

Revised 12/30/16

Clergy Appraisal

The goal of a good clergy appraisal process
is to enable better ministry

Can Non-Clergy Really Do a Meaningful Clergy Appraisal?

Let's face it; the thought of lay people "appraising" the work of an ordained person is daunting. Who are they (we) to judge? Do they (we) have the knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate a highly trained, ordained, "called by God" clergy person?

In a word, "yes". But, and this is a big "but", the task can only be done properly if the lay people are willing to devote time and effort. This document will explain how to do that.

Non-clergy Example

Start at the beginning. We'll use a non-clergy example. Suppose you, yourself hired someone, Joe, to work at your home to get it in shape and keep it in shape. Now, "get it in shape and keep it in shape" might mean structural repair, it might mean clean the bathrooms, vacuum the floors, do the windows, it might mean wash the laundry, it could mean cut the grass, weed the garden and trim the shrubs. Assume you tell Joe what you have in mind and leave for a few hours of shopping.

You drop back by the house around 2:00 and find the following:

One of the two bathrooms has been cleaned perfectly; the fixtures sparkle, the toilet is disinfected and the water is blue, the mirror has not a single smudge, the floor is mopped. None of the windows has been cleaned. Carpets have been vacuumed in an acceptable fashion. The oil and filter on your second car have been changed. Your neighbor's sidewalk has been swept.

You decide to have a conversation with Joe about his performance so far. You want to encourage Joe to keep up the good work as far as the bathrooms are concerned, and, in fact, to complete cleaning the second bathroom. The vacuuming is ok so there's not much to be said there. Unfortunately, none of the windows has been washed so you can't tell if Joe is going to do a good job or not, but you do want to remind him that windows are part of the job in case you weren't clear originally.

The oil and filter change was a surprise. True, you own the car and you are glad Joe noticed it was time to change the oil and filter, but you had other plans to accomplish that. You wonder if you weren't clear with Joe that he was to get the house (not the car) in shape. You clarify your intent with Joe - house and yard only.

The neighbor's sidewalk was also a surprise. When you question Joe about it Joe tells you he noticed the neighbor was elderly and assumed you'd want to help. You tell Joe that was a nice thought, but for now he is to work on your property only.

You leave to meet some friends at the club, returning home at 5:00. When you survey the house you find:

Both bathrooms sparkle.

Carpet is OK, but not great.

Windows in two rooms have been washed and look OK in the fading sunlight. You'll be able to tell better tomorrow. Nothing else seems to have been done for the neighbor and the shrub next to the two rooms with the washed windows have been trimmed.

You meet with Joe again, explaining how pleased you are with the bathrooms, how the shrubs look good, that you'd like to see a little more effort on the carpet next time, and that you can't really tell about the windows but will check them out tomorrow in the sunlight and let him know when he returns next week. Joe mentions he noticed a drip under the kitchen sink that he can fix next week if you like; meanwhile he put a bucket under the trap.

Joe agrees to return next week. He knows what you want and what you don't want. Although he would like to do some more work on your car he understands you are not going to pay him to do that if he does it again without your express permission. Joe feels good about working for you although he wishes you were a bit more charitable towards your elderly neighbor.

You feel good too; your home is getting in shape and you seem to have found a good housekeeper, even if he seems a bit weird about the car and the neighbor.

Congratulations, you performed both an interim appraisal and a final appraisal of Joe's work. You told him what he did well, what he needed to improve, and what he was doing that was unnecessary. You did something else; you did not surprise Joe with a complaint about something he hadn't done that you never told him to do in the first place. As an example, suppose in your mind "get the house in shape" included "make sure the refrigerator has food in it", and you left a grocery list clipped to the refrigerator door. Joe would probably have been pretty surprised if you chewed him out for not shopping for groceries, even if you thought shopping was obviously part of getting the house in shape.

There are several points in this example.

- We don't pay people to do things we don't want them to do.
- We encourage people to do the things we want them to do.
- When people head off in the wrong direction we tell them before it's too late.
- For the appraisal to work the job had to be broken into several components.
- Feedback from Joe was valuable because you hadn't known about the drip. You will check it out and likely call a plumber before next week.

Theory as it Applies to Clergy

Let's remember what we learned from Joe.

- Break the job into several pieces and evaluate them individually
- Agree on what is to be done
- Give feedback on how well it's done
- Agree on what's not to be done
- Sound the alarm before it's too late if something isn't going well.

Actually, Joe had a simple job compared to a pastor so we're going to have to learn a few more things along the way, but we'll start here.

Break the job into several pieces

Pastors do lots of things but for the sake of argument let's start off with five.

These are

- Proclamation (preaching)
- Pastoral Care giving
- Equipping the saints (teaching)
- Outreach/mission
- Managing (the office, other staff, volunteers - we'll call it stewardship of church time, talent, assets)
- Let's add a sixth; self-care. We're going to pay the pastor to do this so we should evaluate it too.

The first task is to explain what each of these things mean and just who is going to be asked to provide feedback for each of them. Feedback should only be provided by people who know what they're talking about. Don't ask a member who never comes to church about how the pastor conducts a worship service.

How would the member know?

To describe what each of these topics means we can simply lift wording from the pastor's job description. What? The pastor doesn't have a job description? The committee never got around to drafting one? Well, there's a second method to get the information.

Go back to the pastor's "call agreement" and to the church's Profile used in the search process. Almost all of the things the church said it wanted of its pastor would probably fit into one of the six categories. List all of the requirements and see if they fit. If they don't you may need to create a seventh category. Don't create too many categories though.

If the pastor has been in position more than a couple of years you will need to see if the requirements in each of the categories are still appropriate; needs do change. Supposed when the pastor was called the church wanted a traditional service of worship but in the ensuing ten years the worship service has moved to a Jazz service. Obviously, the original wording wouldn't work for a current appraisal.

It is also important to be clear if you are evaluating the pastor's own performance or if you are including the performance of others as well, for instance, people reporting to the pastor.

Agree on what is to be done

Next, you need to be specific about what kinds of things will be considered in the evaluation. Following are examples of things that might be considered when evaluating "Proclamation":

- Message and music are related to scripture lesson
- Children's message is related to the adult message and scripture
- Sermon is presented in terms useful for daily living
- Special services of worship are meaningful
- Easter, Advent, Christmas, Blue Christmas, funerals, weddings
- Delivery is clear and enthusiastic

Give feedback on how well it's done

The performance needs to be evaluated to determine a performance level. We suggest numerical evaluation on a scale of 1 -5 as follows below. Numerical evaluation allows averaging feedback from multiple sources.

5. Significantly exceeds acceptable performance.
4. Exceeds acceptable performance.
3. Meets acceptable performance.
2. Falls short of acceptable performance.
1. Falls significantly short of acceptable performance.

In addition, there needs to be clarity about who will provide evaluation for this category. In the case of "Proclamation", feedback could be obtained from all who

attend worship throughout the year. Or perhaps from a random sample of those who attend worship.

Other categories might have feedback only from small groups, for instance, from people actually visited, from church employees, from the pastor him/herself, etc.

It is important up front to deal with the issue of anonymous complaints. Will they be considered under any circumstance and if so, what? As a general rule anonymous complaints have little value. Further, feedback from each individual must be assumed to come from that individual alone; no one is to be allowed to speak for "everyone, lots of people, etc."

Agree on what's not to be done

This is first accomplished by not including something in the job description or performance appraisal form. For Instance, if someone suggests the pastor establish a "clown ministry" and neither the pastor nor the governing board wishes to have such a ministry it would not be included in a performance appraisal.

Sound the alarm before it's too late if something isn't going well

This is where the interim appraisal is so important. It gives the congregation and pastor a chance to talk about things in a structured way before people's noses get bent out of shape.

Is that all?

Ok, we've talked about the need for establishing criteria, or objectives, if you will, and for developing ways in which to measure performance in fulfilling those objectives. Is that all?

Not quite. Let's go back to your house and Joe. Now that you've asked Joe to return next week you start to remember a few things. He's a self-starter, he's an excellent performer on some things, average on others, and does not seem to prioritize his work the way you would. In fact, now that you think of it, he should have spent a bit less time on those bathrooms and more time on the windows.

As it happens, next week the draperies are going to the cleaners, so you want Joe to concentrate on washing all the remaining bedroom windows, and then do the bathrooms, and finally a light vacuuming of the carpet. You'll tell him that when he shows up next week.

Congratulations again; you have just prioritized, or weighted Joe's job objectives. Some are more important than others. If you don't tell Joe he'll have to guess.

No fair chewing him out if he guesses wrong; you should be the one to set the priorities and they should be set in advance of the start of the job.

Weighting the objectives

Going back to clergy appraisal, so far all of the objectives seem to be of equal importance. That's not realistic. In most churches conducting worship is more important than managing the office. In between those two, where does pastoral care fit in? Equipping the saints? If push comes to shove what has to take a back seat?

The congregation and pastor need to agree on the priorities, or weights in advance of the appraisal period. If something comes up during the appraisal period that would change priorities then both congregation and pastor need to agree to the change. For example, the relative weight of worship and pastoral care for churches in lower Manhattan may have changed after the events of 9/11/01.

The best way to weigh the objectives is to express each of them in terms of percentages of the whole. Not necessarily in terms of time devoted to the job, rather in terms of importance.

And remember, the whole cannot exceed 100%, regardless of the hours worked per week. So, whether we're thinking of a part time, 20 hour a week pastor, or of a full time pastor who puts in a ridiculous 80 hours per week, the whole has to be 100%, just like they taught us in school.

It all makes sense so far but how does it come together?

Here's how. First, list the objectives, then next to each objective show its weight. Next show the performance level of each objective. Multiply the performance level by the weight to obtain a whole number for each objective. Total all the whole numbers and divide the sum by 100. That is the overall performance level. Round to the nearest whole number. That is the pastor's performance level for the appraisal period.

Huh?

A picture is worth a thousand words. Let's take a look. Assume this is the end of the appraisal period, **the objectives as well as the weights were agreed to a year ago.** There has been an interim appraisal six months into the year. Feedback has been sought from the appropriate parties and the results of all the feedback tabulated by objective. Following is a picture of the completed appraisal form.

Appraisal form

Objective	Weight	X	Performance Level	= Results
1. Proclamation	25%		3	75
2. Pastoral Care	50%		1	50
3. Equipping	10%		4	40
4. Outreach	5%		5	25
5. Managing	5%		5	25
6. Self care	5%		5	<u>25</u>
Total			100%	240

240/100 = 2.4, rounded to 2

Performance level is 2, or falls short of acceptable performance, despite having above average performance in four out of six categories! The congregation and pastor had agreed a year ago that "pastoral care" was as important as all other objectives combined, based on the relative weights of each objective.

What if the weights had been different but the performance in each category exactly the same? Let's take a look.

Objective	Weight	X	Performance Level	= Results
1. Proclamation	35%		3	105
2. Pastoral Care	10%		1	10
3. Equipping	40%		4	160
4. Outreach	5%		5	25
5. Managing	5%		5	25
6. Self care	5%		5	<u>25</u>
Total			100%	350

350/100 = 3.5, rounded to 4

Performance level is 4, exceeds acceptable performance, despite the fact that performance in each objective is exactly the same as it was in the preceding example. The relative weighting of the objectives has changed.

In the first example pastoral care was by far the most important objective. In the second example proclamation and equipping were more important. This illustrates how important is getting right the relative weights. It is critical the congregation buy into the relative weighting of the pastor's objectives

Besides salary, how can the performance appraisal be used?

Several ways. First, after the performance appraisal has been completed next year's objectives and weights must be established. This is an excellent time for pastor and congregation to discuss current needs and potential changes.

Second, it is a time to figure out how to overcome problems. Let's take pastoral care from the example. The pastor being appraised did a terrible job of pastoral care. But why? Didn't understand the weight of the objective so chose to devote little time and effort to pastoral care, thinking it was of little importance? Or perhaps the pastor is completely unsuited for pastoral care, despite being a fine public speaker. How about the pastor has the natural gifts for the task but lacks proper training?

The point is to dig in deeper because the solution will depend on the nature of the problem. In the first case the pastor may just need to assign a higher priority to pastoral care and a lower priority to something else. In the second case the congregation may have to provide pastoral care through an alternative means, say by hiring a minister of visitation or by establishing a volunteer care team, along the lines of Stephen Ministers. In the third example the problem might be overcome by having the pastor attend a training session. If pastoral care is really important to the congregation the weight of the objective could be increased to drive home to the pastor the importance of the task.

Third, the United Church of Christ has an expectation that pastors continue to develop throughout their careers. The appraisal process can be a useful tool for identifying areas of strength and areas, which might be strengthened.

Remember, the goal of the appraisal process is to enable better ministry, thereby advancing the reign of God on earth!

Pastor as Called Leader

Now you understand the theory of a good appraisal. Be clear about what needs doing, give feedback from appropriate sources, weigh the objectives, etc. Let's consider a crucial fact. Our pastor is not simply an employee of the congregation. Rather the pastor has been "called" to the congregation by the

people of the congregation, and by God, to be pastor, teacher and leader. At times the pastor may be prodding the congregation to move in new directions, at times in uncomfortable directions.

Here's an example. The pastor has been at her new church for six months. During the past few years things have not gone well there and financial giving has fallen off. Programs have been cut and mission support greatly reduced. The pastor feels called to focus on spiritual renewal through worship, small group ministry, open meetings, and modeling appropriate behavior. She believes that once the congregation is spiritually renewed and feels good about itself again financial support will not be a problem.

The pastor can handle worship, open meetings and modeling appropriate behavior without changing the appraisal form. However, there is no place on the form as it exists for devoting considerable energy to establishing small group ministry. And small group ministry will not happen without her direct involvement. The church council is skeptical that small group ministry is wanted or needed.

What needs to happen is this. The pastor explains her position and asks the council to discuss it and consider it prayerfully. The council does so, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The council recalls that the pastor is the professional, has considerable training, and has been called to lead. The council decides to support the pastor by becoming involved in the establishment of the small group ministry and to amend the appraisal form to include establishing small group ministry as an objective, and decreasing the weights of some existing objectives. (Remember, the weights have to total 100%; if something new is added, something old has to be reduced.)

The point here is this. Unlike your relationship with Joe where you called the shots, the congregation's relationship with the pastor is cooperative. You work together to determine direction, priorities, weights, etc., and you recognize the pastor has the professional qualifications to make certain decisions. That being said, it is your obligation to evaluate performance.

Again, the purpose of clergy appraisal is to enable better ministry; to advance the reign of God.