

## **SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR DOING ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEWS**

Both ministers and congregations benefit when annual reviews are done well. There are many ways to perform an annual review and no one instrument can serve our varied congregations. Yet there are some tips that can help you in creating or customizing your own review process.

1. **Mutuality** – Reviews are most successful when there is mutuality between the minister and the congregation. A minister does not work in a vacuum and the congregation must be willing to examine their own role in supporting the “ministry” of the church and not only look to the professional minister as the beginning and end of all ministerial service.
2. **Evaluation Team** - A review should not be done by a large body like the Board. Assign a smaller sub-group to orchestrate the task. It could be a subgroup of the Board or a group that has a representative from the Board, the Committee on Ministry and another appropriate body like worship committee or personnel committee. This smaller group would collect information, compile it, and report on a proposed evaluation for the full Board’s approval.
3. **No Anonymous Surveys** – Broadly circulated anonymous surveys are not helpful. The person who has been in the pew for 3 weeks is given the same weight as someone who has been there 30 years. It is better to get information from a broad range of folks who interact with the minister, but not EVERYONE. Poll leaders of committees, or have a few invitation only focus groups with key church leaders and representative of different groups. Get feedback from folks who actually know and work with the minister directly.
4. **Avoid “Check-A-Box” forms** – Don’t pass out a questionnaire that is a simple “check a number 1-10 how you think the minister is doing on X.” What does a 3 mean? A 7? What is one person’s 5 is another one’s 9. It just doesn’t give you valuable information to share with the minister: “Well, on average the congregation finds your preaching to be a 7.” Does that mean she should slow down when she speaks or that he should use more personal stories. Any survey should have comment areas so people can describe exactly what they think.
5. **Don’t Ask Too Much in One Question** – If you create a tool that has a topic of “Worship” and then ask the person to speak to the minister’s preaching, liturgy, use of story and quotes, children’s message, prayer, song leading, ritual, voice quality, etc. They will pick one thing to speak to and reply. If you want to know about each thing you should ask it separately.
6. **Keep it Simple!** – Don’t make it so complex that it never gets accomplished, Don’t make the report so dense as to be unreadable. If necessary, focus only on specific parts of the ministry.
7. **Self-Evaluation** – A minister should also be asked to evaluate him or herself and the congregation on their ministry. Feedback should not only go one way.
8. **Goals and Expectations** – Evaluations should be based on previous set goals and expectations. If you never told the minister you wanted him to be active in social justice in the wider community, and never discussed it with him, then it isn’t fair to tell him in his evaluation that he is not doing a good job at that. Annual

- evaluations are also good to establish goals for the coming year and articulate overall expectations.
9. **Not a Process for Conflict Resolution** – Evaluations should be done as part of an annual process. It is not something to pull out in a time of conflict or as a means for firing a minister. If there is a conflict then a conflict resolution process should be engaged. Consult with your district executive.
  10. **Don't Combine with Compensation** – The evaluation process is hard enough for everyone involved, but when it becomes entwined with compensation recommendations, it raises the stakes considerably. It is unlikely that people can participate in honest and open ways when the stakes are so high.

Take all of these recommendations with a grain of salt. Every congregation, minister and situation is different. If something works well for you, you need not throw the whole process away. Create a process that accomplishes what you all want and need and that is fair and just for all.

Resources: Some books we have found helpful on ministerial evaluations are:

**When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st-Century Church** by Jill M. Hudson

**Evaluating Ministry: Principles and Processes for Clergy and Congregations** by Jill Hudson

**When Moses Meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations** by Gil Rendle & Susan Beaumont