

THE APPOINTIVE PROCESS

The appointive process in The United Methodist Church continues to be the means by which clergy are placed in the churches and other ministry settings of the annual conference by the bishop. Appointments are to be made with consideration of the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of churches and other ministry settings, with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace in those to be appointed, and with commitment to an open itinerancy. This is the accepted method of our itinerant system in which clergy members of our conference leadership pool, along with clergy from other conferences, "offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve, after consultation, as the appointive authority may determine."

As described in *The 2004 Book of Discipline*, "consultation is the process whereby the bishop and/or district superintendent confer with the pastor and committee on pastor-parish relations, taking into consideration a performance evaluation, needs of the appointment under consideration, and mission of the Church. Consultation is not merely notification. Consultation is not committee selection or call of a pastor. The role of the committee on staff/parish relations is **advisory**. Consultation is both a continuing process and a more intense involvement during the period of change in appointment."

District superintendents meet on a regular basis with clergy and with the S/PPRC to review the goals for mission and ministry. This may occur at a time other than in conjunction with a decision concerning a possible change in the clergy appointment. Superintendents are continually gathering data about the work of the clergy and churches under their supervision.

When a change of appointment is considered, specific steps are taken. Profiles of the church and the clergyperson are to be reviewed and updated as necessary. These are to be provided to the district superintendent who in turn will share the information with the bishop and cabinet.

When a change in appointment has been determined through consultation and prayer, the district superintendent will meet with the pastor and with the S/PPRC to share the rationale for the change and the process to be followed in making the next appointment. While it is not preferable, on rare occasions time and distance may necessitate such conversations be by telephone.

The bishop and cabinet will then consider available personnel in the context of the expressed needs and profile of the church. When a proposed appointee is determined, the person is contacted about the possible appointment and is provided the information from the church's profile. It is assumed that the clergyperson will agree to the appointment unless the clergyperson presents what the bishop and cabinet consider an overriding reason to the contrary. The name of the appointee and the clergy profile will then be provided to the S/PPRC through the district

superintendent. It is assumed that the committee will agree to the appointment unless it presents what the bishop and cabinet consider an overriding reason to the contrary. It is important to note that appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement.

The next step in the process involves the district superintendent scheduling a meeting between the S/PPRC and the appointee. The meeting is for the purpose of introduction and assistance in the transition of leadership. The meeting is not an “employment interview” since in our system a pastor is not employed by a church. Therefore, no vote is to be taken. In rare instances this meeting may result in factors being discovered which call for reconsideration. The district superintendent will communicate this to the bishop and cabinet, and this may or may not result in a different decision.

When the steps in the process have been completed, the sharing of the decision shall be made to all those directly involved in the consultation before any public announcement is made. Ultimately, no appointment is complete until it is “fixed” (made final) by the bishop.

It is important to state that the appointive process is best lived out in an attitude of prayer. The decision-making is best accomplished in alignment with the leading of God’s Spirit and with the commitment to faithfully participate in God’s transforming mission through Jesus Christ.

The assignment process is much the same, although assignments are made by the district superintendent, not by the bishop. For information about the assignment consultation process, please contact your district superintendent.