to praying, to trouble-shooting, to budgeting, to audio systems, to meditation, to worship preparation, to newsletter, to staff problems, to mission projects, to conflict management, to community leadership, to study, to funerals, to weddings, to preaching. I am supposed to be “in charge” but not *too* in charge, administrative executive, sensitive pastor, skillful counselor, public speaker, spiritual guide, politically savvy, intellectually sophisticated. And I am expected to be superior, or at least first rate, in all of them. I am not supposed to be depressed, discouraged, cynical, angry, hurt. I am supposed to be up-beat, positive, strong, willing, available. Right now I am not filling any of those expectations very well. And I am tired.<sup>2</sup>

A lot of clergy are tired. An insurance company for ministers once ran an ad that stated, “The stress that pastors face would drive most people to their knees.” Of course, stress drives pastors to their knees, also, as it should. Some pastors, however, deal with life’s strains only by prayer. Truth is, the physical and emotional parts of our lives -- as well as the spiritual -- also need attention. In this regard, many pastors come up short, get sick, crash and burn. Do churches bear some responsibility when pastors work too hard, play too little, rest not at all? They may.

Most pastors work at least 50 hours a week, and 60-hour-plus weeks are not uncommon. Then there’s the factor of being on-call seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Even during a day off or a night out, pastors always know that a call may come for pastoral care. Many never completely relax, except on vacation, and some even carry their beepers on vacations! Some

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<sup>2</sup>Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1987), 3.

have likened the pastor's difficulty in relaxing to an engine: it's turned off only on vacation when no phones will ring or duty be required; otherwise, at best, it's idling, never completely resting. The human body, designed by God, simply wasn't made for such punishment.

Pastors love most of what they do, so that helps to some extent. Not infrequently, though, pastors are just poor stewards of their own well-being. In some cases this is because they choose to be; in some it's because they feel a need to perform up to the expectations set by others, including pastor/staff-parish relations committees.

Recognizing the more than typical full-time status of pastoral ministry, not to mention the creative, reflective, and academic nature of the vocation, *The Book of Discipline 2004* (paragraphs 351 and 352) provides for leaves of absence for purposes of continuing formation, spiritual growth, and sabbaticals. In addition, most annual conferences suggest generous vacation periods (usually a month). Some congregations give their pastor the same Monday holidays parishioners receive. Others even work with the pastor to arrange for a long weekend away once or twice a year besides vacation. Talk about a morale-booster! Occasionally, parishioners may have difficulty understanding why their pastor gets so much time off. That's when the P/SPRC can be a life-saver in defense of their pastor by explaining to them the facts of life from a pastor's point of view.

How much time off is enough? Besides the annual allotments for on-going education and spiritual renewal, how much time off is due the pastor on a weekly basis? Answers vary; there is no one-size-fits-all answer. One day off a week is usual. But what does that mean about evenings? Six nights a week, also? Not if you want your pastor to be healthy, hardy and happy!

Several factors need to be kept in mind when establishing time-off for pastors: the on-call nature of ministry; evening responsibilities each week; and, the reality that without weekends to get away, seldom does the pastor get two days off in a row. Hence, it's very hard to measure a "work-week" in terms of hours. Some churches divide the week into seven days of three-segments each (morning, afternoon, evening) and ask that the pastor be engaged in no more than a set number of segments for his/her own health. For example, someone working a 9 to 5,

forty-hour week would be employed in ten segments a week (mornings and afternoons). A pastor might, therefore, add a couple of evenings and part of another day and agree to a 14 or 15 segment regimen --on average, for good pastoral ministry can't be regimented.

Another reality to bear in mind is the 90% factor: 90% of what a pastor does is invisible to 90% of the congregation 90% of the time. No wonder people think pastors work only one day a week! Ask your pastor what he/she does in a typical week. Then, with his/her permission, let your congregation know. They'll be shocked!

One more caution: Parishioners often sympathetically wish their pastor would take care of him/herself by taking more time off, but they also don't want the pastor to do less of what they consider most important. For example, some folks say they don't expect the pastor to visit shut-ins on a regular basis, but do expect the pastor to visit the inactive members. Another group will have just the opposite expectation, plus needing him/her to teach in the Vacation Bible School. When all the peoples' concerns are added up, the pastor is no better off than before receiving such sympathy. Only the P/SPRC can run interference for such competing concerns without causing the pastor to appear defensive. In fact, if the P/SPRC doesn't advocate for the pastor's interests, you can be fairly certain no one will! Accordingly, working through the section on "Expectations" can help a congregation and pastor find a good fit and make adjustments throughout their ministry partnership.

Speaking of time, if your pastor is married and/or has children, your committee needs to make sure church expectations aren't taking him or her away from those God-given responsibilities. The divorce rate for clergy is approaching that for the general population. Churches need to intentionally help their married pastor nurture and be nurtured in marriage. Expressions of love for the spouse, remembering anniversaries, and encouraging the pastor to take time off and love his/her family will do for starters.

If your pastor has children, flexibility about child-care duties will be greatly appreciated; your kindness will be returned to you a thousand fold. As with the cobbler's children, so too with many pastor's children: other children may get more from him or her than their own.

Please don't let that happen to your pastor's children: cherish them and let them know that church isn't just the job that takes mommy or daddy away most of the time. Of course, the same goes for the spouse of pastors: remember each is unique and shouldn't be expected to be anything other than a faithful, loving mate to your pastor. If you hear others comparing the new spouse to a former spouse, call their hand: remind them each person is blessedly distinctive, and unless they're on the church payroll should be entitled to the same freedom with which to express their faith as everybody else.

Roy Oswald in *Clergy Self-Care* says that "Who and what we are as persons is our most effective tool in pastoral ministry."<sup>3</sup> If you think about it, you'll likely agree. If the person of the pastor is in poor shape spiritually, physically or emotionally then the tool is dulled, ministry is compromised, and the pastor frustrated. Keeping the pastor healthy and hardy is ultimately the pastor's own responsibility, but your committee can make it so much easier for him/her with sensitivity, encouragement, and education of the congregation.

Who cares for the pastor as a person? The church should. The P/SPRC clearly sets the tone and example for others.

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<sup>3</sup> Roy C. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1991), x.

## COMPENSATION

*I wonder how our pastor feels about the salary we pay.*

*Is our salary package comparable to other churches in our area?*

*What is our role in advocating for the pastor's salary?*

*Does our church's salary package encourage or discourage our pastor?*

Money does matter to your pastor, even if he or she is reluctant to admit it. Truth is, many pastors would rather avoid the subject. They prefer motivating the congregation to mission and service, not to paying their salary. To be sure, pastors aren't in the ministry to make a lot of money. When the discussion turns to the pastor's salary, does your pastor begin to fidget?

On the other hand, pastors have the same bills to pay as their parishioners. They have children to educate, maybe their own loans from seminary to repay, perhaps aging parents for whom to care. In addition, United Methodist clergy are deemed self-employed by the Internal Revenue Service and thus pay the employer's share of social security insurance as well as their own. Does your congregation know this? Chances are, they don't. Of course, pastors also need cars, enjoy vacations, make time for hobbies and want a savings plan beyond their pension. Pastors have needs and wants -- like everybody else. A pastor who worries too much about making ends meet may be compromised in his or her ability to lead their church effectively.

Then there's the matter of morale. What does the salary you pay your pastor "say" to him or her? Does it say "We appreciate you?" Pastors, like you, respond positively to affirmation. Of course, maybe your church really can't pay any more in salary -- does your pastor know how much you wish you could? Studies show that a major contributor to clergy dissatisfaction is the pay. It's always a shame when a pastor asks the bishop to move him or her to another church mainly for a raise in salary. Pay your pastor well and he/she will be highly motivated to serve you to the *very* best of their ability.

So how much should your church pay your pastor? Many factors need to be considered: resources available, the average income of the congregation, salaries paid by churches of

comparable size, and the “x” factor -- what message do we want our salary package to convey? Regrettably, many churches in our denomination determine salary by setting it at the conference minimum. Pastors, ambivalent about voicing their distress anyway, rarely object and an unfortunate tradition continues. Is your pastor being paid only the conference minimum? Is this really the best your church can do?

If your committee does not advocate for matters related to your pastor’s physical well-being it’s likely no other body within your church will. If you want your pastor to serve you the best he/she is able, you can make a big difference by encouraging your church to pay the pastor a salary that sends the message you want sent. Even if your committee isn’t unanimous in appreciation for the pastor, an increase in compensation will likely motivate him/her to try to serve you better. And, not least, regardless of your pastor’s popularity, there are the issues of justice, compassion and duty. Pay your pastor fairly and you will be caring for him/her with the love of Christ.

## HOUSING

*I wonder how the pastor feels about living in our parsonage.*

*Are we good landlords?*

*Do you suppose our pastor would rather own her own home?*

*Does our church's housing arrangement encourage or discourage our pastor?*

There's no place like home. It's true for you and it's true for your pastor. One big difference, however, if your church like most United Methodist churches provides a parsonage for the pastor, is that you are able to choose the house, the neighborhood, the school district you live in whereas your pastor is not. How does *your* pastor feel about living in *your* parsonage? Your pastor's contentment with his or her housing arrangement with your church depends in large measure on your committee. And few things are more important to pastoral morale than a church that maintains a comfortable parsonage for the pastor.

Historically, parsonages were provided for United Methodist pastors because our church moved its clergy every year or two. It didn't make sense for clergy either to own their own homes or provide their own furnishings. In recent years, however, United Methodist pastors are staying longer in their appointments -- the average is four to five years in most conferences, and ten year pastorates are not uncommon. This is deemed good for congregational growth. Accordingly, most annual conferences no longer require churches to fully furnish parsonages, and some are even encouraging pastors to buy their own houses if they wish.

Still, many church members believe that parsonages are bonuses. "I wish I got free housing," some say. Actually, if everybody knew what it was like to have their church be their landlord, few would be anxious to change places with the pastor. For example, the drapes are tattered or the carpet is wearing thin or the dryer doesn't dry. If you're a pastor you probably have to have a committee meeting to decide *if* there really is a problem and what to do about it. Of course, you may or may not agree with the decision, particularly if they decide to replace your worn carpeting with someone's leftover orange shag rug!

Then there's the matter of building home equity. It's not unusual for a pastor to come to the end of his or her active ministry without having built equity in a home. Providing for one's retirement housing on a United Methodist pastor's modest pension and social security is not an easy thing to do. When given the choice of living in a parsonage or providing for their own (with a housing allowance, of course), pastors are increasingly choosing the latter option. Check with your district superintendent about your conference's policy. Then ask your pastor what he or she would prefer. It may even be your church council will be glad to get out of the real estate business.

In any case, if the church does provide a parsonage for the pastor the P/SPRC should work to insure that the pastor is as content as possible living in it. Ask questions. Check assumptions. Serve as an advocate for your pastor's (and family's) needs with the church council. Do this and you will be caring faithfully for your pastor.

## **THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

*I wonder how our pastor feels about his/her office environment.*

*Is it a good “tool” that helps him/her in counseling and in study?*

*How could our pastor’s office be an even better space?*

*Does our church’s office encourage or discourage our pastor?*

After the sanctuary, the pastor’s office is the most important room in the church. There your pastor counsels persons experiencing life’s most difficult hours and prepares him/herself to lead divine worship. The pastor’s office should reflect the respect of the congregation for the calling of its pastor and the ministry of Christ’s church. Does yours?

A well-equipped church office looks a lot different than it did not too many years ago. A telephone and a typewriter were considered basic, a mimeograph machine a bonus, and a copier -- well, you had to go to a library to make copies. As for computers, no one could afford a computer, and besides they couldn’t really do very much of the work that a church needed doing. Times have changed, haven’t they? Now, a church without a computer is like the church of the 80’s without a typewriter. A church without a fax like the church without a phone. Then there’s the Internet: a church that doesn’t have a dedicated connection to the web, not to mention a web-site that is kept current, will soon be deemed irrelevant. Cell phone? Of course. Is your church up-to-date? What would it take to make it so?

Truth be told, many pastor’s offices or studies look like storage rooms for discarded furniture and old curriculum, have worn carpeting and curtains that have seen many better days. How the office appears is important: it creates the atmosphere for productivity including prayer. Furnishings are important, also. Pastors like plenty of bookcase space, file cabinets with locks and seating that is conducive for meetings or counseling. As with compensation, pastors are often hesitant to speak up about their office believing the church would rather put its money elsewhere. The fact is, however, a well-appointed, tastefully and cheerfully decorated office that is adequately heated and cooled goes a long way toward pastoral effectiveness. Not to mention

that oft-repeated word, morale: it helps a pastor be the best he or she can to have such a visible reminder that the congregation is behind him/her by having an office that bespeaks respect for the awesome task that is his/hers.

The P/SPRC should put itself in its pastor's place and ask what would make the work of ministry more efficient and easier. Then talk with the board of trustees and advocate for your pastor's office. Why shouldn't your pastor's office be at least the second nicest room in the church? Chances are, if you bring it up everybody will agree. And, once again, you will be expressing care for your pastor.

*Last, but not least, . . .*

## **YOUR MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

In a way, this entire workbook is about encouragement. A basic dictionary definition of encouragement is “to give courage or confidence to.” Pastors need courage; they also need the help of others to maintain confidence. This is where the P/SPRC can play a role. A big part of your responsibility is to encourage your pastor by engaging in an on-going dialogue with him/her about matters such as expectations, compensation, housing, the work environment, and the pastor as a person. To know that others care about such matters gives your pastor courage and confidence amidst the day to day trials, and helps them be healthy, hardy, and happy in the process.

You may know that the ministry of encouragement has a New Testament root: Acts 4:36 tells of a Levite named Joseph “whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’).” It seems the main task of Barnabus was to encourage the apostle Paul. One can only speculate where the church would be without Paul; it may be that Barnabas made all the difference in the world to help Paul keep on keeping on. To help the pastor “keep on keeping on” is a good description of part of the duty of the P/SPRC.

Encouragement can take many forms from a note telling the pastor “I think you’re doing great,” to an all-expenses paid vacation. Since everyone responds positively to affirmation, the important factor about a ministry of encouragement is that it be frequent and tangible. Many church members presume someone else (maybe the P/SPRC) is providing encouragement so they don’t have to. Sometimes P/SPRCs believe the district superintendent or bishop or the annual conference board of ordained ministry is providing encouragement so they need not bother. Usually, none of the assumptions are accurate. A ministry of encouragement requires that encouragement be everyone’s responsibility and that the P/SPRC lead the way by education and example.

Listed below are examples of what P/SPRCs can do to encourage their pastors. Let these ideas stimulate your own thinking. Be a Barnabas.

### **1. Pray**

Each member of the P/SPRC should covenant to pray daily for the church and the pastor even as the pastor prays daily for the church and its members. The P/SPRC should also include regular notes in the bulletin or newsletter reminding everyone to keep the church and pastor in their daily prayers. A church that prays daily for one another will really be an encouraging church.

### **2. Recognize the Pastoral Appointment (For United Methodists)**

It is to be hoped that all churches celebrate a new pastor's arrival. But what about your pastor's re-appointment? At the least, on the Sunday following annual conference the chairperson of the P/SPRC (or a member of the committee) could stand before the congregation and say "Bishop Allgood has announced her intention to re-appoint Pastor Prettygood to our congregation. Let's stand and show him our gratitude and support for another year of ministry together in Wesley Church." You might also send a note to the bishop or district superintendent thanking them for your pastor's re-appointment and include a copy to your pastor.

### **3. Recognize Achievements**

Commissioning, ordination, seminary graduation, earning post-graduate degrees, gaining certification in a particular skill: all can be recognized and celebrated by the local church. There are many ways to do so. And don't forget to let your local newspaper know about it, too.

### **4. Recognize Ministry Milestones**

Another opportunity to encourage your pastor is to recognize and give thanks for his/her years as a pastor. Five year, ten, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, forty, and for some fifty year celebrations are typical. But, if the spirit moves you, why not a 32nd anniversary of ordination celebration? And what if it was a surprise with the pastor's mentor from youth flown in to join the fun? Use your imagination and lead the congregation in giving thanks to God for its pastor.

### **5. Recognize Birthdays and Anniversaries**

One pastor, walking into church on the day after his 40th birthday, was greeted with a banner declaring "You may be older, but we love you anyway. Happy Birthday, Pastor." Another church surprised its pastor and spouse with a 30th wedding anniversary party after church inviting their grown children to attend, even paying for their transportation from another city. Whether it's giving gift certificates to a favorite store or restaurant, or giving tickets to sporting events or plays or concerts, or just initiating a card-sending campaign from members, whatever the church does to recognize and celebrate life passages for its pastor and family will hearten their souls.

## **6. Remember Family Members**

If your pastor is married and/or has children, don't forget them, either. Remember their birthdays with cards and gifts, and honor their achievements. Too often, spouses and children are made to feel like mere appendages to their reverend pastor husbands or wives or parents. Take a spouse aside and ask, "What would make your life in the parsonage better?" and then act on it. Ask a child what they like most and least about your church. Listen carefully -- you're sure to pick up a clue as to what to do to help the pastor's child feel special.

## **7. Give an Allowance for Entertaining Staff and Church Members**

Although common in the secular world, too few churches give its leader a few extra dollars a year to take a staff member, a church leader, or a prospective member to lunch or a ball game. It doesn't take much money to let your pastor know that you want them to succeed in their ministry as much as they do.

## **8. Christmas gifts**

Many churches give their pastor a Christmas gift or "purse" of money. Unfortunately, some reason that the salary is adequate compensation and no more is necessary. Even if the salary is generous, what a Scrooge-like attitude to have! A gift, large or small, put together by the P/SPRC at Christmas time will help your pastor feel at home for Christmas in your community.

## **9. Health Club Memberships**

A good way to let your pastor know you care about his/her health is to pay for a membership in the local YMCA or a health club. Even if he/she uses it infrequently, it will be that much of a boon to their well-being. And, who knows, they may come to like taking care of their physical health. At the least, they'll know you treasure them.

## **10. Name Something After the Pastor**

In most conferences, new buildings are much rarer than they used to be, meaning there isn't opportunity to express gratitude to a pastor by naming a room after him or her. So, why not do it anyway, with your present building? A lounge, a sanctuary, a fellowship hall, a classroom where the pastor traditionally teaches his/her Bible class -- any such honor would never be forgotten by your pastor especially if it includes a picture of him/her and a plaque. Another idea is to name an endowed youth scholarship, a lectureship or a preaching series after your pastor. Something to think about.

## **11. Give a Book of Memories**

A lovely expression when your pastor is moving to another church or retiring, giving a book of memories is also a real morale booster any time! Usually done as a surprise, you send letters to congregation members asking them to write a note of appreciation for what the pastor

means to them. They're usually instructed to send their contributions to an address other than the church. Then, on a particular day -- perhaps on a Sunday of Pastor Appreciation Month (see below) -- the book of letters, bound together, is presented to the pastor. You can be sure that book will be read and re-read until the pages begin to tear.

## **12. Celebrate Pastor Appreciation Month (or Day)**

More and more churches are recognizing October as Pastor Appreciation Month. If you can't think of enough things to do for a whole month, you can designate a particular Sunday as "Pastor Appreciation Sunday." Then, look at the above ideas and decide which to employ.

## **13. Do Something Really Unusual**

Churches have a terrible reputation for being dull places. Even when we celebrate we keep an eye on the budget and the clock. Doesn't sound very much like Jesus, does it? So, use your imaginations and pull out all the stops. Err on the side of generosity and extravagance. After all, this is what God's love is like for all of us.

For additional ideas see the books *Your Pastor Is an Endangered Species* by H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman (Victor Books) and *Support Your Local Pastor* by Wes Roberts (NavPress). Although written for the business world, *Keeping Good People* by Roger E. Herman (Oakhill Press) reminds us that, although technically not employees, if pastors are encouraged it is to everyone's benefit.

# THE WORKBOOK

## A GUIDE FOR SETTING PASTORAL EXPECTATIONS

*(Pastors and committee members should answer the following questions separately. Then they should compare their responses and discuss aiming to reach consensus.)*

### Worship

1. For how many services each Sunday is the pastor responsible?
2. For how many services other than Sunday is the pastor responsible?
3. For which seasonal or special services is the pastor responsible?
4. Who prepares the worship bulletins?
5. Who chooses the hymns?
6. Will the pastor work with a “worship planning team?” Who will comprise this team?
7. Will laity be used as liturgists? Will they be trained? By whom?
8. Who is responsible for ordering supplies (candles, bulletins, communion supplies, etc.)?
9. Who is responsible for preparing communion elements?
10. On average, how many funerals and weddings does the pastor conduct each year? What kind of help does he/she need with these? Is there a church policy regarding fees?

### Preaching

1. How many Sundays each year is the pastor expected to preach?
2. Are there other services for which the pastor is expected to preach?
3. Who is responsible for getting guest preachers when the pastor is away?

### **Visitation and Counseling**

1. What are the expectations for visiting: active members, in-active members, homebound and nursing home members, hospitalized members, visitors to worship?
2. Does your church community prefer the pastor to phone before visiting?
3. For information only: how much in-office counseling does the pastor do? Is there a church policy regarding fees?

### **Christian Education**

1. What classes will the pastor teach this year?
2. What is the pastor's responsibility with the Sunday School?
3. What is the pastor's responsibility with the youth group (s)?
4. Will the pastor teach a confirmation class?
5. Are there other educational/small group expectations?

## **Administration**

1. What committee and board meetings will the pastor attend regularly?
  
2. What role will the church council play in assisting the nominating committee in filling leadership positions?
  
3. What is the pastor's responsibility with the church's stewardship campaign?
  
4. If there is a building program, what is the pastor's responsibility?
  
5. What are the pastor's office hours?
  
6. If there isn't a full-time secretary, what "secretarial" duties is the pastor expected to perform?
  
7. What is the pastor's responsibility for the church newsletter?
  
8. Is there a prayer-chain? Who begins it? Who sees to its continuity? What role shall the pastor assume?

### **Beyond The Local Church**

1. What is the pastor's role with the church's ministry in the community (food pantry, homeless shelter, etc.)?
2. What are the pastor's responsibilities to the United Methodist connection (cluster, district, conference)? On average, how many hours each month is he/she involved?
3. What are the pastor's responsibility with local ecumenical groups? On average, how many hours each month is he/she involved?
4. Is the pastor expected to participate with community or service organizations (e.g., Rotary or the local fire department)? On average, how many hours each month?

### **Other**

1. In charges of two or more churches, what is the expectation for pastoral attention to each? (Use separate sheets of paper to answer this question in detail)
2. What are the expectations of the pastor in relating to the United Methodist Women and/or United Methodist Men?
3. Is the pastor expected to oversee the church building (e.g., check locks at night or turn off the lights, etc.)? What, specifically?

**Parsonage**

1. What is the pastor's responsibility for parsonage maintenance?
2. Is the pastor expected to mow the lawn?
3. Is the pastor expected to shovel snow?
4. What is the protocol to follow when appliances fail, furnace quits, etc.?
5. Are there other parsonage responsibilities to discuss?

**Personal**

1. How much time off is the pastor to take each week? (See the section on "Pastor as Person" for ideas.)
2. How much vacation is granted to the pastor?
3. How many days (weeks) are allotted for continuing education/spiritual growth?
4. Time needs to be allowed for prayer and study in service to the church. Is this factor being included as a vital part of the pastor's weekly schedule.

## A GUIDE FOR SETTING PASTORAL PRIORITIES

*(Pastors and committee members should separately rank the following ministerial functions in order of importance, 1-12. Or, you may prefer to rank, say, four functions as “most important,” another four as “next most important,” and so on. Rankings should then be compared and discussed. It is assumed that a crisis in the parish would always take precedent; therefore do not allow for these in this exercise.)*

\_\_\_ WORSHIP AND PREACHING

Planning and conducting services of worship including sermon preparation and working with others who will participate in leading corporate worship.

\_\_\_ COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Serving as a volunteer or board member with community organizations, public affairs, social service agencies, civic and educational groups, etc.

\_\_\_ DISCIPLE FORMATION (STAGE ONE: HOSPITALITY)

Overseeing or consulting with leaders to enhance the church’s ministry to non-members; meeting with potential new members; teaching new member classes.

\_\_\_ DISCIPLE FORMATION (STAGE TWO: TEACHING)

Leading adult study and spiritual growth groups, teaching the confirmation class, leading youth groups, overseeing church’s educational/formational ministries.

\_\_\_ COUNSELING

Counseling with individuals or couples, including pre-marital counseling.

\_\_\_ SELF-CARE

Setting aside times for prayer, study, family, recreation.

\_\_\_ DENOMINATIONAL AND ECUMENICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Carrying a fair share of denominational and ecumenical responsibilities.

\_\_\_ ADMINISTRATION

Working with committees, helping to plan and coordinate the church’s program, ordering supplies and resources, office work, supervision of paid staff, etc.

\_\_\_ LEADERSHIP

Working with church leaders to live out the church’s vision and mission.

\_\_\_ VISITATION OF INACTIVE MEMBERS

Calling in the homes of inactive members.

\_\_\_ VISITATION OF HOMEBOUND MEMBERS

Calling on members who can’t come to church or are in nursing homes.

\_\_\_ VISITATION OF MEMBERS IN HOSPITAL

Providing pastoral care to hospitalized members.

## **THE PASTOR AS A PERSON**

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS:**

1. What is our church's policy regarding time off each week? Should it be reviewed?
2. What is our church's policy for continuing education, leaves for spiritual renewal, etc.? Should it be reviewed? Do we have any specific suggestions for continuing education? Do we provide enough funds for continuing education?
3. What is our church's policy for vacation? Should it be reviewed?

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO ASK THE PASTOR:**

1. What does an average week's schedule for you look like?
2. What would you like to change about your schedule?
3. How do you care for yourself physically, emotionally, spiritually?

4. Do you think our church policies regarding time off are fair?
5. Do you feel appreciated?
6. What ministry task do you enjoy most? Least? Can you think of a way we can assist you so that you have more time to do what you do best? A way we can help with the ministry you least enjoy?
7. Are there any people in the congregation whose expectations of you cause you to lose sleep with worry? Can we help you in any way?
8. If you are married, does your spouse feel valued by our church? Are there any unrealistic expectations of him or her?
9. If you have children, do your children feel valued by our church? Are there any unrealistic expectations of them?
10. Is there anything the church can do to help you be a better spouse or parent?

## **COMPENSATION**

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS:**

1. How does our church's salary package compare with the incomes of employed people within our congregation?
2. How does the salary package compare with other churches in our community? In our annual conference?
3. What is our salary history in the past ten years? Has it kept pace with inflation?
4. What would we expect from our pastor in order to give a merit raise?
5. What does our salary package "say" to our pastor?

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO ASK THE PASTOR:**

1. How do you feel about the salary package you're receiving?
2. What do you think is a fair salary? Why?

## HOUSING

### FOR THE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS:

1. What does our church council think about our present housing policy (i.e., parsonage or housing allowance)?
  
2. Who has responsibility for the parsonage? The trustees? The P/SPRC? A parsonage committee? Other? Is this arrangement satisfactory to all concerned including the pastor?
  
3. Is there a list of needed repairs being maintained? Who is to be contacted when something needs fixing? Is there a “wish list” for parsonage improvements?
  
4. Does the pastor have a say about decorating tastes, appliance purchases, furniture, etc.?
  
5. What is the annual budget for maintenance/improvements? Is this deemed sufficient for a property like ours?
  
6. In terms of curb appeal, how does the parsonage compare with other houses on the street?

**FOR THE COMMITTEE TO ASK THE PASTOR:**

1. How do you feel about living in our parsonage?
  
2. How do the other members of your family feel about living in our parsonage?
  
3. Do you feel safe in the neighborhood?
  
4. Would you prefer to own your own home? Would you prefer to find your own rental?
  
5. If you are receiving a housing allowance, is it adequate?
  
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 poor; 10 terrific), how would you rate our parsonage, in terms of: furnishings; decoration; heating/cooling; space? What keeps it from being a 10 in each category?
  
7. What would you put on the “needs” or “wish” list for the parsonage?

8. Do church members respect your privacy?
9. When you entertain, are you proud of the parsonage? Why or why not?
10. How do you feel about expectations the church may have that you host certain events at the parsonage?
11. If you take care of the parsonage grounds, how do you feel about mowing the lawn, shoveling the snow, raking the leaves?

## **THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS:**

1. Regarding office equipment: Do you have an up-to-date copier, phone system, computer system, fax machine, internet connection? Are there improvements needed that would make your pastor's work more efficient or easier?
2. Regarding furnishings in the pastor's office: Are the chairs or sofa comfortable and attractive? Are there plenty of shelves for books and file cabinets? Is the desk adequate for the pastor's use? Is there plenty of light? Is the temperature easy to control?
3. Regarding appearance: Is the pastor's office attractive? When was the last time it was painted or papered? Do the colors suit the pastor? Was the furniture purchased specifically for the office or are some pieces cast-offs from another room? What about curtains or drapes? Old or new? Clean or dirty? Tasteful or not?

### **FOR THE COMMITTEE TO ASK THE PASTOR:**

1. All things considered, on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 poor; 10 terrific), what rating would you give to the church office and your office as tools for ministry? What keeps it from being a 10?
2. If you could have one new thing or change one thing in your office, what would it be?

## **PASTOR/STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

### **An Example of a Year's Agenda**

#### **September**

- ☐ Discussion of **Compensation Questions**.
- ☐ Salary recommend to Finance Committee/Church Council.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

#### **November**

- ☐ Discussion of **Work Environment Questions**.
- ☐ Discussion of **Pastor as Person Questions**.
- ☐ Arrange for P/SPRC Chair and Trustee Chair to walk through the parsonage with the pastor, seeing it both from the point of view of the pastor and family and of the congregation.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

#### **January/February**

- ☐ Agree on format for evaluation of pastor and church. Give to P/SPRC members and/or Church Council members to complete and return to P/SPRC Chair. Do nothing without pastor's knowledge and consent.
- ☐ Discuss **Housing Questions**.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

#### **March/April**

- ☐ Review completed evaluations.
- ☐ Give out **Pastoral Expectations Worksheets** for members to complete prior to May meeting.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

#### **May**

- ☐ Discuss the **Pastoral Expectations Worksheets** with committee members and the pastor.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

#### **June**

- ☐ Discussion of **Pastoral Priorities Worksheet**.
- ☐ Issues, needs of pastor and congregation.

**PASTOR/STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
EVALUATION AND CONVERSATION GUIDE\***

- 1. How are we doing as a congregation this year?**
  - A. How are we doing in our worship life as a congregation?
  - B. How are we doing in the area of Christian education for children? for youth? for adults?
  - C. How are we doing in our caring for one another in the faith?
  - D. How are we doing in reaching out to the unchurched? in welcoming visitors?  
in assimilating new members?
  - E. How are we doing in service beyond ourselves -- in involving ourselves in making our  
community a more Christ-like place? in giving persons opportunities to share in the global  
mission of our church?
  - F. How are we doing in the stewardship of our time, talents, and money as a congregation?  
as individuals?
  
- 2. What are the most appreciated talents and skills of our pastor?**

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\*This evaluation tool is adapted from one used by another conference. I regret I no longer know its origin.

3. **What are the most outstanding accomplishments of the pastor in the past 12 months?**
  
4. **What are areas of growth/improvement for our pastor?**
  
5. **What do you want the pastor to continue to make time to accomplish?**
  
  
6. **What do we want to improve as a congregation/pastor team?**
  - A. **What does this imply for our pastor?**
    1. What kinds of skill or knowledge improvement?
  
    2. Does it involve personal or spiritual growth? How?
  
    3. Will it require more time or money for continuing education?
  
    4. If the pastor's involvement in this improvement of team ministry requires more time, what would you be willing for the pastor to do less?
  
  - B. **What does this desire for improvement imply for the members of the congregation?**
  
6. **How does the pastor keep himself/herself emotionally, physically, spiritually refreshed?**  
(Discuss days off, vacations, spiritual renewal opportunities)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Winkleblack was born in Kansas City, Missouri. He received the B.A. degree from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri in 1968, the M.Div. from the Divinity School of Duke University in 1971, and the Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2000. Dr. Winkleblack was ordained a deacon in the Missouri West Conference in 1970 and an elder in the New York Conference in 1972. He is married to Jeanne Gartrell Winkleblack. They have two children: Diane, who resides in Farmington, Connecticut, and Grant, who lives in Simsbury, Connecticut with his wife, Michelle, and their daughters Lauren and Katie.

Dr. Winkleblack has served United Methodist churches in Fairfield, Kensington, Hamden, Avon, Stamford, Easton and Norwalk in Connecticut. He was appointed a District Superintendent in 1997 to serve the Delaware Hudson district in southeastern New York state, and served as Dean of the Cabinet 2001-2003. In January, 2005, he began service as Assistant to the Bishop of the New York Area. Dr. Winkleblack has been a leader on many local and statewide ecumenical agencies as well as annual conference and district committees and boards. He was elected a delegate to the 2000 and 2004 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conferences and as first reserve delegate to the 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist church. Dr. Winkleblack has published articles in *The Christian Century*, *Circuit Rider*, and *The United Methodist Reporter*.