**Rationale for and Means of Conducting the Mutual Ministry Review Process**

The rationale for a Mutual Ministry Review process is grounded in two realities:

* The first is the phenomenon which typically involved a warden or another member of a vestry requesting “a mutual ministry review.” This was almost always a warning sign that there was significant alienation between the Rector/Vicar and a vocal and empowered portion of the congregation. Conflict had already arisen and it had not been addressed proactively. The request for a “mutual ministry review” was a sign that the relationship between the priest and congregation was on life support. ***This is an effort to normalize a Mutual Ministry Review process.***
* The second reality was the absence of clear expectations – going in each direction. A lack of clarity about expectations almost always leads to disappointment, conflict, and broken relationships. ***This is an effort to get expectations – from both directions – out on the table.***

So, a proactive Mutual Ministry Review process has been designed. It is built around four pillars: teaching what a healthy relationship between a cleric and vestry should look like, a survey regarding goals and expectations, a report of the results of that survey, and the encouragement to make specific plans and goals for the expectations and hopes reflected in the survey.

Over a period of time, the Mutual Ministry Review process will become the norm within the Diocese of Central Gulf Coast. It will begin with a Mutual Ministry Review for the Bishop, two years after his tenure began. The norm for full-time Rectors and Vicars will be a facilitated MMR at the two-year anniversary in their tenure in a specific congregation. A consultant, appointed by the Bishop, will lead the process.

The guiding principle was to be found in the “pinch” or “expectation” model. A basic understanding is that conflict in congregations arises when expectations – from the vestry to the priest, or the priest to the vestry – are either unclear or unstated. When expectations are not fully known, the possibility of conflict within the congregation increases significantly. “That which we do not know CAN hurt us.”

An outline of the process:

* The process begins with the consultant making a visit to meet with the vestry and priest. The purpose in this initial meeting is to describe the process, the reasoning behind it, and to respond to any questions. This is an important but typically brief meeting. Its purpose is to get people on board. The consultant typically schedules the next, more substantive meeting for six-to-eight weeks later.
* The next day, an on-line survey is made available to the vestry and priest (this ***is not*** a congregational process. The vestry has the authority to evaluate and make decisions). The survey is extensive and is grounded in the baptismal vows, canonical responsibilities of the vestry, the diocesan vision, the priest’s ordination vows, and any canonical responsibilities of the priest. Opportunities are also offered for personal reflection by the individual responding to the questionnaire and for the respondent to “get anything off his or her chest.” The vestry and cleric will generally be given two-to-three weeks to take the survey on-line.
* The survey will be done through an on-line resource called *Surveymonkey*. At the conclusion of the survey period the full results will be downloaded. The consultant will spend the next two weeks reviewing and digesting the results. Eventually, the consultant will write an executive summary, highlighting the main points he or she sees in the report. The consultant makes copies of *everything –* the full survey results (including *all* comments, though names are not included) and the executive summary. Those copies will be distributed at the report meeting.
* At the report meeting, the consultant hands out the executive summary at the beginning of the meeting. The consultant reviews the executive summary in detail, highlighting the key points in the survey. The consultant responds to questions, as needed, then turns their attention toward *SWOT Analysis*, which invites them to look at the major points of the survey by engaging *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities* and *threats*. They are encouraged to take time – in conversation with one another – to discern what those items are. They are then encouraged to reduce those to two new documents, which become parts of a formal Letter of Agreement: a *Rector Position Description* and a *Vestry Leadership Description*.

Each of these new documents is to have four-to-six *clear, concise, quantifiable and attainable tasks or goals* for the next one-to-three years. *These goals are reached in dialogue between the cleric and the vestry; it is not something that one party does to the other.* Those two documents become the subject material for the next MMR, three years later. Samples of those elements are shared with the vestry and priest, and they are included in this material.

At the end of the meeting, the consultant distributes the full results of the survey. The names of individuals are not connected with any of the comments. In fact, no names are included in the report. The consultant emphasizes that the full results are confidential personnel information and is not to be shared outside of the vestry. However, the vestry is encouraged to publish a summary of the process in the parish newsletter.

A note: It is always good to have ongoing, mutually-evaluative conversations between a cleric and the lay leadership. Many folks do not know how to do this or are, at best, uncomfortable with such discussions. An outline of a recommended process for them to use between formal MMRs is available from the Consultant.

***A process for part-time or vacant pastoral positions is being developed***