

WHO CARES FOR THE PASTOR?

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

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PREFACE TO THE 2017 REVISED EDITION

This manual and workbook — the fruit of a Doctor of Ministry dissertation/project at San Francisco Theological Seminary — has maintained an extensive, “underground” existence available through the website of the New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church since 2002. Testimonies from dozens of pastors and churches across the country and Canada confirm its usefulness. Interest from other denominations has led to revisions to make this tool inclusive. Still, for the most part, I’ll use United Methodist vernacular to avoid clutter. The following may be helpful for ecumenical friends:

The pastor-parish relations committee is the body that relates with the pastor(s). Many call it the staff/parish-relations committee owing to responsibilities beyond working with pastors. I’ll reflect each of these by calling it the pastor/staff-parish relations committee (P/SPRC). In your denomination this group may be called the personnel committee or vestry or committee on ministry or pastoral relations committee, or a similar name.

The church council in United Methodist usage is the chief decision-making body of the local church. It may also be known as the administrative board or council. You may know it as vestry, or session or general board.

“Pastor” is the most common title for United Methodist clergy, though “minister” is also widely used as it is in other Protestant denominations. Or you may call your spiritual leader “rector” or “head-of-staff” or “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 or her own copy. Thus, permission is granted to copy for use within your church.

The energy for this project comes from more than 40 years of pastoral ministry where, although I was generally well cared for, enough bad stuff happened to interest me in making the way easier for others. I wouldn’t, couldn’t have persevered either in the parish or with this effort without the encouragement of Jeanne, my wife. If you find yourself grateful for this book, say a prayer of thanks for her.

I appreciate feedback and suggestions for future revisions – you may email me at dwinkleblack5@gmail.com. As time permits, I also enjoy conducting workshops for local church P/SPRCs.

THE MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

Who cares for your pastor? Surely, most people do. Possibly, though, only a few may care in ways that benefit the pastor's life and ministry beyond "contractual" agreements. To care for your pastor beyond minimal expectations 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 are caring for their pastor just by paying a salary, providing housing and giving other material 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 sufficiently for the personal and professional needs of the clergy. And to a considerable extent, they do. However, to love your pastor — and family if he or she has one — as God has loved us is to love in tangible ways that exceed nominal requirements.

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*) Accordingly, this workbook seeks to assist pastor/staff-parish relations committees (P/SPRC) to care for the appropriate personal and professional needs of their pastors, *and* — at least occasionally — to overwhelm them with appreciation and love.

Although it may surprise a few readers to learn, a pastor's primary "tool" for ministry is himself or herself. Thus, their success in attending to their own spiritual, physical and emotional needs is crucial to serving God in pastoral ministry. Of course, the ultimate responsibility for self-care rests with the pastor. Nonetheless, inasmuch as your church is obliged to love all who relate to 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 glad to work there. But, you'll want to include the exercises in this book not least because you desire to love your pastor as you've been loved by God — to the end she or he may continue healthy in body, hardy in soul and mind, and happy in the vocation to which they have been called. 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 church members — success or lack of success clearly isn't the burden of the pastor alone. Therefore, the P/SPRC, on behalf of the congregation, plays a significant role in the partnership with the pastor. According to the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*, your committee has two broad duties: to help the pastor understand and respond to the needs of the congregation; and to care for the appropriate personal and professional needs of the pastor. Traditionally,

United Methodist churches have conceived their role primarily in terms of the first duty — conveying the needs of the congregation to the pastor. Sadly, caring for the personal and professional needs of the pastor is often neglected. Because annual conferences don't have the day-to-day connection with pastors, the partnership you enjoy with your pastor is crucial to her or his contentment.

PARTNERSHIP = HOSPITALITY + OPENNESS

Because a United Methodist pastor is appointed by a bishop rather than employed by the local church, a pastor arrives as an outsider and may remain so throughout their tenure. After all, it may be presumed, consciously or not, just when we begin to know them they're moved — we don't want to become too close. For better or worse, 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. Still, during the time your pastor is part of your church community, embracing her or him as a brother or sister benefits everyone. Think about it: how do we treat invited visitors to our homes? We're welcoming, aren't we? To say the least, the same hospitality needs to be shown by churches to pastors. Because it can't happen without planning, such hospitality needs to be *intentional*. This workbook, therefore, seeks to help you care intentionally for your pastor.

To be sure, hospitality on the part of your committee is only part of the formula. The pastor must be clear about his or her pastoral and professional needs. If the church isn't aware of what the pastor wants, it can't be supportive. Some pastors are more comfortable than others in sharing personal matters. If your pastor is more reserved, then you must take this into consideration. However, don't presume because your pastor is reluctant to talk about himself or herself that he or she wouldn't want to join you in these exercises of partnership. Ask, and then do what you can to honor those wishes.

PARTNERSHIP IS A DIALOGUE

Your partnership with your pastor is grounded in good communication. The better your committee and the pastor communicate about the needs of the church and pastor the better your relationship will flourish. To this end, this workbook is designed for dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect. And, please, because all we do is God's work, I invite you to invite God into your conversations 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 a racial-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 should 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 in United Methodist churches should read what *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* says about the responsibilities of your committee. This is contained in paragraph 258.2 of the 2016 edition. You should also have copies of “Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2017-2020 Pastor-Parish Relations” (available from Cokesbury) that expands on the *Discipline*’s outline of duties.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS WORKBOOK

Ideally, your committee should meet every other month to include the agenda of this workbook with the responsibilities set by the *Discipline*. To assist you in incorporating these exercises in your annual responsibility, an example of a year’s agenda is included on page 34. Also, please note that to share at more than surface level, you’ll need to allow enough 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 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 this section. The benefits, however, of doing so make it worth the effort. For all sections, committee members and the pastor should be given time before meetings to ponder the questions.

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 follow God’s leading.

“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 (she or he) 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.¹”

¹ 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 meet everyone's expectations?

How can our committee help church and pastor agree on expectations?

Is our pastor energized or overwhelmed by our church's expectations?

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 agreement on expectations is so important for pastors and P/SPRCs. What shall the pastor do with her or his time? What is a priority for the pastor's attention? You can be sure your relationship with your pastor will thrive if you review pastoral expectations annually, come to consensus regarding responsibilities, and support your pastor in the face of criticism.

For United Methodists, if you haven't already, look at paragraph 340 in *The Book of Discipline 2016*. This is your pastor's job description. Anyone want to trade jobs? The requirements are exhaustive in scope and exhausting just to read. St. Paul tried to be all things to all people, but couldn't satisfy everyone — in fact, he was martyred! No wonder your pastor will fail to meet everyone's expectations and sometimes find himself or herself on the defensive.

In the most faithful churches, priorities for pastoral ministry derive from a church's missional understanding and its goals and objectives set annually by the church council. In such instances, the pastor's activities will reflect the congregation's discernment of God's will for them as brokered by the P/SPRC.

Unfortunately, many churches do not set congregational goals, leaving their pastor to do his or her best to meet nebulous objectives. If this is the case with your church, you'll want to encourage your church council to be intentional about establishing the church's missional agenda. In the meantime, your task is to help your pastor identify needs for her or his attention that are in concert with your church's goals as you understand them, and then defend him or her if he or she is challenged until expectations can be reviewed anew.

Beginning on page 21 is a list of questions about congregational expectations for your committee and pastor to discuss at least once a year. It's best to ask your pastor to complete his or her answers to the questions prior to a P/SPRC meeting. Then, when the committee meets, your pastor can explain her or his responses, members can dialogue about any differences in opinion, and come to a consensus. If folks disagree, please give your pastor the benefit of the doubt: his or her calling, training and experience earn her or him this privilege. Changes can always be made.

Following the above section is a tool for setting priorities for your pastor (page 26). Here, too, it's helpful to let the pastor rank the needs first, with the committee affirming and challenging him or her if desired. Then, if "visiting active members" is at the bottom of the list and someone asks why the pastor doesn't visit everyone once a year, you can point out that the P/SPRC and pastor didn't set that as a priority. It may not convince the person making the complaint that this is the correct ranking, but it broadens 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 evaluate their pastor formally — they may consider themselves either unqualified or fear hurting the pastor's feelings. In fact, pastoral evaluation goes on all the time, including in worship centers, fellowship halls, parking lots and member homes. Accordingly, the pastor is better off learning about her or his growth opportunities from trusted colleagues on the P/SPRC — and sooner rather than later. To evaluate your pastor is to give her or him a precious gift. It is also to serve your church faithfully.

If you don't have an evaluation instrument, ask your district superintendent (one used by several annual conferences may be found on page 35). The best include an evaluation of the pastor as well as the church's ministry as a whole — after all, the pastor is but one part of the body. Nonetheless, for churches who *only* desire to help their pastor gauge how his or her ministry is being received, a modest method consists of three questions for the committee to consider: 1) In what areas of ministry do we believe our pastor exceeds expectations? 2) In what areas of ministry do we believe our pastor falls 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 competency.

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

THE PASTOR AS A PERSON

I wonder how many hours our pastor works each week.

How can we help him or her avoid burnout?

How does her or his 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'm appalled at what is required of me. I'm 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'm 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'm expected to be superior, or at least first rate, in all of them. I'm not supposed to be depressed, discouraged, cynical, angry, hurt. I'm supposed to be up-beat, positive, strong, willing, available. Right now I'm not filling any of those expectations very well. And I'm tired.²

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 all pastors to their knees, 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. Oblivious to the rules of health, far too many pastors become ill, crash and burn. Do churches bear responsibility when pastors burn their candles at both ends? They might.

Most full-time pastors work at least 50 hours a week, and 60-hour-plus weeks aren't 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 a call may come for pastoral care. Recognizing the stress of pastoral ministry — let alone the creative, reflective, and academic nature of the vocation — *The Book of Discipline 2016* (paragraphs 350 and 351) provides for leaves of absence for continuing formation, spiritual growth, and sabbaticals for United Methodist clergy. In addition, most annual conferences suggest generous vacation periods (a month is typical). As well, some congregations give their pastor the same Monday holidays parishioners receive. Others work with the pastor to arrange for a long weekend away once or twice a year besides vacation — talk about a morale-booster! On occasion, a parishioner may express concern why their pastor gets so much time off. That's

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

when the P/SPRC can be a lifesaver in defense of their pastor by explaining to them the facts of life from a pastor's point of view.

Churches ask, "How much time off is enough? Besides the annual allotments for continuing education and spiritual renewal, how much time off is due the pastor on a weekly basis?" Answers vary — no one-size-fits-all answer exists. One day off a week is typical, though more and more churches expect their pastors to take two days off, like most of the members. But what does that mean about evenings? Work 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; frequent evening responsibilities; and the reality that without weekends to steal away, seldom does the pastor have two days off in a row. Hence, it can be a challenge to measure a "work week" in terms of hours. Accordingly, some find it useful to divide the week into seven days of three-segments each (morning, afternoon, evening) and ask that the pastor be engaged in a mutually agreed-upon number of segments. For example, a lay person working a 9 to 5, forty-hour week would be employed in ten segments a week (mornings and afternoons). A pastor might, therefore, add two evenings and part of another day and agree to a 14-segment regimen — on average, for faithful pastoral ministry can't be regimented.

One more reality to remember 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 but one day a week! Ask your pastor what he or she does in a typical week. Then, with his or her permission, let your congregation know. They'll probably be shocked.

Another caution to add is when parishioners express concern for their pastor by encouraging her or him to take more time off and suggest what the pastor could eliminate from her or his list of duties. For example, some folks might say they don't expect the pastor to visit shut-ins regularly (but do expect the pastor to visit the inactive members). Another group of well-meaning church members will have the opposite expectation of him or her. Others may see no use to visitation whatsoever, but be unable to imagine church without the pastor running the Vacation Bible School or teaching a Bible study between services. 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 these competing priorities without causing the pastor to appear defensive. In fact, if the P/SPRC doesn't advocate for the pastor's interests, it's unlikely anyone will. 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 her or him away from those God-given responsibilities. To this end, 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 or 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 proverbial cobbler's children, so too with many pastors' children: other children may receive more from him or her than their own if care isn't taken. Please don't let this happen to your pastor's children: cherish them so they can experience church as more than just the job that takes mommy or daddy away most of the time.

A similar caveat applies 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 folks comparing the new spouse to a former spouse, challenge them: 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 everyone else.

Roy Oswald in *Clergy Self-Care* writes, "Who and what we are as persons is our most effective tool in pastoral ministry."³ If you think about it, you'll 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 much easier for him or her with sensitivity, encouragement, and education of the congregation.

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

³ 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 is important to your pastor, even if she or he is reluctant to admit it. Truth is, a lot of pastors would rather avoid the subject — they prefer motivating the congregation to faithful mission rather than talking about their salary. When the discussion turns to the pastor's compensation, does your pastor fidget?

No surprise, pastors have the same bills to pay as their parishioners. They have children to educate, maybe their own loans from college and/or 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 in addition to their own. Is your congregation aware of this law? Chances are, they aren't. Pastors also need cars, enjoy vacations, have hobbies, and want a savings plan beyond their pension. Pastors have needs and wants — like you do. To be very sure, a pastor who worries too much about making ends meet may be compromised in her or his ability to lead the church.

Then there's morale. What does the salary you pay your pastor "say" to her or him? Does it say, "We appreciate you?" Pastors, like you, respond to affirmation. Of course, it may be that your church can't pay more salary — does your pastor know how much you wish you could? Studies show 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 for a raise in salary. Pay your pastor well, and she or he will be motivated to serve you to the best of their ability.

So how much should your church pay your pastor? Several 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 at the conference minimum? Is this the best your church can do?

If your committee doesn't advocate for matters related to your pastor's physical well-being, it's likely no other church body will. Encouraging the church council to pay the pastor a salary that sends the message you want sent can make a big difference in your pastor's ministry. Even if your committee isn't unanimous in

appreciation for the pastor, an increase in compensation will motivate her or him 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 as generously as you can, and you'll be caring for him or her with the love of Christ.

HOUSING

I wonder how the pastor likes living in our parsonage.

Are we good landlords?

Do you suppose our pastor would rather own his or 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. There's one big difference, however. That is, if your church, like most United Methodist churches, provides a parsonage for the pastor, you — unlike your pastor — can choose the house, the neighborhood and the school district in which you live. That's a pretty big difference. So, how does *your* pastor feel about living in *your* parsonage? Your committee should know that your pastor's contentment with her or his housing arrangement with your church depends largely on you. To be sure, pastoral morale is significantly impacted by a church's maintaining a comfortable parsonage for the pastor.

Historically, parsonages were provided for United Methodist pastors because our church moved its clergy every year or two. Thus, 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-plus pastorates aren't uncommon. Accordingly, most annual conferences no longer require churches to furnish parsonages, and may encourage pastors to buy their own houses if they wish.

Still, many church members believe that parsonages are bonuses. "I wish I received free housing," some say. But, if everyone knew what it was like to have their church for a landlord, few would be eager 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* a problem exists and endure a discussion about the cheapest way to fix it. Of course, the pastor may not agree with the decision, particularly if it's decided to replace the worn carpeting with a member's leftover orange shag rug! Still, she or he has no recourse.

Then there's the issue of 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 real estate. Providing for one's retirement housing on a pastor's pension and social security can be challenging. 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.

And don't be surprised to discover your church council and board of trustees will be glad to get out of the real estate business.

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

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

I wonder how our pastor likes her or his office environment.

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

How could our pastor’s office be a 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. In this space your pastor counsels people experiencing life’s most difficult hours and prepares himself or herself to lead worship. Accordingly, the pastor’s office should reflect the respect of the congregation for the responsibilities 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 long ago. A telephone and a typewriter were all the technological marvels necessary. If the church had an electric mimeograph machine, it was a bonus. As for a copier? Well, you had to go to a library or a copy center to make copies. Computers? Into the nineties, computers were rare in church offices. 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 internet service like the church without a mimeograph. No website or Facebook presence? You’ll never be discovered by anyone under 40 years of age. Is your church technology up to date? What would it take to make it so?

Then there’s the issue of appearance. Truth be told, many pastors’ offices or studies look like storage rooms for discarded furniture and old curriculum, have worn carpeting, and curtains that have seen better days. How the office appears is important: it creates the atmosphere for productivity and efficiency as well as for prayer. Furnishings are important. Pastors appreciate ample space for their books, lockable file cabinets, and seating 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 well heated and cooled goes a long way toward pastoral effectiveness. Not to mention that oft-used word, morale: to have church leaders care for the pastor’s office environment will help him or her in the awesome task to which they’ve been called.

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, everyone will agree. And, once again, you’ll revealing your care for the pastor.

Last, but not least . . .

YOUR MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

This workbook is all 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 ongoing dialogue with her or him her about matters such as expectations, compensation, housing, the work environment, and the pastor as a person. When pastors know their partners in ministry care about such vital components of a pastor’s life and ministry, courage and confidence result. And helps them be healthy, hardy, and happy.

You may know 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 Barnabas was to encourage the apostle Paul. One can only speculate where the Church would be without Paul; it’s possible Barnabas was the key person in helping Paul keep on keeping on. To help the pastor “keep on keeping on” is a major responsibility of the P/SPRC.

Encouragement can take many forms from a note telling the pastor, “I think you’re doing terrific,” to an all-expenses-paid vacation. All of us respond positively to affirmation. Therefore, the crucial factor in a ministry of encouragement is that it be offered frequently and tangibly. Likely, church members presume another committee (maybe the P/SPRC) is providing all the encouragement necessary. Frequently, P/SPRCs believe the district superintendent or bishop or the annual conference board of ordained ministry is providing sufficient encouragement — so they need not bother. In all likelihood, none of these assumptions are true. A ministry of encouragement requires that encouragement be everyone’s responsibility, but the P/SPRC must lead the way by education and example.

The following 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 members to keep the church and pastor in their daily prayers. A church that prays daily for each other will 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 Smith has announced her intention to re-appoint Pastor Jones to our congregation. Let's stand and show 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 be sure to 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 let your local newspaper know about it, too.

4. Recognize Ministry Milestones

Recognizing and giving thanks for your pastor's ministry over many years can be a boost to the entire congregation, not just to the pastor's morale. Five, 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 celebration of ordination? And what if you surprised your pastor by bringing in his or her mentor from long ago to join the fun? Use your imagination and lead the congregation in giving thanks to God for your pastor.

5. Recognize Birthdays and Anniversaries

One pastor, walking into church on the day following his 40th birthday, was greeted with a banner declaring, "You may be older, but we love you anyway. Happy Birthday, David." Another church surprised its pastor and spouse with a 30th wedding anniversary party after church, inviting their grown children to attend and paying for their transportation from a distant city. Whether it's giving gift certificates to a favorite store or restaurant, or giving tickets to sporting events or plays or concerts, or 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 overlook them. Remember their birthdays with cards and gifts and honor their achievements as well. Too often, spouses and children find themselves considered as mere appendages to their reverend pastor. 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 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 principal 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 show your pastor 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 feel that the salary is adequate compensation, thus a gift is deemed unnecessary. Even if the salary is generous, what a Scrooge-like attitude to have! A gift, large or small, collected 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 reinforce your concern for your pastor's health is to pay for a membership in the local Y or a health club. If they don't already, 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. As a result, opportunities to express gratitude to a pastor by naming a room after him or her aren't as prevalent as in bygone days. So, why not do it anyway with your present building? A lounge, a sanctuary, a fellowship hall, a classroom where the pastor traditionally teaches her or his Bible class — any such honor would never be forgotten by your pastor, especially if it includes a picture of her or him and a plaque. Or, name an endowed youth scholarship, a lectureship or a preaching series after your pastor. Put on your thinking caps — you'll come up with an idea.

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 at any time. Usually done as a surprise, the P/SPRC sends 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 a member at a non-church address. Then, on a particular day — perhaps on a Sunday of Pastor Appreciation Month (see below) — the bound book of letters is presented to the pastor. You can be sure that book will be read and re-read until the pages are tattered.

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 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 use.

13. Do Something 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 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, generosity and extravagance is what God's love is like for all of us.

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 seek 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 for worship?
10. On average, how many funerals and weddings does the pastor conduct each year? What kind of help does she or he 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 securing guest preachers when the pastor is away?

Visitation and Counseling

1. What are the expectations for visiting: active members, inactive 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, board, task force, and other group 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. Will the pastor maintain office hours? If so, what shall they be?
6. If there isn't a full-time administrative assistant, what office duties is the pastor expected to perform?
7. What is the pastor's responsibility for the church newsletter? Website or Facebook pages?
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 or she involved?
3. What are the pastor's responsibility with local ecumenical groups? On average, how many hours each month is she or he involved?
4. Is the pastor expected to participate with community or service organizations (e.g., Rotary or the local fire department)? Is this mutually acceptable? 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 (or other auxiliary program bodies)?

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 the 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 will the pastor take? (Check the annual conference minimum.)
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 take precedent; therefore, don’t 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 specific suggestions for continuing education? Do we provide sufficient 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 (to be shared in confidence, of course)? 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 her or him?

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 would be a fair salary? Why?

HOUSING

For the Committee to Discuss:

1. What do we 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?

THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

For the Committee to Discuss:

1. Regarding office equipment: Do you have up-to-date office equipment? Is there internet access in your church? 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? 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 tasteless cast-offs? 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. Please do nothing without the 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?

B. How are we doing in the area of Christian education/formation for children? For youth?
For adults?

C. How are we doing in our caring for one another?

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
neighborhood/community a more Christ-like place? In giving members 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?

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

- 2. What are the most appreciated talents and skills of our pastor?**

- 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?

7. How does the pastor keep himself or herself emotionally, physically, spiritually refreshed?
(Discuss days off, vacations, spiritual renewal opportunities)

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS (FOR UNITED METHODISTS)

“Saying Goodbye – Saying Hello”

United Methodist pastors are appointed one year at a time. The average tenure of these yearly appointments is approximately five years. This means most United Methodists are experienced in saying farewell to one pastor and welcoming another, sometimes in the space of only two weeks! To be sure, these tender times are significant for churches and clergy alike. Done well, they provide much-needed continuity and inspire hope and confidence. Done poorly, they can interrupt congregational momentum, provoke division and fear, and unnecessarily handicap the future that God is trying to bring about.

As soon as a church’s P/SPRC is aware of a change to be made, they need to begin soon to plan both an ending and a beginning. Oftentimes, this committee will delegate such a responsibility to others. No problem — as long as someone takes the ball and runs with it in time to do justice to both ministries. Hastily conceived goodbyes and hellos usually fail to offer either an satisfactory closure or a joyful beginning to a pastorate.

Listed below are ways that many churches have found to express their appreciation and welcome.

SAYING GOODBYE

- Most churches declare a “last Sunday” and plan a farewell party following worship, usually with a meal. Some, however, prefer to separate the final Sunday and this celebration of ministry. Again, thinking well in advance will enable your church to decide which format is best.
- Our *United Methodist Book of Worship* (page 598) contains helpful advice for planning a farewell to a pastor. It also includes a good litany of mutual appreciation that can help affirm the past and anticipate the future. With the pastor’s help, utilizing this resource can add to the meaning of your worship.
- If your pastor is retiring, you might want to consider inviting representatives of congregations he or she has previously served to attend. If there will be time for “testimonies” (recommended) during worship or afterwards, these former parishioners could also participate and add much to the occasion.
- A “Book of Testimonies” is also a treasured gift. Collected from church members months in advance, containing written expressions of gratitude for the pastor’s life among them, you can be sure this book will be looked at time and again in the years to come and always with gratitude.
- Similarly, compiling photos or videos of church life over the past years will be greatly enjoyed and appreciated.
- If you have a parsonage family, don’t neglect the spouse and children. Moving is usually hardest on family members. A little thoughtfulness including offers to help with packing will make the trauma of moving easier to deal with.

- Many churches give the outgoing pastor the last week or two off (though usually remaining available for emergencies). This grace of time with freedom from sermon preparation gives space for final packing details and attending to the countless unforeseen complications that always arise when moving.

SAYING HELLO

- A well-planned welcome of the new pastor (and family if she or he has one) will go a long way to helping make the transition smoother and the new pastor's tenure successful. Even before saying good-bye to your present pastor, your P/SPRC needs to begin thinking about how to welcome their new leader. Because summer congregations are usually fewer in number, your church may want to plan a more informal initial welcoming early in July and hold a "grander" event early in September. Our *Book of Worship* has an excellent service to celebrate the appointment on page 595. As well, if your church will be blessed with children in the parsonage, how kind it is to have someone in the congregation reach out with information about the school system. If there is someone in the church who has children about the same age, that family might phone to volunteer to answer any questions that arise in the weeks to come. Of course, an invitation for an evening or day together (after the move) would also be a loving deed.
- As with courtesy extended to the outgoing pastor noted above, so also your church will want to allow space in pastoral expectations for the first week or so as the new pastor unpacks and settles in. Although most pastors will have briefly checked out their new neighborhood prior to the move, they'll surely appreciate suggestions for local goods and services they might otherwise overlook. In addition, if there are special events in the neighborhood or town or county, you can extend an invitation to your pastor and family to join you.
- Our system of appointment-making often doesn't allow adequate time to prepare the parsonage as thoroughly as most churches wish for the new pastor and family. If repairs or painting can't be finished before the moving truck arrives, you'll want to schedule the remaining work to be done at a convenient time in consultation with the new pastor. Regarding moving day, drop off gifts of cold drinks and brownies or the like will also be appreciated.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Dennis R. Winkleblack was born in Kansas City, Missouri. Following two years at the University of Missouri, he received the B.A. degree from William Jewell College 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 Hartford, 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, Norwalk and Bristol 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. Beginning in January, 2005, he was 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 has been an elected delegate or reserve delegate to three United Methodist General and Jurisdictional Conferences. From 2012 to 2016, he served as a consultant and assisting clergy with Trinity Episcopal Church in Hartford, Connecticut. Dr. Winkleblack has published articles in *The Christian Century*, *Circuit Rider*, and *The United Methodist Reporter*. Now retired, Jeanne and Dennis reside in Simsbury, Connecticut.