

Considerations for meeting schedules in preparation for Charge Conference

Budget: Get leaders to submit budget requests. 6-8 weeks depending on how the budget is created.

Finance needs to meet:

- Is there guidance on requests (% increases, hold steady, decreases)?
- Once requests are submitted, what will be the budget?
- NOTE: technically, charge conference only has to approve the salary of the appointed clergy.
- Probably over half the churches approve the whole budget.

Nominations Report:

- Typically, this will take the most time to complete.
- As pastor new to the parish, you may consider asking leaders/committee personnel to extend their “term” for one year.
- Most churches run a three-year “term” for committee members. You only have to vote on the new people. Unless told otherwise, you can assume that the others listed in the committee structure will continue.
- While “terms” are for 3 years, if someone is taking on a new role/committee I usually ask them to try it out for at least a year and if they don’t like it they can serve in a different way. If they do like it, then they can fill out their full term.
- Entire process: Depending on the number of people incorporated into the structure it will take several meetings to get the slate of officers filled.
- Check with key lay leaders on how this typically is done. I usually did weekly meetings over 4-6 weeks and tried to keep meetings to 60-70 minutes.
- Everyone identified to fill a committee should be contacted to make sure they are willing to serve: an honest “no” is better than a fudged “yes”.
- Try not to use the same people all the time. Depending on the size of the church, this might be your only choice.
- *You will need to allow plenty of time for the process to be completed. Smaller churches may take less time because there are fewer spots to fill and fewer people to fill them.*

Trustees Report

Can be given to the business manager or trustee’s chairperson. Find out who has done it in the past.

Many of the figures can be used from one year to the next. Do look over previous reports to make sure that no changes are needed for this year.

SPRC

- Will need at least 2 meetings prior to Charge Conference:
- Set salary for 2024. Usually in first-year appointments, their salary remains stagnant.
 - Remember to consider the other clergy compensation pieces such as pension and health & life insurance.
- Start the State of the Church report – You won’t have much input at this time since you are new to the church. If you can find last year’s report, it may be a starting point. (1-2 pages)
 - Can be helpful to have people give input and then someone (you) put it together.
 - Don’t try to draft the document in a committee meeting.
 - You don’t have to say it all. Summarize and highlight the important things.
 - Can be positive and negative (strengths and concerns/weaknesses)
 - You want this to reflect the actual life of the congregation.
 - Think 2-3 pages.
 - If you are new, the reference to the “pastor” should be the pastoral office and not just on your initial few weeks. The response can reflect both you and the person you followed.
- Draft Anti-Racism report

Typical Schedule

Lay Leadership works on nominations report – (4-8 weeks prior to Charge Conference Date)

S/PPRC Meeting #1:

- Start the conversation about the “State of the Church Report”
 - Encourage people to share their reflections about the questions in the report’s prompts
 - Develop a draft document with the input from committee members
- Start the conversation about Salary (this probably won’t take as long)
- Start “Anti-Racism Report” Conversation
- Any other S/PPRC discussion points

S/PPRC Meeting #2

- Review draft of “State of the Church Report” – Have community approve/affirm the report
- Finalize compensation package – salary, allowances, etc.
- Finalize “Anti-Racism Report”

Finance Committee

- Finance Chair can fill out the Finance Report or you can with information provided by the Finance Chairperson, Treasurer or Financial Secretary.
- Finance Chair and S/PPRC Chair should have some conversation to determine how much money is available if there will be a consideration of an increase in compensation.
- Finance Committee should begin to build a budget
 - In churches with static membership, attendance and/or giving, the budget remains pretty stable and so budgets typically will be roughly the same year to year.
 - If that is the case, then you may get through the process with only one Finance Meeting – to approve the budget including the compensation for pastor
 - If the budget is more dynamic, you may need at least 2 Finance Meetings –
 - First: to begin the budget process and get input from work areas (the Finance Committee can gauge the general increase in budget that seems practical)
 - Second: Finalize budget – especially pastoral compensation package
 - Note: It is the S/PPRC that recommends compensation, not the Finance Committee
- Church Council/Administrative Board: Early in my ministry I was told the church council meeting prior to the charge conference was crucial. That way, if there are issues, they can be ironed out in that meeting rather than at the charge conference.
 - AFTER Finance Committee approves Budget/Compensation package,
 - AFTER Nominations Committee finishes staffing the committee structure with willing laity,
 - BEFORE the Charge Conference (at least 2 weeks prior to Charge Conference) -
 - APPROVE: Compensation/Budget and Nominations Report, and
 - SHARE State of the Church report with Church Council – you don’t have to read it word for word, but certainly share key ideas.

Don’t forget the Pastor’s Report. This may not be overly long given your short tenure at the new church. However, it is not unimportant. As you fill this out, consider in your answer what you want the cabinet to know about your ministry. Again, it is ok to include not only your strengths, but also your growing edges.