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.
In agreeing to be part of this program, you have taken a critical step in the ongoing growth and development of your congregation.

The United Methodist Church describes the Staff-Parish Relations Committee as being “the administrative unit in a local church, where staff and congregational interests are integrated to focus on the mission of the church.”

Pastor & Parish™ is a theologically-framed formational activity for SPRCs that encourages discussion within your committee about the unique character of your church. It will help you identify ways for committee members to work in partnership with your pastor, other staff, and the congregation in strengthening your local church.
The Duke Clergy Health Initiative was formed in 2007 when the North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences of the United Methodist Church partnered with Duke Divinity School and The Duke Endowment to seek solutions to their growing concerns about declining clergy health and increasing health costs.

Findings from our early research established a clear picture of clergy health and the factors affecting it. We now know with certainty that United Methodist clergy in North Carolina are more likely to suffer from obesity, chronic disease, and depression than other comparable state residents. We also have a better understanding of the factors in the lives of clergy that expose them to greater risks of poor health. One key driver of well-being is the quality of the relationship that a pastor has with the members of his or her congregation.

In 2010, we enrolled more than 1,100 North Carolina-based United Methodist clergy in Spirited Life, a multi-year wellness program and behavioral health study. Through it, pastors learn to manage stress; care for their bodies in a healthy, mindful way; and find spiritual renewal.

We hope that the skills you will learn in Pastor & Parish will augment your pastor’s efforts to care for himself or herself and will enable your SPRC to build the quality of its leadership.

To learn more about the Clergy Health Initiative and our research findings, visit our website: www.clergyhealthinitiative.org.
What to Expect

Pastor & Parish is a six-session small group learning experience. It is an opportunity for your SPRC to grow in community with one another in a forum separate from your regular committee meetings.

Each of the sessions is meant to last about an hour. During each session, you will view a short video and then individually answer several questions in this workbook. Your group’s facilitator will guide you in a discussion of these ideas, which you can continue to explore on your own through additional readings. By discussing candidly in this safe space what your church does well and how it might improve, you will increase the effectiveness of your committee.

This series is unique among training resources for SPRCs in that it ties the committee’s responsibilities back to their spiritual beginnings. At the conclusion of this course, you will have the opportunity to craft a covenant to capture what your SPRC has learned and use it to guide your committee’s ministry as you work with your pastor to preserve and develop your church’s unique character.

Should you wish to delve more deeply into any of the topics presented in Pastor & Parish, links to articles, books and additional resources are available online at www.pastorandparish.com.
Remembering Our Baptism

Do you remember – or have you been told – details about your baptism? How old were you? When and where did it take place? Who performed the sacrament? Were other important people in your life present? Are there photos to commemorate the event?

Not everyone who attends a United Methodist church was raised in the Methodist tradition. How might your baptism have differed from others on your committee? List your recollections below and share some of them with the group.

As members of the church, we all are called to ministry in some way. What does your baptism into the church mean for the way you live your life?

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:17
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

In the space below, write the names of the members of your SPRC and your pastor. Pray for each of them by name every day, asking for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as they go about their ministries. Be sure to pray for yourself, too!

_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________

Study “Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters,” the hymn that introduced this session's video. Sing or read it several times over a few days, asking the Holy Spirit to open new understanding for you. What images in the lyrics speak powerfully to you? Why? What kind of congregation does the hymn long for?

HYMN

Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters
United Methodist Hymnal, #605

Wash, O God, our sons and daughters, where your cleansing waters flow.
Number them among your people; bless as Christ blessed long ago.
Weave them garments bright and sparkling; compass them in love and light.
Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit, Holy Dove and heart’s delight.

We who bring them long for nurture; by your milk may we be fed.
Let us join your feast, partaking cup of blessing, living bread.
God, renew us, guide our footsteps; free from sin and all its snares,
One with Christ in living, dying, by your Spirit, children, heirs.

O how deep your holy wisdom! Unimagined, all your ways!
To your name be glory, honor! With our lives we worship, praise!
We your people stand before you, water-washed and Spirit born.
By your grace, our lives we offer. Recreate us; God, transform!

Used by permission of Augsburg-Fortress (music) and The United Methodist Publishing House (lyrics)