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Atlanta Decatur Oxford District

## Staff-Parish Conversations to Encourage and Strengthen Returning Pastors

Pastor's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

SPRC Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step One: Preparing for the Conversation

**Prayer.** Commit to praying for each other daily in the coming year as you work together to seek and do God's will for your congregation.

**Participants.** The most obvious participants are the pastor and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee members. If there are others who should be involved, the pastor and the committee should decide this together and invite others to participate.

**Preparation.** All the conversation participants should be given this outline in advance. Set the time and place for the conversation in advance so people have adequate time to prepare. Allow adequate time for the conversation so that participants do not feel rushed and are comfortable sharing openly.

**Format.** The pastor and the committee should decide on a format that works best for them. Participants will want to prepare to respond to the questions, perhaps making notes for themselves. If the group decides that they wish to have input ahead of time for distribution, this should be a group decision with clear instructions about what is expected of everyone. This guide is prepared so that it can be worked through in one session in most cases.

### Step Two: Learning More about Each Other

#### The Pastor's Gifts and Passions

Begin with the pastor sharing with the committee how the pastor assesses personal strengths and, especially, those aspects of the church's mission and pastoral leadership for which God has instilled a passion. As the committee listens, make notes of key words and themes. Take time to ask questions if that would be useful.

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## **The Congregation's Strengths and Passions**

Next have committee members share their answers to the following questions:

- What are the passions of our church?
- What do we do really well (key strengths)?
- When the community thinks of our church, what words do they use?

All make notes, listening for key words and themes.

## **The Needs and Opportunities of the Congregation and its Community**

Now have committee members talk about these questions:

- What are the most pressing challenges and opportunities we face in the coming year?
- What factors will most shape the strength and vitality of our congregation ten years from now?
- If our church closed today, who would miss it other than the members?

All make notes, listening for key words and themes.

## **Step Three: Capturing and Using the Feedback**

What are some strengths of our pastor we have affirmed in our conversation?

What are some strengths of our congregation that emerged in our conversation?

What are some challenges our congregation and pastor face that we named?

In light of all this, what goals seem most appropriate for the coming year for the pastor and congregation? Discuss those ideas and then write from one to three that emerge as the most important.

1.

2.

3.

**Our Church's Mission if it Exist:**

(If there is not a mission, please work with the Church Council on this over the next year)

**Our Church's Vision (the future picture of where God is taking us)**

(If there is not a vision please work with the Church Council on this over the next year)

**Our Church's core values (if applicable)**

**Our church's established goals for the coming year are, if they exist:**

(If there are no set goals, please work with the Church Council on this over the next year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, SPRC

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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