

## How to do effective Feedback: Principles, Process and Documentation for SPRCs

Counseling with clergy when needed is one of the duties of the SPRC pursuant to ¶258.2(g)(3) of The 2016 Book of Discipline, which directs the SPRC “to confer with and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on the matters pertaining to the effectiveness of ministry; relationships with the congregation; the pastor’s health and self-care; conditions that may impede the effectiveness of ministry; and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry.” Subparagraph (4) includes counseling around gifts, skills, time and priorities for effectiveness.

### **Guiding principles**

We value direct conversation when there is a problem (see Matt. 18:15-20)

Principle: When there is a problem with the pastor’s performance, the SPRC Chair and one other member (such as lay leader) will meet with the pastor. The SPRC Chair will have specific information about the conduct or aspect of performance at issue or situation: who, what, where, when. The goal is renewed relationship and effective ministry, so this is not a punitive process.

How we speak and what we say matters. (Eph. 4:29)

Principle: We speak to the pastor in a spirit of “bearing with one another in love,” and for the purpose of building up, not tearing down, to give grace. We use “I” messages. We do not use anonymous information.

Preparation is key to the effectiveness of the conversation

Principle: The SPRC will prepare by understanding the feedback process, outlining the conversation ahead of time, researching resources that can be offered to the pastor, reviewing previous SPRC conversations about this matter, and by praying.

As Wesleyans, we “watch over one another in love.”

Principle: Accountability and support go hand in hand and our intention is to offer the gift of both. One without the other fails the pastor and the congregation. Together, they offer the opportunity for redemption of relationships, revitalized ministry, and victory for the sake of the kingdom.

“Support without accountability promotes moral weakness; accountability without support is a form of cruelty” (¶102, p. 55, The 2016 Book of Discipline).

Also be mindful that you are likely to discover that the performance or behavior or circumstance is actually attributable at least in part to the behavior of the congregation or circumstances external to both the pastor and congregation. For example, declining worship attendance may be in part due to where the congregation is in the life cycle, or due to changes in the surrounding community. *These contextual factors should be considered in the evaluation and in the course of action and envisioned outcomes of the process.*

**Step by step process for SPRC Chair, after consultation with District Superintendent:**

1. Arrange meeting with Pastor and one other trusted, gifted member of SPRC.
2. Open in prayer. Seek God's guidance, wisdom, and will. Offer all to the glory of God.
3. Describe the process you have followed to reach this point, the guiding principles you have followed (above), and the defined performance expectation standards.
4. Describe the specific conduct or ministry issue using observations and concrete examples.
5. Describe specifically how this issue affects the operation, cohesiveness, or mission of the church. Indicate recognition of other contextual factors.
6. Ask the pastor to share his or her perception of the behavior or circumstance. Ask the pastor to share what he or she thinks is causing this. LISTEN with an open mind.
7. Work together on solutions, accessing of resources, and implementation plan to address the behavior or circumstance. This can take the form of next steps or SMART goals. The written plan should include: specific action steps, who is involved, when the actions steps will happen, what support is available, and what the intended outcome will look like. Close in prayer.
8. Calendar a follow-up meeting with reporting from the pastor. Prepare a memorandum that documents what happened in each step above (see sample below).
9. Consider together how this information will be shared with the SPR Committee, and what, if any, could be shared in a positive way with the church council.
9. Close in prayer.
10. Provide a copy of the memorandum and written action plan to the DS within 3 days of the meeting.

SAMPLE: Memorandum of Counseling

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

RE: \_\_\_\_\_

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date) we met to discuss concerns about your performance and/or a particular issue(s) around your ministry.

The area of performance or particular ministry issue of concern is:

\_\_\_\_\_

It is a concern because it affects the congregation or the church's ministry in this way:

\_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's comment in response to the concern was:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

After discussion, we agreed that your performance or ministry can be improved by (attach separate page if needed based on sample below)

\_\_\_\_\_

The SPRC will support/resource/accompany you by

\_\_\_\_\_

A follow-up meeting to review progress in resolving this matter will be scheduled \_\_\_\_\_ (Date).

Counseling is intended to be a form of holy conferencing and a constructive process to assist you to identify, discuss and remedy aspects of your performance or particular ministry issue that needs improvement. We join you in prayer, with the hope that at evaluation time, we will be able to thank God for the ministry together.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Pastor / Date

Signature of SPRC Chair / Date

Original to: Pastor

Copy to: District Superintendent, and Church SPRC file

## Sample Improvement Plan

Below is a SAMPLE of how to identify and clearly articulate performance expectations in an area that needs attention. It is important to define the standard, the rationale for that area of ministry and why it is important, the actual behaviors that are happening in the ministry setting that do not meet the standard, to ask questions about what is happening, and collaboratively define a course of action.

SAMPLE area to be addressed:

**Interpersonal Skills**: these are the skills upon which we rely to communicate and interact effectively with others. Examples of interpersonal skills are: verbal and non-verbal communication, listening and understanding others' ideas as well as their emotions, negotiation and problem-solving.

*Expectation in this area*: Pastor uses a variety of interpersonal skills to work well with individuals and teams to build relationships, trust, cohesion, and to accomplish the mission of the church.

*Rationale*: Interpersonal skills are important because the mission of the church cannot be accomplished by one person. As a leader in the church, the interpersonal skills of communication (verbal, nonverbal and listening), team-building, appropriate influence, capacity to clarify, manage conflict, and assist a team to make good decisions based on reflection and discernment are critical for the pastor. All of this happens within the culture of the church, people, and setting.

*Observed behaviors that affect the ministry of the people and the church*: The leaders of the church are not functioning as a team and therefore decisions are made in a vacuum and not for the mission. The members of the church do not feel connected to the pastor. Pastor does not lead or equip the laity for effective decision-making processes. Examples of the above include...

*Exploratory Questions to use* : Through interpersonal skills of pastor, do congregants, leaders and teams feel listened to by the pastor? Does the pastor create an atmosphere where people can be heard? Does the pastor appropriately express emotion? Can the pastor accurately interpret the non-verbal communication of others? Does the pastor appropriately use pastoral authority to guide laity in making decisions?

*Collaboratively-Designed Course of action*:

-Read The Emotional Intelligence of Jesus with lay leader and one other layperson. Develop 2 or 3 goals to increase Emotional Intelligence skills.

-Attend a Center for EQ training with members of SPRC and leadership team. Develop 2 or 3 goals based on your learning.

-Study the worldview, hurts, joys, and dreams of the congregation and context. This should include cultural norms, social values, and even the recreational priorities of the community (p. 66, From the Steeple to the Street), to assist in building relationships with the congregation and community.

*Envisioned outcome*: Together we believe that by reading a book about interpersonal skills with another, by attending a training on emotional intelligence with others, and by studying the church and community in a deeper way, the pastor will improve in his own communication, and also in understanding the words and emotions and actions of the congregation. This in turn will build trusting relationships, and effectiveness in making disciples. The SPRC commits to reading, and attending training in order to support the pastor.