Explanation of How an Exit Interview Works

An exit interview is a formal way to close out the call of a rostered minister with a congregation’s council leadership. The intent is to look for general learning that can inform the transition and future ministry of both the rostered minister and the congregation. Because of this, we ask that someone takes notes, and creates a summary report of the learning so that future councils, or call committees or pastors can have it as a resource. A draft of the summary is offered for review by all the participants in the exit interview before the final version is available to those who were not part of the exit interview. This means that the exit interview is NOT intended to be a confidential space to process specific situations in ministry, as a personnel committee interview might be. (If that kind of space is needed, a separate meeting should be set up besides the formal Exit Interview with the council.)

Generally, the participants at an Exit Interview are the outgoing pastor, any senior/associate pastor/s, and the church council. There are two versions of the same 11 questions. Prior to the Exit Interview, everyone is asked to fill out their answers and send them to the synod staff person who will facilitate the interview at least 24 hours before the scheduled interview. These answers are for each person's own preparation and reference during the Exit Interview. The responses of these individual forms are not shared with the group beforehand, or during the Exit Interview. It will be up to each person to decide what they actually share verbally at the interview. Sending the completed interview forms to the facilitator ahead of time simply helps the facilitator to prepare for the conversation, and it helps the participants prepare their thoughts.

At the Exit Interview, we will review the RESPECT communication guidelines and ask the group to practice them during the interview. We walk through each question, one at a time, first giving the Rostered Minister who is leaving the chance to share, and then asking the group if they have any clarity questions for the Rostered Minister about what they shared. Then the council as a whole has an opportunity to respond to the same question. Clearly there is not enough time to hear from every council person, so we will hear from several and then ask if there are any additional thoughts to share from those who did not yet speak.

It is helpful to set aside at least 1.5 hours for the Exit Interview. Some groups find they need a bit more time. If it looks like we will not get done in the 1.5 hours, we will either see if people want to add 15 more minutes or if we simply hear from the Rostered Minister who is leaving for the remaining questions, since the council can always discuss the remaining questions at another time if they choose to.

Please feel free to contact Pastor Kristin or Pastor Jennifer with any questions about any of this information or additional questions you have about how an Exit Interview works.

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