***Good Beginnings***

**Dialogue Guide for Starting Well in a New Appointment**

**(SPRC Version)**

**Pastor:**        **Church/Charge:**

 **Introduction**

The questions below are intended to shape dialogue between pastors and church leaders in the first few months of a new appointment. Since each pastor may make assumptions about what should take priority in their practice of ministry and each congregation differs in their expectations of what pastors should do, clarity and communication about what each sees as essential can help avoid misunderstandings and prevent conflict. These conversations can also help the pastor and congregation develop shared ministry goals. Please respond to the questions below and share them with your pastor. Contrast your responses with those offered by the pastor who will complete a similar set of questions. Discuss similarities and differences between the two sets of responses as a way of beginning dialogue about shared ministry expectations.

**Part One: Priorities and Motivations**

1. What are the three most important things a pastor should do? Please offer a brief statement about why you have chosen to place each one among the priorities.
1.

2.

3.

1. Of all the things pastors are called upon to do, what should a pastor spend most of their time doing?
2. Are there things among the responsibilities often placed upon the pastor that members of this congregation have been equipped to do well?
3. Do you expect the pastor to invest more energy in reaching new people or tending to existing members and constituents? What expectations are there about how the pastor will be involved with the community beyond the church?
4. What’s the most important thing a church should invest its resources in to witness to Jesus Christ and make a difference in people’s lives?
5. What is the greatest challenge facing this congregation?
6. Do you have a mission statement or has your church identified core values that guide and direct how you live as a community of faith and what you prioritize as a congregation? If so, what are they?

**Part Two: Availability, Visitation, Communication**

1. Do you expect that the pastor will be available each week for drop in office hours at the church? What day and time would be best for this?
2. Have your pastors taken a regular day off? Does your congregation expect the pastor to respond to calls, e-mails or texts on their day off?
3. Do members and constituents of the congregation expect the pastor to be available when on vacation? Under what circumstances?
4. How should the pastor communicate vacation plans to your leadership? How much advance notice should they give? Will you arrange for pulpit supply and pastoral care coverage for emergencies in the pastor’s absence or expect the pastor to attend to this?
5. How often do you expect the pastor to visit shut ins and those in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities? What plans are in place to help the pastor identify those who are counted among the “shut ins”?
6. Do people expect to get a visit from the pastor when they have a long-term illness, are facing surgery or are hospitalized? How will people let the pastor know about these situations?
7. Do members and constituents expect in home visits from the pastor? How often? How should the pastor arrange such visits? How will people in the congregation indicate they would like a pastoral call?
8. What is this congregation’s primary way of communicating? Do most people in the church have a preferred way of receiving communication?

**Part Three: Worship Ways**

1. What style of worship most appeals to most people in this church?
2. Would people support trying a different style of worship if it reached new people?
3. How far ahead should the pastor plan sermons so that they can coordinate with other worship leaders?
4. When do the church secretary or worship media leaders expect material for the weekly worship order?
5. How and how often does your congregation expect to receive communion in worship?
6. Is the pastor in charge of music selection and other details of worship or are they expected to partner with others in worship planning?
7. Are there Seasonal practices (in terms of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter) or holiday observances (Memorial Day. Fourth of July, Thanksgiving) that are part of the worship experience in this church? Which ones absolutely should continue? Is the congregation open to trying new things that the pastor might suggest?

**Part Four: What’s Next?**

1. What do you think should be the pastor’s first priority at this point in this new appointment?
2. By this time next year, what is one thing you would most like to be able to say has been accomplished?
3. What are three ministry goals you have for the year ahead?

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_