

Appointment Making
For the Sake of
God's Mission in the World



Go Ye Into all the World...

Prepared for the local church by
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I. Why Appointment Making?

God's mission to love and save our world resulted in the most profound "missional appointment" in history. God sent Jesus Christ, not to take care of an institution, but to proclaim — in His life, death and resurrection — Good News for all people of the world. This, in itself, is the primary point of appointments!

Jesus Christ in His risen power and with the promise that He would always be with us, made the missional appointment of sending His followers. Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19-20 provide the Church with our mission:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (from *The 2004 Book of Discipline*, paragraph 121)

This is still the primary mission of United Methodist laity and clergy which our appointment system is meant to serve in a creative and dynamic way.

John Wesley's movement to make disciples of Jesus Christ in England and America in the eighteenth century recovered this highly effective itinerant, missional, *sending* strategy for the sake of the Gospel. He went out and sent out (appointed) others to all kinds of places where there were people who needed to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. As John Wesley moved around, he claimed, as we still do, “The world is our parish.”

So the missional appointment system focuses primarily on sending our pastors to team up with congregations for the purpose of reaching out to the people in the “world” of that community with the Good News of Jesus Christ inviting them into discipleship.

This can be a joyful and fulfilling adventure of faith for the clergy who have chosen to be a part of the United Methodist itinerant, sending system, having vowed to “offer themselves without reserve to be appointed.” And the congregation, as the continuing witnesses for Christ in the community, benefits from the variety of gifts that different pastors offer over time, and thereby strengthening the congregation for their mission of making disciples in that part of God's world.

II. What are the Principles of Appointment Making?

Along with the purpose of mission, the following major principles undergird the appointment-making process:

1. PRAYER

This is God's process, not ours! Therefore, the whole process is filled with prayer through which we seek God's will together. Whatever part you play in this process, you are asked to be

in prayer concerning the appointment — to actively participate in the spiritual discernment process.

2. CONSULTATION

Through prayer, all of us stay in touch with God in this process. Through consultation, the Cabinet (which consists of all the District Superintendents in the Annual Conference) stays in touch with the congregation via the staff/pastor parish relations committee and the pastor. While our primary focus is on the mission of Christ in the community, there is also significant sensitivity to the unique needs of the church, and those of the pastor and his/her family. All contacts throughout the year, including your reports and profiles, contribute to this sensitivity and knowledge.

There is also a more intensive consultation process involving the District Superintendent, the staff/pastor parish relations committee, and the pastor during the changing of appointments.

3. OPEN ITINERANCY

The focus is always on appointing the best possible pastor for the particular missional needs of the community and church. Therefore, appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, marital status or age (except for mandatory retirement). While salary or seniority levels are taken into consideration, they are not the determining factor in making appointments.

4. THE LENGTH OF APPOINTMENTS

We continue to work toward longer tenures in appointments. However, there is the possibility that any pastor or church may have a change of appointment for missional reasons in any given year.

5. GIFTS AND GRACES

All appointments place major emphasis on the gifts and commitments of pastors and congregations as they participate in the ministry of transformation.

6. THE DISCIPLINE OF THE UMC

All appointments are made according to the provisions of *The 2004 Book of Discipline*. The United Methodist Church places pastors through the appointive — sending system — not a “call” system. District superintendents are an extension of the Bishop’s superintending role and, with the Bishop, compose the Cabinet. The Bishop, after prayer and consultation, makes all appointments for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in our world.

III. What is the Process of Appointment Making?

1. A CHANGE IN APPOINTMENT may be requested by:

a.) the pastor — including a request to move from the current local church appointment, or to retirement, or to move to/from an appointment in ministry beyond the local church, known as extension ministry — and/or,

b.) the staff-pastor parish relations committee and/or,

c.) the bishop and district superintendent

for their mission of making disciples in that part of God's world. *Such a request is part of the consultation process, but does not guarantee a move.*

2. THE MISSIONAL NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY are a part of the Cabinet's discussion to determine appropriate, missionally-strategic appointments.

3. WHEN A NEW APPOINTMENT IS BEING CONSIDERED for a church, the district superintendent for that church presents to the other members of the Cabinet the missional needs of the community and the congregation's profile. The superintendent's experience with the church and prior consultation with the church assists in the presentation to the Cabinet.

4. THE BISHOP AND THE CABINET ENTER INTO A TIME OF PRAYER, seeking God's guidance for the names of pastors who could bring gifts to the missional needs of both the church and community.

5. AFTER PRAYER, THOSE NAMES ARE OFFERED AND LISTED.

Consideration is given to each pastor's profile and gifts for the mission that is needed. Consensus is sought during this process.

6. FOLLOWING THE DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET,

the Bishop makes the final decision. Prayer is then offered for the mission of Christ in that community, for the church, the pastor, and for God's continued presence throughout the remainder of the process.

7. NEXT, THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT CONTACTS THE PASTOR

to be appointed and shares with her/him information about the community, the church, and the missional reasons the Cabinet believes indicate this appointment is God's will.

8. THE PASTOR IS GIVEN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME TO PRAY

and reflect on the appointment. Outside of immediate families, pastors are expected to keep this matter confidential. A pastor requesting reconsideration of the appointment must do so in writing, with the primary focus being the missional reason for reconsideration. Other reasons such as family and personal concerns may also be shared. The Bishop and the Cabinet receive the request for reconsideration, and in prayer and consultation make the final decision as to whether or not the pastor is to be appointed.

9. THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT THEN CONVENES A "TAKE-IN MEETING"

with the staff/pastor parish relations committee for the receiving church to introduce the pastor and provide information about the pastor and the missional reasons the Cabinet believes this appointment is God's will. The staff/pastor parish relations committee has the opportunity for discussion and questions with the pastor. If the committee or pastor wishes to ask the Bishop to reconsider the appointment, with a primary focus on the missional reasons, they must do so before the close of the meeting. This entire process is to be kept in confidence.

10. IF THERE IS A REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION AFTER THE TAKE-IN

MEETING, the request must be received by the District Superintendent in writing within twenty-

four (24) hours. After receipt of this letter, the Bishop and Cabinet, in prayer and consultation, makes the final decision as to whether or not the pastor is to be appointed to that church.

11. IF THE APPOINTMENT MOVES FORWARD,

the District Superintendent contacts/convenes the pastor's current staff/pastor parish relations committee to inform them of the change in appointment. At this time, the process begins for the pastor's current church. The district superintendent reviews the church profile with the staff/pastor parish relations committee as the first step in preparing to appoint a new pastor to that church.

12. WHEN THE APPOINTMENT IS MADE,

the District Superintendent indicates the date on which the public announcement is to be made. Within a few days of the announcement a letter is sent to the congregation by the staff/pastor parish relations committee introducing the new pastor.

13. AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION,

the appointment is read and celebrated in a service of commitment for our shared mission in Jesus Christ. The newly appointed pastor and a representative of the congregation is invited to receive from the Bishop the "missional epistle" describing the reasons this appointment was made for the sake of God's mission in the world!

As your bishop, I request your continual prayers for me and the Cabinet during the appointment process. If you have any questions, you may contact your district superintendent.

Violet L Fisher, Resident Bishop

Best of all, God is with us.

----John Wesley