

Guidelines for SPRC committee members

The Pastor-Parish (or Staff-Parish) Relations committee serves a key role in establishing the focus of the pastor, staff and congregation's ministry. By advocating for the pastor and staff, and helping to interpret their roles and ministries, the SPRC supports and nurtures the whole congregation.

Support for Clergy and Staff

The SPRC has an important role supporting the morale of the staff and providing positive, helpful feedback. Supporting the staff is more than saying, "Hello, how are you?" on Sunday morning. It is more than saying "Thank you" when a staff member has performed a job. Support is building relationships between people; it is getting to know one another so that you know when something is bothering the other person even when nothing is said.

Pastors and staff need friendly advisors: people to suggest how best to handle some of the joys, concerns, and issues of the parish. This function of counsel determines, in large measure, the degree to which the shared vision can be achieved. The SPRC members are chosen because they have the ability, by way of the Holy Spirit, to discern what the pastor (and staff) need, what the church needs, and how to bring these needs together for ministry. The information and feedback of the SPRC is essential for developing the ministry direction of the congregation and pastor.

Financial Support and Benefits

The Book of Discipline calls for the SPRC to provide assessment annually for the pastors and staff. Remember that your annual conference sets minimum salary recommendations for ordained ministers. Ask the lay member of annual conference from your church to discuss the action taken by the conference with the committee before the committee makes compensation recommendations for the coming year.

For other staff members, assign a member of the committee to contact nearby churches of a similar size to discover their salary scale for the same services. This will help you determine equitable salary for your lay staff.

As liaisons: Start by asking staff members for a report of their accomplishments, and celebrate them.

Report back to the SPRC committee after your meeting with them.

Other aspects of support for all employees include determining:

1. Working conditions, including working space, office helpers (volunteers), equipment, and hours.

2. Travel expenses, annual conference session attendance allowance, continuing education for clergy and employed staff, moving expenses, and so forth.
3. Fringe benefits for all, employees, including Social Security, Worker's Compensation, insurance, opportunity for pension program, and vacation allowances. Some conferences have vacation policies for clergy.

The Book of Discipline requires provision of adequate housing for pastors, and housing is not considered part of compensation (although there are federal tax implications). Check with your district superintendent to find out about conference policies for housing standards.

Your committee's recommendations go to the church council for its consideration. It is a courtesy to give a summary of your salary recommendations to the finance committee for their budget preparations, but the finance committee does not determine salary packages. The final recommendation to the charge conference may be as you recommended, or it may differ. If it differs; the SPRC has the right and the responsibility to advise the council or the charge conference of its recommendations and the reasoning behind that decision. However, the charge conference has the final decision on salary matters.

The SPRC is responsible for the assessment of lay staff as well as appointed clergy. The committee functions to consider when changes are needed in the number of paid personnel. Ideally, staffing is developed within the vision/mission context of the local church and is not financially driven. The SPRC must be wise stewards of the congregation's resources while providing staffing for the congregation's ministry goals.

Other SPRC committee responsibilities:

Job descriptions for employees

Personnel policies

Terminating employees

Interviewing prospective new employees

Tour parsonage with parsonage family and Trustee representative (for inventory, maintenance and repair).

Remember, the work of the SPRC is confidential. No meeting is allowed without the knowledge of the pastor or district superintendent. Retiring SPRC members (those who have served three years) may not succeed themselves. Spouses of staff and other family members of SPRC committee members are not eligible to serve on the SPRC committee.

*The information for SPRC committee guidelines was compiled from the Pastor-Parish Relations guidelines handbook.