

Covenant for Expectations of Ministry

Pacific Northwest Annual Conference

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Introduction for a Covenant for Ministry

We are in a time when expectations for our pastoral leaders are changing. The role has moved beyond worship leadership, teaching, and visitation. It is a challenge for congregations and pastors to “strike a balance.” It is especially a challenge in less than full-time appointments. It can also be viewed as an opportunity for flexibility, vital ministry, and more growth in the lay ministry and leadership of a church.

The needs of a community of faith do not change if an appointment is less than full-time. Where a full-time pastoral leader might be able to be directly involved in all the areas of ministry and priorities of the faith community (though this isn’t healthy or likely), a less-than-full-time situation means that there will be a shift in who takes responsibility for various tasks and responsibilities for mission and ministry.

Whether an appointment is full-time or part-time, there needs to be an honest conversation about the expectations of the faith community and the pastoral leader regarding the faith community’s life and ministry.

The main areas of focus for leadership in a faith community include:

- Community engagement (volunteering, meeting community leaders, creating ministry partnerships, serving on the board of local non-profits, etc.).
- Worship, preaching, leading funerals, teaching (Sunday School, Bible Study, seasonal studies, etc.) and the time to prepare for these.
- Visitation and pastoral care (hospital, special needs, new people, etc.)
- Faith community ongoing or seasonal activities (volunteering with local church ministry, men’s and/or women’s groups, fundraising activities, being the church representative at community events, etc.).
- Administration, committees, the ordering of the church, staff supervision, etc.
- Visioning, strategic planning, etc.
- Training and development of lay leadership, teachers, care teams, etc.
- Other

Full-time pastoral leaders may have several priorities. Less than full-time pastoral leaders need to narrow this to a few priorities. In all cases, lay leadership will need to step into and be empowered to lead in the areas that are not among the priorities and to assist in all these areas.

This packet is intended to get the conversation about expectations started and encourage some agreement on how the laity and pastoral leader will partner in ministry. Your District Superintendent will assist in helping have this conversation with the congregation when needed.

SPRC WORKSHEET

As you work towards creating this covenant of expectations, these questions might be helpful in your discernment and as you prepare for the conversation about the Covenant.

- What task is the faith communities' absolute top priority for pastoral leadership?
Check 1-2

- Community engagement (volunteering, meeting community leaders, etc.)
- Worship, preaching, leading funerals, teaching
- Visitation and pastoral care
- Faith community ongoing or seasonal activities
- Administration, committees, etc.
- Visioning, strategic planning, etc.
- Training and development of lay leadership
- Other: Describe:

- In what events, activities, or tasks would it be exceptionally hard to function without the pastoral leader taking the lead? Name them:

- Why is that?
- Can this be overcome with training, permission, resourcing, planning with the pastor, etc.?
- Is this both insurmountable and so important that it should be named as a priority for the pastor?

- What are two other areas where the pastoral leader's leadership is very important, and it would be detrimental to the ministry if they are not a vital part of these things?

- Community engagement (volunteering, meeting community leaders, etc.)
- Worship, preaching, leading funerals, teaching
- Visitation and pastoral care
- Faith community ongoing or seasonal activities
- Administration, committees, etc.
- Visioning, strategic planning, etc.
- Training and development of lay leadership
- Other: Describe:

- Other (from above):
- What did not make your list of priorities that are of significant concern? What might empower your laity to address these concerns?
- What are the staff/laity already very good at doing that do *not* need the pastoral leader's direct involvement?

PASTORAL LEADER'S WORKSHEET

As you work towards creating this covenant of expectations, these questions might be helpful in your discernment. This is for the pastoral leader's personal use only, and it is intended to help you prepare for the conversation about the Covenant.

- What are 2-3 areas of ministry in a faith community where you excel, have exceptional gifts, feel a particular sense of call, or in which you have specialized training?
 - Community engagement (volunteering, meeting community leaders, etc.)
 - Worship, preaching, leading funerals, teaching
 - Visitation and pastoral care
 - Faith community ongoing or seasonal activities
 - Administration, committees, etc.
 - Visioning, strategic planning, etc.
 - Training and development of lay leadership
 - Other: Describe:
- What single area of ministry in a faith community is so central to your personal theology that you cannot imagine entrusting it to someone else in the faith community?
- What 2 areas of ministry in a faith community are life-draining for you, areas where you have less experience/training/interest, or areas where you pray that someone else is called to serve?
 - Community engagement (volunteering, meeting community leaders, etc.)
 - Worship, preaching, leading funerals, teaching
 - Visitation and pastoral care
 - Faith community ongoing or seasonal activities
 - Administration, committees, etc.
 - Visioning, strategic planning, etc.
 - Training and development of lay leadership
 - Other: Describe:
- Do you have any particular boundaries, unavailability, etc., that should be taken into account in this process? (E.G. "Family comes first." "I will always be gone for this week. Church events will all have to go on without me during this week every year." "I do not do home visits. It's not my culture, it's out of my comfort zone, and it's non-negotiable for me.") This is the time to be clear for yourself and consider sharing this info with your DS.
- What else must be taken into consideration in this covenant?

Covenant between _____ [pastoral leader's name]
and _____ [faith community's name] United Methodist Church

[Pastoral leader] will be appointed as _____ [fraction] time pastor of [faith community's name] UMC, effective _____ [start date]. In anticipation of fruitful ministry together, we enter this covenant:

- (Pastoral Leader) understands these are the priorities of this faith community for their pastoral leader and covenants to faithfully engage in them:
- (Faith Community) UMC understands these are the priorities of this faith community for the laity and covenants to engage in them faithfully:
- All parties understand that the pastoral leader will not be expected to do:
- All parties understand that they will work together to address whatever other needs might arise in their ministry.

Pastor Signature: _____ Date: _____

SPRC Signature: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent Signature: _____ Date: _____

The pastoral leader and faith community are encouraged to revisit this conversation annually and adjust as needed to account for any shifting needs and priorities.

Breakdown of Expectations of Tasks for various less than FTE and FT Appointments

Wespath Clergy Well-being Survey 2023 reports a 10-year trend of steady decline in clergy overall wellness. Physical, emotional, and social wellness all continue to decline. Work-related stress has increased in feeling challenged by the organization and local congregation, and in feeling isolated and lonely. One contributing factor is the amount of time clergy feel they are expected to work.

We offer the following in keeping with the theme for Annual Conferences in 2024 – Being Well. As Bishop Cedrick wrote: “In the fourth chapter (verses 4-17) of his Gospel, John shares the story of a Samaritan woman’s encounter with Jesus at the well... From this story, we draw the theme for our 2024-25 conference year, 'BEing Well.'” This builds on the 2023-24 theme of “Go and Do Likewise.” With it, we are not abandoning our call to do no harm and to do good. Instead, Being Well is our call to be as Christ would have us be in this time and space. Being well emotionally, physically, spiritually, and ecologically is a daily pursuit. When we intentionally include space to look inside and around to identify and amplify structures, policies, and behaviors that support being well and well-being, we are actively doing good and wisely dismantling harm.”

To help local congregations and pastoral leaders to “Be Well” while traveling the M.I.L.E., the Cabinet of the Greater Northwest Area shares this information concerning expectations for our pastoral leaders. We understand hours of work per week in ¼ FTE increments: 10 hours for ¼, 20 hours for ½, 30 hours for ¾, and 40 hours FT. **We encourage everyone to remember that during any given week, unforeseen events will happen that will require pastoral attention. We want to emphasize that discussions around “normal” work weeks should consider a 35-hour limit for FT (adjusting for other FTEs as well) to leave space for these unexpected needs.** The following is a guideline for how the Cabinet sees these hours breaking down in a normal week:

	¼ FTE*	½ FTE*	¾ FTE	FT
Worship & Sermon Preparation	7 hours	8 hours	8-10 hours	12 hours
Meetings	1 hours	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours
Classes/Bible Studies & Prep	1.5 hours	1 hours	2 hours	3 hours
Lay Leadership Development	0 hours	1-2 hour	2 hours	3 hours
Visitation	0.5 hours	1-2 hours	2 hours	3 hours
Strategic Planning, etc.	0 hours	2 hours	3 hours	5 hours
Hands on mission work	0 hours	0 hours	1 hours	2 hours
Denominational work	0 hours	0 hours	1 hours	1 hours
Community engagement	0 hours	1 hours	2 hours	2 hours
Office Hours	0 hours	2 hours	3-4 hours	5 hours
Total Hours	10 hours	20 hours	30 hours	40 hours

It is understood that in the life of a local church, things do not happen in neat or orderly time slots. The breakdown above is a guideline for the pastor and the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee to use in their work together.

(*) ¼ FTE and ½ FTE appointments do not come with the expectation of preaching and worship leadership every week; therefore, on weeks when this is not happening, the worship and sermon prep time could be used for lay leadership development, strategic planning, denominational work, etc.