Depending on the size of your church, your committee may refer to itself in one of two ways. United Methodist churches served by multiple clergy generally call this group the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), whereas congregations served by one pastor often use the term Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC).

We have chosen to use the broader term of SPRC throughout this series. In places where we refer to ‘your pastor’ for simplicity, you should consider the point to extend to all clergy.
Thank you for agreeing to serve as facilitator during your Staff-Parish Relations Committee’s journey through Pastor & Parish™.

This curriculum is designed to ground the work of the SPRC theologically, while encouraging thoughtful reflection upon the committee’s ministry in your congregation.

Please recognize that this guide is meant to serve as a starting place for guiding discussion. Feel free to use your judgment in determining places where deviating from it might generate more discussion and honesty.

Your leadership throughout this series is a gift to the church, and we hope that it will be a satisfying ministry for you as well.
Your Responsibilities as Facilitator

Your experience in the local church, combined with the resources in this guide, equip you to assist your SPRC in exploring the six sessions of Pastor & Parish. As your group’s facilitator, you are responsible for:

• Gathering the group
• Ensuring that those participating have access to both the materials they need to complete the program and a safe space in which to share
• Coming to each gathering prepared to keep the conversation moving and productive, so as to be respectful of everyone’s time

The videos provide a theologically-framed introduction to each session’s topic, and the participant workbook guides the committee in considering how the ideas that have been presented might apply in your church.

Through your guidance – and the conversation that stems from it – your committee will emerge from this series with a deeper understanding of its ministry within the church.

Using this Guide

This facilitator guide will help you prepare for each session in a variety of ways:

• The overview provides suggestions for successfully preparing to lead your SPRC through the program.
• The instructions for each session include:
  • A learning objective
    This is a way for you to orient yourself and the group to the purpose of each particular meeting.
  • A list of materials and equipment
    You will need to assemble these in the meeting space prior to the session.
  • Tips for keeping the group’s conversation focused
    We encourage you to observe time limits where they are specified, so that each session lasts 75-90 minutes. Committee members are more likely to be faithful in attending if they know that their time is respected.
  • Resources for delving more deeply into each topic
    On the Pastor & Parish website are books, articles and websites that you or others may wish to read to learn more.
Who Should Participate

We strongly encourage all members of the SPRC to attend all six sessions, as it is through communal discussion that your group will come to better understand its role and ministry within the church. Please encourage your committee members to make their presence a priority.

Because this program encourages discussion of matters that are sensitive to the life of the congregation, there should be no casual drop-ins. Only members of the SPRC and invited church leaders (such as the Chair of Church Council or Nominations) should attend, and the meeting space should be free from interruption by other groups and from distracting noise.

There should be assurance of confidentiality among the group participating. While these gatherings are not official SPRC meetings, you must create a safe space for people to share their thoughts.

Time and Place for Sessions

Consistency in time and place of meeting is strongly encouraged.

Pastor & Parish is designed to be presented in six individual sessions. Most of the sessions last about 75 minutes. Many committees have reported that the final two sessions in particular have prompted enough discussion to warrant 90 minutes; therefore the time estimates in this guide reflect this longer timeframe. If that is not possible for your group, actively manage the session so as to maximize your discussion time, or continue it on a subsequent date.

We encourage committees to meet weekly. The curriculum is neither time-consuming nor difficult, but combining two or more sessions into a single gathering will limit the time for prayer and reflection, two integral parts of the program. The Sunday School hour may be the ideal “set-aside” time for this study to take place, emphasizing the formational aspect of this ministry, as well as the practical training.

The setting in which Pastor & Parish will be presented is very important. You will need a room where a DVD can be played and easily viewed by all. While some sanctuaries contain a large screen and projection equipment, you may find that meeting in a smaller classroom with fewer windows makes it easier for everyone to view the screen and is more conducive to small-group discussion.

Continued on page 4.
Audio-Visual Equipment

To show the videos, you will need either:

• **A television connected to a DVD player** or

• **A laptop computer equipped with a program for playing DVDs.** If you use a laptop, be sure to also have a screen and projector available, and ensure that you have adequate speakers, since the laptop’s built-in speakers may not be sufficient.

It is important that you do a test-run of your planned set-up well in advance of the first session, ensuring that the equipment is functional and that you can navigate to the correct session.

Materials

Please ensure that the following materials are available:

**At each session:**

• Audio-visual equipment, tested and ready to go

• Table and chairs sufficient for everyone to be seated comfortably, facing one another

• Poster paper and markers (plus tape if the paper is not self-adhesive)

• Pastor & Parish DVD

• Pastor & Parish Participant Workbook (one per participant, including the facilitator)

• Pastor & Parish Facilitator Guide

• Pens or pencils and blank paper for participants who may not have brought their own

• List of the names of the participants (this will be created during the Baptism session)

• You may also wish to have:
  • One copy of *The United Methodist Hymnal*
  • One copy of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* (2012)

**At specific sessions:**

• **Sessions 1 and 5:** Large glass bowl of water in the center of the table (or the bowl from your church’s baptismal font, if it is removable)

• **Session 3:** One copy of the local church’s history, if available

• **Session 5:** One copy per participant of the Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors, found in the 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline, ¶ 340 (pages 267-270)

• **Session 6:** One copy per participant of any covenant that your church and/or SPRC may have developed
Preparing for Each Session

As the facilitator, you will need to **set aside time to prepare for each weekly session.** It will be your responsibility to encourage engagement and thoughtful reflection, should the conversation stall or get sidetracked, and good preparation will help you to do that well.

**Prior to the first gathering:**

- Watch all the videos (when combined, the six sessions last about an hour.)
- Read through the participant workbook and this facilitator guide.
- Review the suggested resources on leading group discussions effectively.

Becoming familiar with the curriculum will help you answer questions from the group as they arise.

**Before each session:**

- Watch the week’s video again.
- Review the workbook content for the session, as well as the “For Further Reflection” section of the prior session. Consider the connections between the two sessions so that you can bridge the discussion from one to the next.
- Write your own answers to the discussion questions. Doing this ahead of time will enable you to turn your focus to the group during the session itself.
- Reread the session notes in the facilitator guide for additional ideas on prompting discussion.
- Read some of the additional resources listed on the Pastor & Parish website so that you can direct participants who may wish to become more fully immersed in the topic.

Addressing Questions and Concerns

The Duke Clergy Health Initiative staff wants you to have a positive experience in facilitating this program.

Should you have questions about the curriculum or guiding your committee through it, please contact us.

**Duke Clergy Health Initiative**

919.613.5350  
clergyhealth@div.duke.edu  
www.clergyhealthinitiative.org
Setting the Stage for Pastor & Parish

Pastor & Parish can have a transformative effect on your SPRC and the ways it approaches its responsibilities, but completing the program requires a substantial investment in time. Therefore, it is important that the members of your committee understand why they are taking part in the curriculum and what it is designed to accomplish.

The introductory gathering can take place during a regularly scheduled SPRC meeting. The SPRC Chair should take responsibility for gathering the group and communicating his or her support of the program. If you are not the chair, ensure that he or she can speak knowledgeably about what Pastor & Parish entails and decide who will present the information below.

Video and Discussion

If the group gathered solely for this introduction, welcome them and thank them for coming.

Distribute a copy of the Participant Workbook to each member.

Explain why the Duke Clergy Health Initiative created Pastor & Parish. Use the description below or summarize in your own words:

“The Duke Clergy Health Initiative is a collaboration of The Duke Endowment and Duke Divinity School, who are working in partnership with the two United Methodist conferences in North Carolina to study and improve the health and well-being of clergy. Information about their clergy wellness program, Spirited Life, is available on page 2 of the participant workbook.

Their research is the first to examine how to tailor health interventions to clergy, and they have determined that efforts to improve clergy health will succeed only if those programs address the many factors that influence pastors’ health. That includes the environments created by their congregations and denominational leaders.

They believe that the SPRC plays a critical role in fostering a healthy relationship between the pastor and the congregation. In response, they have developed this theologically-framed curriculum. It describes service on this committee as being a ministry that supports the mission of the local church. Their hope is that as we begin to view our work through this lens, we will, in turn, seek out ways to strengthen communication across the church and serve as good stewards of our pastor’s time and gifts – and that this will foster an environment that promotes clergy health.”

Using the DVD, play the Introduction. (Duration: 4:30)
Explain why your SPRC has chosen to participate.

Describe what is involved:
• The videos provide a theologically-framed introduction to each session’s topic, and the participant workbook guides the committee in considering how the ideas that have been presented might apply in your church.
• Pastor & Parish is designed to be presented in six individual sessions, with the time between used for prayer and reflection.
• Most of the sessions last about 75 minutes; the final two last 90 minutes.
• The final session involves creating a covenant built upon the key tenets of the Pastor & Parish program to guide the work of the SPRC going forward.

Share the expectations of committee members:
• Encourage faithful participation by everyone.
• Reinforce the importance of confidentiality within the group. The committee should decide together what should be shared more broadly.

Describe the role of the facilitator:
• Gathering the group
• Ensuring that those participating have access to the materials they need to complete the program and a safe space in which to share
• Coming to each gathering prepared to keep the conversation moving and productive, so as to be respectful of everyone’s time

Discuss optimal meeting times.

Invite and answer additional questions.

Ending the Session
Conclude with prayer. Use this prayer or one of your own design:

“Lord, as we begin this journey together, send your Spirit among us. Open our hearts and minds that we may see fresh ways of doing your will in this congregation. Keep us kind and generous to each other as we seek to be formed as disciples of Jesus Christ, that we may strengthen your people’s witness in this community and around the world. We pray in the name of Jesus, to whom the church belongs. Amen.”
LEARNING OBJECTIVE
To encourage committee members to see their work on the SPRC as a ministry in response to the sacrament of baptism

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)
Begin by welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming.

Use the first few minutes for introductions. This is important even if everyone participating knows one another well.

1. Ask each person to give his or her full name.
2. Encourage each person to share:
   • One thing that they love about your church
   • One thing that no one knows about them (something not on their résumé)

As the committee members introduce themselves, write their full names on poster paper so that all can see. After all have finished, add the names of any other members who will be participating in Pastor & Parish, but who may not be present.

Lead the group in the following prayer or a similar one of your own design. Use the list you have created to ensure that each participant is named in the prayer.

“Gracious God, we give you thanks and praise for our baptism and place in your holy church. You came to the waters and called us each by name. You called [name each person on the list] and welcomed them into the Communion of Saints. As we move through this study together, let your Spirit move among us, opening our hearts and minds to new learning and insight, that our congregation may be strengthened to do your will powerfully and gracefully. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Risen and Exalted Lord. Amen.”

Setting Expectations (2 minutes)
Focus the group’s attention for several “housekeeping” items:

1. Reinforce the importance of confidentiality within the group. The committee should decide together what should be shared more broadly.
2. Encourage faithful participation by everyone.
Video and Discussion (55 minutes)
Using the DVD, play Session I: Baptism. (Duration: 8:30)

Refer the group to page 4 of the workbook. Ask them to answer the questions listed under “Remembering Our Baptism.” Allow approximately 5 minutes for writing. If the group finishes writing sooner, feel free to move on.

Invite members to share their recollections of baptism, whether those memories are of their own baptism or their children’s baptisms, or are anecdotes recalled from others’ telling. Encourage participants to touch the water in the bowl as they reflect. While there is no need to go in order around the table, do encourage everyone to speak. Allow no more than 2-3 minutes for each story. For a committee with 10 members, this could take up to 30 minutes.

If answers to the second question – What does your baptism into the church mean for the way you live your life? – did not emerge earlier, ask for volunteers willing to comment. Continue this discussion until approximately 8 minutes prior to the scheduled conclusion of the session.

For Further Reflection (4 minutes)
Call the group’s attention to the “For Further Reflection” section on page 5 of the workbook.

Encourage everyone to copy the names of those participating in Pastor & Parish in the workbook space provided. Request that each member of the group take time over the next week to reflect on the relationship between his or her calling through baptism and the ministry of the SPRC. The group will discuss these questions briefly at the start of the next session.

Remind the group that the Pastor & Parish website (www.pastorandparish.com) contains a variety of resources for those who wish to read more on this topic. We intend to update these resources periodically.

Ending the Session (4 minutes)
Confirm the date and time when the group will meet next.

Conclude with prayer. Use this prayer or one of your own design. Be certain that each person around the table is named:

“God, renew us, guide our footsteps, free from sin and all its snares. One with Christ in living, dying, by your Spirit, children, heirs. Gracious Lord, the covenant you made through baptism with [name each participant] is timeless and trustworthy. As we move through this study together, keep our heads wet with the waters of your promise that we may learn and grow for the blessing and strengthening of the ministries of this congregation. We pray in the name of Jesus, who was baptized by John in the Jordan. Amen.”

TIP
Smallgroups.com, an offering of Christianity Today, features several excellent tutorials on how to facilitate group discussions effectively. The links to these and other resources are available on the Resources tab of the Pastor & Parish website.
Extending the Impact

While Pastor & Parish is not intended to address the day-to-day business of the SPRC, it is likely that the topics you have discussed together will have an impact on how you approach the operations of the committee in the months and years to come.

Enhancing the SPRC’s planning and process

Your group may have identified some practical items of business to address that fall outside of the spiritual intent of the covenant, but which might bear good fruit.

- Perhaps the SPRC would like to establish a new mid-year planning retreat to address important but non-urgent concerns.
- Another way to address business with great intentionality would be to establish a process for agenda-setting that functions across the year, rather than month-to-month or meeting-to-meeting.

Sharing Pastor & Parish with new committee members or a new pastor

One of the aspects of Pastor & Parish that churches have found most valuable is its capacity to foster community within a committee and between SPRCs and clergy.

- Since the SPRC has a rolling membership, consider repeating the curriculum annually at the point when new members are joining the committee, affording them the opportunity to contribute to the SPRC’s covenant.
- Likewise, going through the program with a newly appointed pastor offers clergy joining a congregation a wonderful lens into the church’s character and the SPRC a way to get to know and connect with their new leader.

Encouraging your congregation to embrace the teachings of Pastor & Parish

While designed with the needs of the SPRC in mind, the theological concepts presented in Pastor & Parish could be beneficial for the wider congregation.

- Consider sharing one or more of the videos at an evening gathering, discussing how, as baptized individuals, we each have a call to serve as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Share with other church leaders the covenant your SPRC has created, encouraging them to likewise reflect on their committees’ responsibilities as a ministry in service to the local church.

Regardless of the specific actions you take, we encourage you to continue to engage in conversation with one another, drawing on the principles you’ve explored through this series.