

Effective and Ineffective Staff-Parish Relations Committees

Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective SPRCs

Effective

Meet regularly and often

Prepare for meetings

- Have an agenda
- Stay focused on agenda and identify topics for future meetings
- Allow adequate time

Establish partnership with pastor

- Keep pastor informed
- Take pastor into confidence
- Maintain "We are in this together" attitude
- Provide support and understanding

Ineffective

Conduct annual evaluations only

- Withhold regular feedback
- Allow issues to build too long
- Related to salary and appointment decisions more than to growth

Allow too little time and care

- Insufficient time to do task well
- Insufficient care in getting input and preparing for evaluation

Behave unfairly

- Bringing unevaluated complaints
- Bringing anonymous complaints
- Giving all sources equal credibility
- Not putting issues in perspective

What SPRCs and Clergy Most Need from Each Other

SPRCs Most Need from Clergy

Cooperation and receptivity

- Willing to listen with open mind
- Attempt to understand members' needs and concerns
- Attempt to make some changes
- Openness to improvement ideas

Clear and open communication

- Pastor's vision for ministry
- Candid assessment of what is going on in the church
- Information about issues and needs

Clergy Most Need from SPRCs

Honest feedback

- Balanced, objective, thoughtful, and candid feedback
- Treated as adults who can take criticism

Personal concern and support

- Advocate for pastor

Communication with the congregation

- Education of congregation
- Feedback from and to congregation

Based on a comparison of staff-parish relations committees deemed effective by both the SPRC chair and the pastor and those deemed ineffective by the chair and pastor

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Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback IS:

- Sincere and plain-speaking
- Self-revealing on the part of evaluators
- Humbly invited, humbly offered
- Conversation contains useful insights
- Dialogue *with* a pastor
- Personal and interactive
- Tool for improvement
- Ongoing process in the midst of ministry
- At its best, love in action

Feedback IS NOT

- Winning a point or coercing another
- Passing rumors
- Hiding behind what someone else says
- Advocating a theological perspective
- Something done *to* a pastor
- Weapon to be used against an enemy
- Defending one's self or others
- Saving up complaints for a one-time session
- Objective truth

Asking for and Receiving Feedback

- Specify the feedback you seek and why you are asking.
- Be sure those giving feedback understand what they are being asked to do.
- Have adequate time and a setting where you will not be interrupted.
- Assume positive motive and intention on the part of those giving feedback.
- Invite feedback givers to offer specific observations from their own experience.
- Repeat and rephrase comments to be sure you understand what they meant to say.
- Be aware of your feelings, breathing, physical comfort.
- Call for a break if needed.

Giving Feedback

- Have adequate time and a setting where you will not be interrupted.
- Be clear about confidentiality.
- Agree what can be shared from evaluative session.
- Avoid ganging up as a group on the one receiving feedback.
- Assume positive motive and intention on the part of the one receiving feedback.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Give specific details.
- Invite questions for clear understanding.
- Did the person hear what you meant to say?
- Divide the feedback itself and conclusions from feedback into different sessions.

Adapted from: Art Gafke, *Ministry Assessment Process: Giving and Receiving Feedback*, General Board of Higher Educational and Ministry

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