

When Folks Are Complaining

When a church member voices a concern to you about the pastor or paid staff:

1. Encourage him/her to speak to the pastor (or staffer) directly.
 - If they have already done so but are dissatisfied, you may encourage them to further direct conversation or reflection upon other positive responses and forgiveness.
 - If the person can't or won't speak to the pastor AND the issue seems important, then...
2. Have the person write down their concern, date and sign it.
 - If they decline, tell them that you cannot carry verbal concerns to the committee.
3. Convey the written concern to the chair of the S/PPRC.
 - The chair or secretary should write an acknowledgment: 'We received your concern and will discuss it at our next meeting.'
4. The chair should inform the pastor &/or staff person of the written concern.
5. At the next regular or called S/PPRC meeting, the whole committee decides if:
 - The concern has merit and deserves further attention, or
 - The concern has no merit and deserves no action. If not, then write a note thanking the person for their input and informing him/her that the Committee will remain aware.
6. The Committee discusses legitimate concerns with the pastor/staff person for a full understanding of situation. Together, decide on a course of action and follow up.
7. The whole committee decides if a joint statement is needed to the church or the individual who initiated the concern. All members are obliged to share only the approved, joint statement without additions or deletions.
8. The S/PPRC may receive individual's letters only, not petitions from groups. When trying to gain a sense of the entire congregation, S/PPRC should not conduct polls, but should make known (via newsletter, bulletin) who the S/PPRC members are so the general membership can approach them. Each S/PPRC member should keep a discreet list of who approaches them and give it to the Chair. The Chair can then determine if a few individuals are unduly influencing S/PPRC opinions.
9. S/PPRC is responsible for addressing situations with the pastor and any paid staff. The Lay Leadership/Nominating Committee is responsible for addressing situations with elected members of the congregation.