



ONE-TO-ONE STRATEGY FOR A NEW PASTOR OR STAFF IN A CONGREGATION

What is a “relational one-on-one”?

The relational meeting is a short (30-45 minute), memorable, one-to-one, in person conversation meant to uncover, explore, and share the animating stories, core values and motivating interests of each conversation partner. The goal of a 1-1 is to figure out the “who” of the person you are talking to is by inviting them to share with you what motivates them, carries meaning for them and connects them to the community they live.

On an average day we spend a lot of time in “what” conversations: we exchange pleasantries, rehearse our resumes, report our track records, seek or provide advice, etc. That is all well and good, but the relational meeting is not any of those things. (Nor is it a commercial for our new project, an interview, or a pastoral counseling session.)

Whom should I meet with?

- Internal Church relationships
 - members you’ve had contact with – call committee, staff parish relations team, etc.
 - staff you’ll be working with
 - council members and committee chairs
 - community groups (men’s, women’s, etc.)
 - confirmands’ parents, etc.
- External relationships
 - Key persons outside the congregation (school, medical, community center, etc.) that have a relationship with your church or align with your church’s mission

Setting up the Meeting

- Email or call the person and ask for a meeting of about 45 minutes.
- If this is someone you don’t know, ask someone else to connect you via email.
- Ask how they would like to meet (e.g., online or in person for a socially distanced walk). Have multiple options and meet the person at their comfort level.
- Focus on who they are as a person, not their role.
 - “I’m looking for folks who are really committed to community/this congregation/etc., and I’ve heard that you are one of those people.”
 - “My colleague/leadership team member/etc. (so-and-so) told me you’d be a great person to talk to because of (blank).”

Format of meeting

- At the beginning of the meeting, restate your credential and context (especially for people outside of the local church); be clear that you will honor the time set aside.
 - Remember the 5 questions in people's minds: 1) *Who are you?* 2) *Who sent you?* 3) *Why me?* 4) *What will this cost me?* and 5) *What's next?*
- Then move into the main part of the meeting: the conversation itself. Ask good questions and then follow up with more good questions that invites folks to consider the “why” of the answers they just gave, and gives you an opportunity to share meaningfully about your own commitments. At first, navigating the balance of deep listening, probing questioning, follow-up and story sharing will feel clunky. But don't worry. The more relational meetings you do, the more natural they will become. You are looking for the “Why?”-- you are looking for what makes people tick. Where does their passion, knowledge and experience all converge?
- Sample questions:
 - Tell me the story of how you became a _____ (occupation/volunteer position/etc). Biography is the best place to start, but push hard on the particulars; don't let it be superficial. What does that mean for your life now? What is the main thing you are up to in your organization, life or congregation?
 - Who are your heroes?
 - You seem angry/passionate/convicted about _____. Where did that come from? What are you going to do about that anger/passion/conviction?
 - If money were no object what would you do? What would you love to spend your life doing even if no one paid you for it?
 - What is next for you?
 - What you drew you to this particular church/neighborhood/city? What do you love most about being a part of this church/neighborhood/city?
 - What is something you love to do and wish you had more time for?
 - What is one thing about this community that you would like to be a part of changing/growing/enhancing/etc.?
- This is an opportunity for reflective listening and repeating back what you hear from the other person.
- Don't forget: during the conversation you should find natural places to speak about your story, interests, values. The one-on-one is not an interview. The question is what can we do together?

End of the Meeting and Follow-up

- At the end of your meeting, thank the person and ask if they have suggestions of 2-3 other people that you should meet with.
- Do not take notes during the one-on-one but write some notes down afterwards.
- Follow up with a thank you email and ask them to connect you to the 2-3 other people you discussed.
- One –on-ones are something that can be used beyond just the beginning phase of your ministry in a place! Some churches use them as regular check-ins for leaders, to help connect new people into the life and ministry of the church, or to grow the church's community network.