

# Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee Manual

North Georgia Conference of  
The United Methodist Church



**Prepared for Pastor/Staff Parish Relations  
Committee Chairs and Members**

**2021-2022**

# ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## **The Committee on Staff Parish Relations**

There shall be elected annually by the charge conference in each local church or charge a committee on pastor parish relations who are full members or associate members of the local church or charge. People serving this committee must be engaged in and attentive to their Christian spiritual development so as to give proper leadership in the responsibilities with which the committee is entrusted.

In conducting its work, the committee shall identify and clarify its values for ministry. It shall engage in biblical and theological reflections, on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of the church.

The committee shall reflect biblically and theologically on the role and work of the pastor(s) and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities. The committee shall assist the pastor(s) and staff in assessing their gifts and setting priorities for leadership and service.

It is the responsibility of the committee to communicate with the committee on lay leadership (nominations) and/or the church council when there is a need for other leaders or for employed staff to perform in areas where utilization of the gifts of the pastor(s) and staff proves an inappropriate stewardship of time.

## **Membership of the Committee**

- Not fewer than five nor more than nine representative lay persons
  - One shall be a young adult (19-34)
  - One may be a youth (13 – 18)
- All shall be active full members or associate members of the local church
- In addition, the lay leader and lay member of Annual Conference shall be members with vote.
- No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee.
- Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee.
- Where there is more than one church on a charge, there must be at least one representative from each congregation.
- Each congregation on a charge may have a pastoral advisory committee consisting of 3 persons, with the chair serving as a member of the charge SPR committee.

See the *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶258.2, for complete details.

## Meetings

The SPR Committee shall meet **at least quarterly**. It may meet additionally at the request of the Bishop, District Superintendent, the Pastor, the chairperson of the committee, or any other person accountable to the committee.

The Committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor, who should be present at every meeting except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself. It may meet with the district superintendent without the pastor being present, but the pastor as well as any other appointed staff, shall be notified prior to such a meeting if his or her employment is being discussed. Pastors and appointed staff should be informed of the deliberations of the committee following discussions about his or her employment.

A quorum is those present at any duly announced meeting.

Confidentiality is essential. The violation of confidence is cause for immediate dismissal from membership on the Committee. The proceedings of SPR Committee meetings are confidential. Personnel matters are not appropriate to share with the congregation or community.

The Staff Parish Relations Committee members, as all United Methodist Christians, are in ministry. They have a distinctive ministry and relationship to the pastor, the congregation, the district superintendent and the annual conference.

## The Committee Serves

### WITH THE PASTOR

As a friend, counselor, sounding board, and interpreter  
Not punitive—Not critical  
Affirming—Constructive

### WITH THE CONGREGATION

As a listener and interpreter  
of expectations and needs for ministry

### WITH THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

As a friend and consultant

### WITH THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

As a recruiter of ministers

## Duties of the Committee

1. TO INTERPRET TO THE CONGREGATION
  - A. The nature and function of ministry, general and ordained
  - B. The ministry of the staff (telling their story)
  
2. TO COUNSEL WITH THE PASTOR/STAFF CONCERNING THEIR MINISTRIES AND TO BE A LIAISON BETWEEN THEM AND THE CONGREGATION IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS
  - A. Task expectations and work priorities
  - B. The professional growth and spiritual nurture of the pastor/staff (continuing education, spiritual retreats, personal leave, health and fitness)
  - C. Compensation and other practical matters
  
3. TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PASTOR/STAFF USING THE CRITERIA AND PROCESSES DEVELOPED BY THE BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY AND THE CABINET
  
4. TO CONFER AND CONSULT
  - A. With the pastor and/or other appointed staff should it become evident that the best interests of the charge and/or the pastor would be served by a change of pastors
  - B. With the district superintendent concerning the pastoral appointment
  - C. With the pastor, SPRC may also choose to consult with Church Council and Lay Leadership Committee when considering additional staff positions
  
5. TO MEET EMERGENCIES IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE PASTOR AND HIS OR HER FAMILY
  
6. TO ENLIST CANDIDATES FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY AND TO INTERVIEW, EVALUATE, REVIEW AND RECOMMEND THEM TO THE CHARGE CONFERENCE FOR CANDIDACY
  
7. TO RECOMMEND
  - A. To the Charge Conference, reporting budget items to the Finance Committee, compensation for the pastor/staff
  - B. To the Church Council, the necessary financial assistance and time for attendance of pastor/staff at continuing education and spiritual renewal events
  - C. To the Charge Conference, persons for candidacy for ministry
  - D. To the Church Council, policy and procedures regarding the process for hiring, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not under appointment

## **Monthly Calendar Overview for SPR Committees**

### **January**

SPR Chair & Pastor affirm that all new committee members are trained for the work of SPR

Consultation regarding appointment of clergy to congregation begins

### **January – March**

Consultation regarding appointment of clergy to congregation continues as necessary

Cabinet meets to project appointments

Cabinet begins notification of SPR chairs and pastors (March)

### **April**

Cabinet continues to project appointments

Cabinet continues notification of SPR Chairs and pastors

Cabinet review session

Announcement Sunday of new pastoral appointments

Consultation regarding appointment of clergy to congregation continues as necessary

### **May**

Move Seminar for itinerating clergy

### **June**

Annual Conference Session

Farewell Sunday for moving pastors

Moving Day for Clergy

### **July-August**

Welcome Sunday for new pastors

Getting to know new pastors and leading good transition

SPRC and pastor meet within 6 weeks of new appointment

Consider On-Boarding with new pastor

Begin work on compensation & staffing recommendations for inclusion in operating budget for the coming year

### **September - October**

Ministry Review forms completed by pastors and SPRC

Supervisory Meetings by DS with all appointed clergy.

Consultation regarding appointment of clergy to congregation continues as necessary

**October**

Pastor Appreciation Month

**November – December**

SPRCs and pastors consult and make recommendations about appointments

**GUIDELINES FOR COMPENSATION  
AND HOUSING**

(From the North Georgia Annual Conference *Journal*)

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
Full Connection	\$40,000	\$40,000
Associate Member	\$37,800	\$37,800
Provisional Member	\$37,800	\$37,800
Full Time Local Pastor	\$34,815	\$34,815
Part Time Local Pastor	\$12,750	\$12,750
Minimum Housing	\$17,600	\$17,600

<https://www.ngumc.org/clergycompensationtax>

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE STANDARDS  
FOR PASTORAL SUPPORT**

(See the *North Georgia Conference Journal* for the most current standards and guidelines.)

1. The cost of pastoral leadership includes
  - a. Base compensation
  - b. Contributions to the Annual Conference’s pension plan
  - c. Annual Conference’s health insurance,
  - d. Provision for a parsonage or housing allowance,
  - e. Reimbursement for travel/business expenses and continuing education
  - f. Other expenses as may be required by the Annual Conference.

Pastoral base compensation (a) may be divided into salary and utilities/furnishings allowance to minimize a pastor’s tax liability. Local churches should become familiar with Internal Revenue Service requirements for pastors receiving non-taxable income when establishing compensation and allowances.

2. **SEE THE SCHEDULE OF MINIMUM BASE COMPENSATION SET BY THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR (THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 2016 par. 342 & 624):**

3. Local churches are expected to reimburse pastors for travel/business expenses and continuing education expenses under an accountable reimbursement plan that complies with IRS regulations. IRS regulations require reimbursements made outside an accountable reimbursement plan to be reported as taxable income. The local church shall budget sufficient funds to meet the anticipated cost of pastoral travel and business expenses based on the most current year's actual expenses. The local church shall budget sufficient funds to meet the pastoral continuing education expectation of the SPR committee (THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 2012, par. 258.2g(8)), which shall be no less than \$800 annually.
4. Beginning July 1, 2017, all churches are required to follow the Annual Conference practice of paying pastoral salaries in advance.
5. The Commission on Equitable Compensation recommends that all charges of the conference provide their pastor(s) annual vacation periods of at least the following schedule and make necessary financial arrangements for pulpit supply during the pastor's absence from the pulpit. Guidelines for vacation periods shall be based on the credited years of service indicated in the Chronological Roll published annually in the Conference Journal.

1-5 years	3 weeks (including 3 Sundays)
6-10 years	4 weeks (including 4 Sundays)
11+ years	5 weeks (including 5 Sundays)

## **Minimum Parsonage Standards**

### Space Requirements

1. Four bedrooms w/minimum 120 sq. ft. in each and ample closets
2. Minimum two full baths with Master bedroom having connecting bath and at least one bath and bedroom on main level.
3. Two car garage or carport
4. Minimum 120 sq. ft. of storage space in addition to closets
5. Main floor handicap accessible (includes door widths)
6. Central heat and air, energy efficient windows or storm windows, and R30 insulation or higher
7. A study in the parsonage or at the church
8. Family room/dining and/or living room and separate dining room

### Furnishings

1. Window treatments, stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, dryer, smoke alarms, mower or lawn service
2. Parsonage furniture will not be required (except for above mentioned)
3. Cable or satellite TV connection, telephone and high-speed internet service to be paid for by the pastor.

4. Private telephone line with minimum of two jacks
5. Fenced play/pet area recommended.

PASTORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PURCHASE RENTERS INSURANCE ON THEIR PERSONAL PROPERTY IN THE PARSONAGE.

## **Housing Allowance Standards**

1. The District Superintendent reviews all requests and approval is granted by the Bishop and Cabinet. Questions about housing allowances may be referred to the District Committee on Church Development for its ruling.
2. Each local congregation, conference agency or district that decides to provide a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage and sells the existing parsonage must place the proceeds from such sale in an escrow account or use the proceeds for capital improvements beyond the operating budget when written approval is granted by the District Superintendent and the Pastor.  
(THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 2016 par. 2543)
3. **REFER TO THE HANDOUT FOR THE MINIMUM HOUSING ALLOWANCE FOR THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR.** The district superintendent must approve exceptions to this minimum. The allowance should respect the IRS regulations and rulings. The housing allowance should be clearly established, recorded in the charge conference minutes and excluded from Box 1, but listed in Box 14, on the W-2 form provided to the pastor.

## **Annual Conference Standing Rules For Pastors and SPR Committees**

### Rule 18      MOVING DAY & EXPENSES

Moving Day for pastors shall ordinarily be Thursday of the week following the regular session of the Annual Conference; provided, if unusual circumstances prevail, the cabinet may change the date to a more suitable one. Departing clergy shall vacate their parsonages by 1:00 p.m. on the Moving Day. District superintendents shall encourage the pastoral charges to pay moving expenses for newly assigned clergy moving within the bounds of the North Georgia Conference. Reimbursable Moving Expenses are included as income for Clergy (per IRS regulations) and shall not exceed \$6000 (Standing Rule D.3)

### Rule 19      CARE OF PARSONAGES

Clergy shall use care to maintain cleanliness and good housekeeping of the parsonages in which they reside. In addition to the annual inspection of the parsonage, Part V, Chap. 6, Section VI, BOOK OF DISCIPLINE 2016 (par. 2533.4), at a time of change in pastoral appointment, there shall be an inspection of the parsonage by the pastor and the PPR



committee to determine the condition of the parsonage. Where there has been obvious abuse, replacement and/or repair shall be at the pastor's expense. If pets are a part of the pastor's family, the expense for professional treatment for infestation and odor shall be the pastor's responsibility prior to moving out. Any disagreement concerning liability shall be addressed by a mediation committee to determine the ratio of responsibility. The decision of the mediation committee shall be binding on all parties. The mediation committee shall be composed of the District Superintendent, a person of the church's choice, a person of the pastor's choice, and a neutral person selected by the district superintendent.

## **MINISTRY REVIEW**

The Ministry Review allows meaningful conversation and evaluation of the pastor. The goal is a feedback system to facilitate a constant and dependable flow of information. A useful way to consider feedback is to think of it as a mirror, which reflects back to the person an image of how he/she is being perceived and experienced by others. The result is a verbal picture. That picture should also be reflected in the written review.

## **REMEMBER**

THE GOAL OF THE MINISTRY REVIEW IS THE ENHANCEMENT OF MINISTRY.

REVIEW IS NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF "CALLING THE PREACHER ON THE CARPET." NOR IS IT FOR LISTING ALL THE THINGS SOME MEMBER MAY NOT LIKE ABOUT THE PASTOR. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT A TIME FOR DECIDING HOW MUCH SALARY INCREASE THE PERSON SHOULD RECEIVE

IT IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENHANCING THE MINISTRY OF THE PASTOR AND THUS TO INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH

# CONSULTATION AND APPOINTMENT MAKING

## Consultation and Appointment Making

Consultation is the process whereby the bishop and/or district superintendent confer with the pastor and committee on pastor parish relations, taking into consideration certain criteria, a performance evaluation, needs of the appointment under consideration, and mission of the Church.

Consultation is not merely notification, although it begins with initial notification. Consultation is not the SPR Committee acting as a pulpit committee to select or call a pastor. The role of the Committee is advisory.

Consultation is a continual process and a more intense involvement during the period of change in appointment. The intensity and length of consultation will be different in each situation.

## Criteria

Appointments take into account the unique needs of a church or charge, the community, and the gifts and graces of the pastor.

CONGREGATIONS—The D.S. will receive from the pastor and Committee a profile that reflects the needs, characteristics and opportunities for mission of the church consistent with the Church's statement of purpose (Book of Discipline 2016 par. 427.1).

A profile includes:

- a. the general situation in which a congregation finds itself—size, financial condition, quality of lay leadership, history
- b. the convictional stance of the congregation—theology, prejudices, spiritual life
- c. the ministry of the congregation—service, growth, decline, community & world mission, forms of witness
- d. the qualities & functions of pastor(s) needed to fulfill the missions and goals of the congregation

SPRCs anticipating a change in pastoral appointment should provide the District Superintendent with a written statement including the above and any special considerations the committee desires be considered when making the new appointment.

PASTORS—The D.S. will receive from the pastor a profile reflecting the pastor's gifts, evidence of God's grace, professional experience and expectations and also needs and concerns of pastor's spouse and family.

A profile includes:

- a. Spiritual and personal sensibility—personal faith, call and commitment to ordained ministry, work in the church, integration of vocation with personal and family well-being, lifestyle
- b. Academic and career—theological stance, continuing education, professional experience, record of performance
- c. Skills and abilities—in church administration, leadership development, worship and liturgy, preaching and evangelism, teaching and nurture, counseling and group work, ability to work in cooperation, ability in self-evaluation and relational skills
- d. Community context—ability of the pastor to relate effectively to the community setting
- e. Family circumstances

Pastors anticipating a move will provide the DS a written statement including the above information and any special considerations he or she desire to be considered when making his/her appointment.

## **Making the Appointments**

1. A change in appointment may be initiated by a pastor, a SPR committee, a D.S., or a Bishop
2. All requests for a change are considered by the Bishop and Cabinet in light of the profile developed for the church and the gifts, graces, experience and family needs of the pastor
3. When a change in appointment is indicated, the D.S. will communicate with the pastor and with the SPR committee to share the reason for the change and the process for making the new appointment
4. All appointments receive the consideration of the Bishop and Cabinet until a decision is made
5. A change in appointment may occur at any time at the discretion of the Bishop and Cabinet.

## **Do's and Don'ts of Appointment Making**

1. Do pray earnestly for the churches, pastors, Bishop, and Cabinet. The Holy Spirit guides the process most effectively when we are open to God's plan for us.
2. Do continue to work with your present pastor(s) to advance the church's mission and outreach.
3. Do keep the conversations around consultation and appointment making within the Committee. Confidentiality is essential for this process to work to its maximum effectiveness. This is confidential work until the Bishop declares that appointments are set and the DS notifies the Committee of the same.
4. Do not request specific pastors to be appointed to the church.

5. Do not call or visit other churches where prospective pastors are currently serving. This interferes with the ministry of that church and pastor.

## Practical Advice

**1. Advise and Consult with the Pastor.** Your committee serves in a consulting role with the Pastor. He or she does not work for you. He/she is appointed by the Bishop to serve your congregation and to lead your church to be in mission to the community and the world. Adversarial relationships do not enhance the mission.

**2. Relating to The Pastor in Charge.** In your role of advice and consent you provide the pastor with invaluable input and information. However, he/she is the pastor in charge and is responsible for the leadership decisions made while appointed to your congregation.

**3. Accountability.** All Staff must report to and be accountable to the Pastor in Charge or those designated by him/her for performance of the responsibilities of their jobs. In your consulting role you will provide advice to the pastor regarding staff responsibilities, supervision, accountability and evaluation. However, staff members must understand they are primarily accountable to the Pastor in Charge for the day-to-day performance of their duties.

**4. The priority of the mission.** Staffing decisions must be made with the mission taking the priority in the decision-making process. Personal preferences, personal relationships, past performance, longevity, personal circumstances, etc., must not determine the staffing decisions in a church. Never attempt to “do ministry” through employment. It almost never works.

**5. Adequate work time** – possible annual retreat and quarterly meetings. Your committee must have adequate time together to do the work of the ministry to which you have been called and elected. Rushed meetings and an inadequate number of meetings will not allow you to be proactive in your work. Committees that only act reactively rarely enhance the overall mission of the church. Adequate work time together will allow you to deal with small issues before they become big issues.

**6. No Triangulation.** Never, never allow a committee member to get between the Pastor-in-Charge and a staff member. If the staff member has a grievance, first inform them to consult with the Pastor. If that is unsatisfactory, or not possible as in the extreme case of abuse, then two members of the Committee should meet with the staff member with the Pastor or District Superintendent’s Consent. If the issue cannot be resolved in that forum, then the staff member has right of appeal to the entire committee.

**7. No Power-plays.** The work of the committee is never to be a Win/Lose process. The Committee should work to a consensus on nearly every issue, as much as is possible. This does not mean every decision will be unanimous. However, a 5 to 4 vote means you need to do more work to move toward consensus.

**8. Pay.** You should be the advocate for reasonable and comparable pay for all the staff. Staff turnover is far more expensive than adequate compensation. Compensation does not include reimbursable business expenses agreed upon in advance.

**9. Support.** Your committee is the primary church support system for the pastor and staff. Most of your pastors and staff really want to be effective in ministry and work very hard to do so. Deal with incompetent or insubordinate staff quickly and decisively and do not equate their behavior with that of the rest of the staff. Remember, most church employees really do want to serve well in your church.

**10. Time off.** The standing rules of the Annual Conference defines vacation time for the appointed staff. Set your own vacation time/sick leave for all other staff. Insist the staff take the time off in order to enhance their effectiveness.

**11. Appreciation.** Look for numerous opportunities to say, "Thank You." Most pastors and staff will respond most favorably to genuine appreciation.

**12. Advocacy to the Finance Committee and Council.** While you do not need to assume an adversarial role with the Finance Committee or the Council, you must assume the role of advocate for the staffing needs of the church and the needs of the staff.

**13. Relationship with the D.S. and conference.** In most circumstances, your input in the appointive process will be elicited and essential. Exceptions may exist when in the process of making appointments it becomes clear to the Bishop and Cabinet that a change is required where it was previously unexpected. If that should ever be the case, you will be informed as soon as possible by the DS. As United Methodists we are accustomed to the appointive system and live into the promise such a system provides for the fulfillment of our mission.

**14. CONFIDENTIALITY.** Personnel discussions and decisions must be made in a confidential environment. The inability to maintain confidence is cause for immediate dismissal from the committee. This is the only committee in the church where confidentiality is so important. All other committees have open meetings. The one exception to this rule is if the church decides to purchase additional property and charges a committee to negotiate the purchase(s). The negotiations may need to be done in confidence until an agreement is reached which then is shared with the Charge Conference for action.