

SPRC

Staff/Pastor – Parish Relations Committee

United Methodist Church

Where lives are transformed.



January 2026

Our Purpose Today

Describe and celebrate the unique ministry of the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee

Highlight ways to support clergy so that they flourish.

Topics for Today

Responsibilities

Meeting Schedule / Sample Calendar

Cultivating a “Garden” Dynamic

Duties of Encouragement

Building Trust

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Responsibilities

- To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect clergy, staff, and their families
- To confer with the pastor(s) and staff on matters pertaining to:
 - effectiveness of ministry
 - relationships with the congregation
 - opportunity to grow in effectiveness of ministry
 - interpret the nature and function of the ministry

Responsibilities

- **To confer with pastor(s) and staff on priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time**
- **To communicate to the congregation the nature of ministry in The United Methodist Church**

Responsibilities

- **To develop and approve written job descriptions**
- **To confer with the appointed pastor(s) and/or other appointed staff should a change of pastoral leadership become evident.**

Sample Meeting Schedule

SCHEDULED MEETINGS = Announced in Advance

- **Jan/Feb – Set Expectations**
 - Identify Meeting Dates
 - Agree on Priorities
 - Advisory Discernment Form (due Jan. 30)
- **Late Spring – Staff Evaluations / Plans for Renewal**
- **Late Summer – Budget & Salary Considerations**
- **Fall – Pastor and Appointed Clergy assessments**

Sample Meeting Schedule

- **CALLED MEETINGS = Unexpected yet necessary**
 - **Staff departures**
 - **Budget concerns**
 - **Emerging issues**



Committee Dynamics

Fire fighting



Gardening

Gardening with the S/PPRC

***prepare the soil**

***plant seeds**

***tends to what is growing**

***carefully remove the weeds**

***enjoy the blooms and blossoms**





SPRC Training January 27, 2026

Center for Leadership Excellence
North Carolina Conference UMC

Loved and Cared For:

A Handy Guide for P/SPRCs Who Want to Support Their Pastor Well



Research on clergy well-being conducted by the Duke Clergy Health Initiative in 2023 identified five profiles of clergy mental health, using combinations of positive mental health and mental distress. Ever on the hunt for actions that may improve clergy well-being, we discovered that feeling “very loved and cared for” by their congregants is strongly associated with better clergy mental health, as you can see in the figures. Even in the face of a sometimes distressing world, lay leaders can make a difference for a key person in the lives of so many – their pastor.

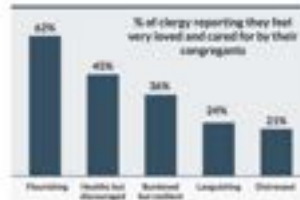
This guide is intended to help P/SPRCs engage in practices which support their pastor feeling loved and cared for. The ideas in this guide can be explored in more detail

Duke | CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE



Learn more about the research of the Duke Clergy Health Initiative and access more of the resources addressed inside this report.

as a committee through the resource *Keeping the Faith: Conversations to Strengthen the Bond Between Pastors and Church Leaders*, and individually through the resource, *Fully Alive: A Resource to Guide Clergy to the Four Behaviors of Flourishing*. You can find a QR code to download these complete resources below.



Clergy Mental Health Profiles



Book of Discipline ¶258.2g

The duties of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

01. To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor(s) and staff and their family(s).

17. To encourage, monitor, and support clergy and lay staff pursuit of health and wholeness.

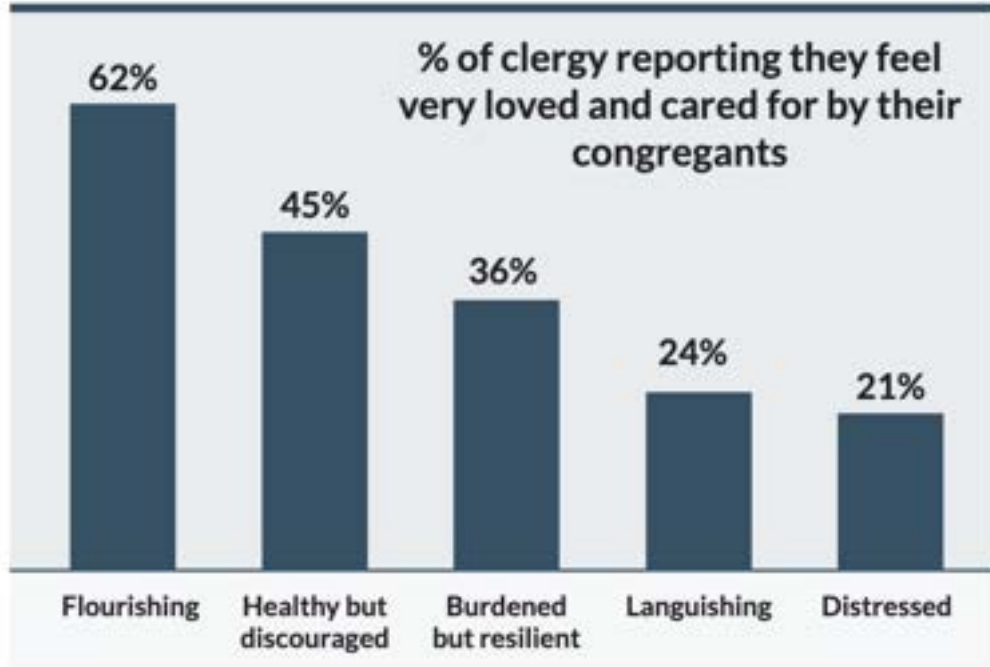
What word jumps out at you from these two duties?



Why do pastors need encouraged?

01. **Role complexity**
02. **Great expectations and criticism**
03. **Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue**

% of clergy reporting they feel very loved and cared for by their congregants



Clergy Mental Health Profiles

1. How do you feel loved and cared for?
2. How do you express (or how has your church tended to express) love and care for your pastor?

Ask:

1. What are you reading lately? What vacation plans do you have? How is your family?
2. What's been going well lately? Where are you finding joy in ministry?
2. What's been particularly challenging lately?
3. Are there concrete ways that we (the congregation) can support you?
4. How can I pray for you?



Do:

1. Create a safe space to talk. Be sure you're in a space where your pastor can trust that what they share with you will remain safe and confidential. This is as much about the place where you are as it is the tone that you set and the trust you build over time.
2. Listen actively without interruption or distraction. Turn off your phone and be fully present. Make eye contact. Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. Nodding and smiling can be helpful. Crossed arms can indicate a defensive posture, so be aware of your own body language.
3. Ask open-ended questions. Restate what you hear them saying as a means of clarification. A non-judgmental, empathetic listener does not pass judgment, even if they don't agree with what's being shared. It's easy to unintentionally sneak in unsolicited advice or judgment with closed-ended questions such as "Have you thought about...?"
4. Validate their emotions and experiences. Remember, your pastor is allowed to feel what they are feeling. It is not your job to talk them out of feeling what they are feeling. Simple and brief statements create safety.
"That's a lot to deal with." "I'm sorry that this is happening." "It sounds like that really hurt you." "That would make me angry, too."
5. If it is appropriate, brainstorm an action step or show support in a tangible way. If a person is experiencing grief, there may not be a specific action. Allowing them to share their experience is important. An action step could be something they commit to doing or something you commit to doing on their behalf. Being present is important, but leading the congregation to show your care and support in tangible ways is also important.
6. Encourage and pray for your pastor! When criticism flies and results are slow to appear, it can be easy to be discouraged. Share stories of the concrete ways you see your pastor's work making an impact in your church and community.

Don't:

1. Violate your pastor's trust. If your pastor shares about a difficult situation they are facing, allow them to share that experience without judgment or fear that you will spread this information through the congregation.
2. Try to fix every problem. Some days your pastor simply needs to be heard. At other times, you may brainstorm together a way to navigate a next step to resolve an issue. Resist reaching out to other congregants on behalf of your pastor without their consent.
3. Use statements such as *"I told you so," "It's really not that big of a deal," "It can't be that bad," "You're blowing it out of proportion"* or other critical or minimizing comments. Your job is to show support and empathy.
4. Give unsolicited advice.
5. Make assumptions about your pastor. Remember that there are no two-dimensional people. Everyone is a complex combination of experiences that have formed them into the person they are. Always assume best intentions. Seek clarity when there is something you do not understand.

- Encourage and support your pastor to have time away

from work, including a regular day for Sabbath rest. Have an honest conversation as a committee or board. If it constitutes an emergency that might be disrupting the pastor's time away. Communicate clearly to the congregation on the pastor's absence.

- Feed them! (But make sure it's healthy). On a particularly stressful week when there has been more activity than usual (think: Advent, Lent, Holy Week, Charge Conference season, following a mid-week funeral, or during a season where pastoral care demands have been high), ease their burden by offering to prepare a meal for your pastor and their family.

- Encourage your pastor to have multiple and diverse sources of social support in addition to the church. Encourage your pastor to engage with a therapist, spiritual director, or other professional if the pastor has time to engage.

- Maintain the church office and parsonage. Fix things when they're broken. Don't ask or expect your pastor to live or work in spaces where you would not also want to live or work.

- Practice grace! (We're Methodists, after all). If your pastor makes a mistake or endures a hard season of life, find ways to extend forgiveness and communicate acceptance of the beloved child of God who has been called to be your pastor.

Loved and Cared For: A Handy Guide for P/SPRCs Who Want to Support Their Pastor Well



Research on clergy well-being conducted by the Duke Clergy Health Initiative in 2021 identified five significant areas of mental health, including substance use, depression, anxiety, and self-harm. Even on the most basic of wellness, clergy members are at a higher risk for mental health issues than the general population. This is due to a variety of factors, including the unique stressors of the ministry, the isolation of the profession, and the high expectations placed on clergy members. The good news is that there are many ways to support your pastor well, and this guide is designed to help you do just that.

This guide is intended to help P/SPRCs engage in practices that support their pastor's mental and physical health. The ideas in this guide can be adapted to your local church.

An introduction through this resource is available to strengthen the Bond of Church Leaders and support clergy through the Clergy Health Assessment for Clergy (CHAS) tool. You can find a CHAS tool on the CHAS website.



Duke CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE



Learn more about the research behind Duke Clergy Health Initiative and how you can support your pastor's mental and physical health.

Clergy IM

Bear One Another's Burden A Handy Guide for P/SPRCs to Support Clergy in Times of Stress



"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The job description of the Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee (PSPRC) in the United Methodist Church is to "encourage, monitor, and support clergy and lay staff in the pursuit of health and wholeness." It is a mission of your congregation's PSPRC, you have been called to the work of caring for the pastoral appointment in your congregation. The first step in this work is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the well-being of those called to serve as your pastor.

Who knows that when clergy are healthy and flourishing in their vocation, they become the foundation of thriving

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Duke CLERGY HEALTH INITIATIVE

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KEEPING THE FAITH: CONVERSATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS



*May God bless you with wisdom, compassion, and discernment
as you take up the holy task of caring for your pastor.*

*May your work be guided by grace, rooted in love,
and shaped by a deep sense of justice and mercy.*

*May you be attentive to the burdens your pastor carries,
and generous in offering the support they need to flourish.*

*And may your commitment be a source of strength,
not only for your pastor, but for the whole body of Christ.*

Amen.