

# **HANDBOOK FOR LAY LEADERS**

**IN THE KENTUCKY ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**By Judge Lewis D. Nicholls  
Ashland District Lay Leader**



## **Table of Contents**

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| I. Crucial Moments .....             | 3  |
| II. Organization and Structure ..... | 5  |
| III. Apportionments .....            | 13 |
| IV. Role of Lay Leader.....          | 17 |
| V. Church Conflict .....             | 20 |
| References .....                     | 28 |

# HANDBOOK FOR LAY LEADERS IN THE KENTUCKY ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## I. Crucial Moments

We all have crucial moments in our lives. We each make decisions that affect us for the rest of our lives. We must decide whether to stay in high school, whether we go to college, technical school, or enter the work force. Whom will we marry, or will we even get married? Everyone must make the additional decision of whether to accept Christ. Once we make the decision to follow Christ, our lives take a different direction.

In the Bible we read of the decisions that each of the apostles had to make when they chose to follow Christ. The common thread among them was that they wanted to follow Christ. They made a conscious voluntary decision to follow Christ willingly. When called upon, we too have to make a voluntary decision to accept our roles as lay leaders. Nobody can force us to perform these duties against our will.

According to the Gospel of Luke we have a record of three people who also had to make a difficult decision.

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:57-62*

Each of these people had a crucial decision to make. First, they had to decide if the price was too steep to pay to follow Christ. Second, they all had things they wanted to do before they committed to Christ. Third, one of them was willing to serve so long as it was convenient. If we choose to follow Christ, there can be no price too high. We must commit totally to serving Him. We must be willing to serve even when it is inconvenient. Serving Christ will come with a cost. It may be severed relationships, giving up old habits, enduring criticism from former friends, or any number of other situations. We must continue to serve Him no matter what the cost and never look back. People who plow using mules or horses tell us that if you look back where you have plowed, you begin to lose your concentration and soon you begin to plow in crooked rows. We must always concentrate on looking forward and not backward.

As lay leaders we must recognize that crucial moments come along in the lives of other people. When I attended college I was in a pizza shop ordering pizza. I noticed a female college student on crutches picking up four pizzas to go. She struggled with her pizzas as she tried to carry them,

use her crutches to walk, and open the door. I held the door for her. I asked her if she had someone outside waiting to drive her to her destination. She told me no, and that she was picking them up for some of her friends. I said, “Your friends sent you to pick up the pizzas!” in an unbelieving tone. I offered to give her a ride to her dorm and she accepted. She thanked me for the ride and entered the dorm with her pizzas.

The next day an ambulance rushed over to the same dorm with the siren wailing. I later learned that the girl I offered the ride to the day before had committed suicide by jumping out of a window from one of the top floors. I always wondered if there was something I could have said to her that may have helped her change her mind before committing suicide. Of course, I will never know in this lifetime. Maybe if I had shared the Good News of the Gospel, or said a few kind words, things would have turned out differently. Here was a crucial moment in that girl’s life and I missed it.

God cannot depend solely on ordained clergy to save the world. God’s ministers include the laity. Since the job is so large, God must also depend on the laity to carry on His business here on earth. Elton Trueblood once said, “It is just as important for one boy to decide to be a Christian businessman as it is for another boy to decide to become a Christian clergyman.”

The laity must know how to respond to the crucial moments and decisions that come along in people’s lives. When we first choose Christ, we don’t automatically come equipped with the knowledge to know how to handle every situation. The clergy do not automatically become equipped with the knowledge of theology because they choose to follow Him. They attend seminary and learn how to think, speak, and write theologically. In the same way, it becomes critical that the laity become informed how to respond to the situations they encounter. We can only do this through proper training.

Every human being is unique. None of us are exactly the same. We are each a product of our experiences, our upbringing, our genetic makeup, and most importantly—the gifts that God has placed in each of us. We are also spiritually different from each other. We each are made in the image of God, but our awareness of God and how each of us experiences God are also different. The point is that all lay leaders are not in the same place in terms of training, experience in leadership position, and call.

## **REMEMBER**

- 1. Lay Leaders want to fulfill their call to ministry as leaders of the laity in the United Methodist Church.**
- 2. To accomplish this call, lay leaders need training.**
- 3. All lay leaders are not in the same place in terms of training, experience in leadership position, and call.**

The Board of Lay Ministry hopes that this handbook will help prepare laypersons to serve God as effective lay leaders. It was designed to be a starting point to acquaint you with your duties as a lay leader in the United Methodist Church and to assist you in fulfilling them.

In 2008 Cokesbury published a new booklet entitled *Lay leader/Lay member* under the Guidelines Series written by Sandy Zeigler Jackson. It is an excellent resource to assist lay leaders in understanding and fulfilling their duties. The Board of Lay Ministry highly recommends that the lay leader purchased a copy of this booklet as an additional guidance and reference.

## II. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

The organization of each unit in the church is carefully spelled out in *The Book of Discipline*, the book that describes and guides the doctrine and polity of The United Methodist Church. All members are at least acquainted with the local church. It includes those who have professed their belief in Christ, have been baptized, and have taken the vows of membership. The local church is the context for hearing the Word of God and for receiving the Sacraments. It reaches out in the name of Christ to bring persons into its fellowship, to nurture the members in their faith, and to witness to and serve the community, both locally and globally. Groups of local churches work together as a district and are supervised by a clergy superintendent. These districts are part of an annual conference, the basic unit of the denomination. Central Conferences are those regional units outside the United States. Conferences in the United States are grouped into five geographic jurisdictions.

Checks and balances are built into all aspects of church life. The organization of the denomination resembles that of the U.S. government. The General Conference is the top legislative body; the nine-member Judicial Council is the “supreme court,” and the Council of Bishops is similar to the executive branch. Church-wide boards and agencies are primarily accountable to the General Conference and have boards of directors who are lay and clergy persons nominated by their respective jurisdictions.

[Editor’s Note: In the following sections, and throughout this document, paragraphs cited from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2010* will be noted simply with their paragraph citation in bold. For example: ¶ 100 Not all paragraphs cited in this booklet could be reproduced here. The reader is encouraged to research the references in the *Discipline*.]

### Local Churches

¶ 201. *Definition of a Local Church*—The **local church** provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

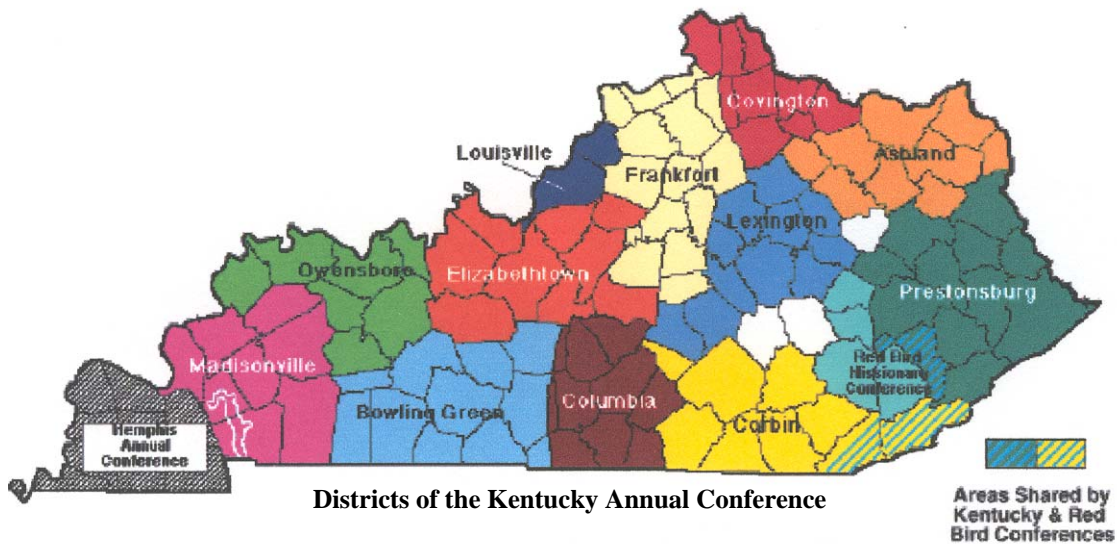
¶ 202. *The Function of the Local Church*—The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to

help people to know Jesus Christ personally and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

¶ 203. *Relation to the Wider Church*—The local church is a connectional society of persons who have been baptized, have assumed the vows of membership in The United Methodist Church. They gather in fellowship to hear the Word of God, receive the sacraments, praise and worship the triune God, and carry forward the work that Christ has committed to his church. Such a society of believers, being within The United Methodist Church and subject to its *Discipline*, is also an inherent part of the church universal, which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and which in the Apostles’ Creed we declare to be the holy catholic church.

## Districts

Districts are geographical and administrative subdivisions of an Annual Conference. The Annual Conference determines the number of districts. The bishop determines the boundaries of the districts after consultation with the district superintendents. A district consists of all the pastoral charges within its boundaries and is under the supervision of a district superintendent.



## Annual Conferences

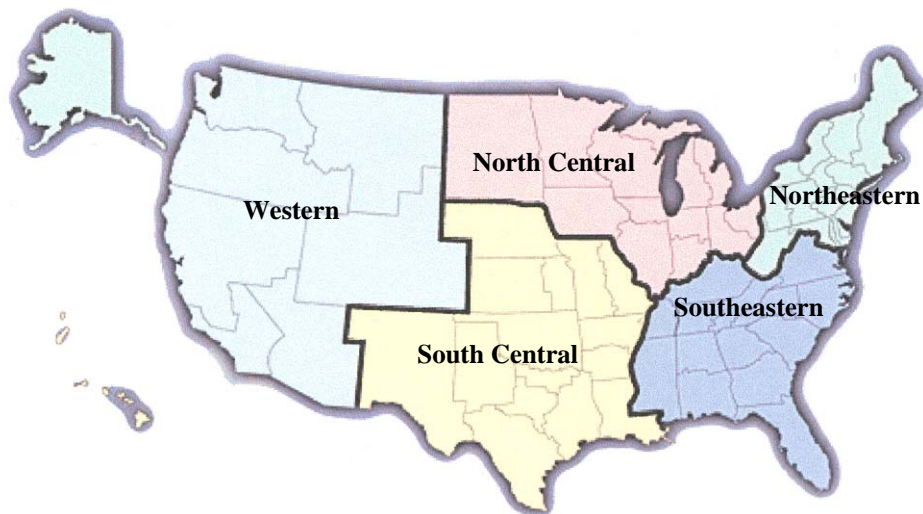
The Annual Conference is the basic organizational body in The United Methodist Church. An Annual Conference includes all United Methodist churches in a geographically defined area. Lay and clergy members of the Annual Conference have the right to vote on all constitutional amendments and delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Members establish the budget for the Annual Conference and vote on all matters related to the organizational life of its agencies and institutions. The Annual Conference members are responsible for the program and

administration of the work of the Annual Conference and its local churches. Only clergy members vote on all matters relating to clergy membership and ordination. The membership of the Annual Conference consists of an equal number of lay and clergy members, and at least one lay person from each pastoral charge is to be a member.

The combined membership of the Kentucky Annual Conference is approximately 177,000. On Sunday morning over 73,000 Methodists gather for worship in more than 875 local congregations. More than 41,000 people attend Sunday School each Sunday.

## **Jurisdictions**

Jurisdictions are large regional divisions of The United Methodist Church within the United States, determined by the UMC Constitution, and composed of the Annual Conferences within their boundaries. The jurisdictions are Western, South Central, North Central, Southeastern, and Northeastern. The Kentucky Conference is in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.



## **General Conference**

The General Conference is the highest legislative body in the denomination. The Constitution states: “The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional.” It meets in the spring once every four years (quadrennially). Bishops preside at the sessions of the General Conference but do not have the privilege of voice or vote in its deliberations. The General Conference is composed of an equal number of lay and clergy delegates elected by their respective Annual Conferences. The clergy and lay delegates debate and vote as one body. The primary responsibility of the General Conference is to enact legislation that:

1. Establishes the conditions for membership,
2. Defines the powers and duties of the clergy,
3. Defines the powers and duties of the Conferences,

4. Establishes the powers and duties of the bishops,
5. Provides for a judicial system within the church,
6. Establishes the budget for the denomination, and
7. Establishes legislation governing the work of the local church and general agencies.

## **Judicial Council**

The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body or “court” of the United Methodist Church, and its nine members are elected quadrennially by the General Conference. The Judicial Council determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences. It acts on these either on appeal of lower rulings or through requests for declaratory decisions. It also rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the denomination conform to *The Book of Discipline*. This is done in accordance with procedures established in *The Book of Discipline*.

## **Bishops and Episcopal Areas**

A bishop is an elder (ordained clergy) who has been elected to the office of bishop by the lay and clergy delegates of a Jurisdictional or Central Conference. A United Methodist bishop is consecrated for the office of bishop by other United Methodist bishops. Bishops serve as general superintendents of the denomination. As such, individually and collectively, bishops give general oversight to the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire denomination. It is a responsibility of the bishops to see that the rules, regulations, and responsibilities developed by the General Conference are understood and effectively carried out. The Greek word for bishop is *episcopos*, which is the root word for “episcopal.”

## **Church Membership**

¶ **214. Eligibility**—The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection (¶ 4). In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.

¶ **215. Definition of Membership**—The membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith.

1. The baptized membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in the local congregation or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to the local United Methodist church subsequent to baptism in some other congregation.
2. The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.



3. For statistical purposes, church membership is equated to the number of people listed on the roll of professing members.
4. All baptized or professing members of any local United Methodist church are members of the worldwide United Methodist connection and members of the church universal.

## **Mission**

¶ 120. *The Mission*—The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Local churches provide the most significant area through which disciple-making occurs.

¶ 122. *The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission*—We make disciples as we:

- proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ;
- lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
- nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing;
- send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and
- continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.

## **Organization and Administration**

¶ 243. *Primary Tasks*—The local church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community—reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond; encouraging people in their relationship with God and inviting them to commitment to God’s love in Jesus Christ; providing opportunities for them to seek strengthening and growth in spiritual formation; and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.

In carrying out its primary task, it shall be organized so that adequate provision is made for these basic responsibilities: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the district and annual conference; (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.

¶ 244. *Organization*—The basic organizational plan for the local church shall include provision for the following units: a charge conference, a church council, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a board of trustees, a committee on finance, a committee on lay leadership, and such other elected leaders, commissions, councils/administrative boards, committees, and task forces as the charge conference may determine. Every local church shall develop a plan for organizing its administrative and programmatic responsibilities. Each local congregation shall provide a comprehensive program of nurture, outreach, and witness, along with leadership training, and the

planning and administration of the congregation's organizational and temporal life, in accordance with the mission of The United Methodist Church (see ¶¶ 120-124).

1. The church council and all other administrative and programmatic structures of the local church shall be amenable to the charge conference (¶ 246). The council shall function as the executive agency of the charge conference.
2. Alternative plans may be developed in accordance with the provisions of ¶ 247.2. Such alternatives include: nurture, outreach, and witness ministries; administrative council; or administrative board/council on ministries.
3. Members of the church council or alternative structure shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the church, are loyal to the ethical standards of The United Methodist Church set forth in the Social Principles, and are competent to administer its affairs. It shall include youth and young adult members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All persons with vote shall be members of the local church, except where central conference legislation provides otherwise. The pastor shall be the administrative officer and, as such, shall be an ex officio member of all conferences, boards, councils/administrative boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless otherwise restricted by the *Discipline*.

¶ 217. *The Meaning of Membership*—When persons unite as professing members with a local United Methodist church, they profess their faith in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, they make known their desire to live their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. They covenant together with God and with the members of the local church to keep the vows that are a part of the order of confirmation and reception into the Church:

1. To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;
2. To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
3. To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;
4. To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;
5. To be loyal to the United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;
6. To faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, and their service;
7. To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

¶ 218. *Growth in Faithful Discipleship*—Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves.

¶ 219. *Mutual Responsibility*—Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risk, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

## The Charge Conference

Members of the charge conference shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the Church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the Church, are loyal to the ethical standards of The United Methodist Church set forth in the Social Principles, and are competent to administer its affairs. It shall include youth members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All shall be members of the local church, except where central conference legislation provides otherwise. The pastor shall be the administrative officer, and as such shall be an ex officio member of all conferences, boards, councils/administrative boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless restricted by the *Discipline*.

¶ 246. *General Provisions*—1. Within the pastoral charge the basic unit in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church is the **charge conference**. The charge conference shall therefore be organized from the church or churches in every pastoral charge as set forth in the Constitution (¶ 43). It shall meet annually for the purposes set forth in ¶ 247. It may meet at other times as indicated in §7 below.

¶ 247 *Powers and Duties*—1. The charge conference shall be the connecting link between the local church and the general Church and shall have general oversight of the church council(s).

2. The charge conference, the district superintendent, and the pastor shall organize and administer the pastoral charge and churches according to the policies and plans herein set forth. When the membership size, program scope, mission resources, or other circumstances so require, the charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the district superintendent, modify the organizational plans; provided that the provisions of ¶ 243 are observed.
3. The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church (¶¶ 120-124), receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church.

## The Church Council

¶ 252. 1. *Purpose*—The **church council** shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The church council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the charge conference (¶ 244).

2. *Mission and Ministry*—Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:

- a) The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.
  - b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race, and the status and role of women.
  - c) The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; lay speaking ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.
  - d) The leadership development and resourcing ministries shall give attention to the ongoing preparation and development of lay and clergy leaders for the ministry of the church (§ 258.1)
  - e) The nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities shall include consideration of (i) the election of a prayer coordinator to promote prayer and mobilize the local church to pray, (ii) establishing a prayer room or designated place for prayer and prayer resources, and (iii) encouraging intentional prayer for the pastoral leadership of the local church.
3. *Meetings*—a) The council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings.
- b) In order for the council to give adequate consideration to the missional purpose of the local church, it is recommended that the first agenda item at each meeting be related to its ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness. The administrative and supportive responsibilities of the church will then be given attention. It is recommended that the council use a consensus/discernment model of decision-making.
4. *Other Responsibilities*—It will also be the responsibility of the church council to:
- a) review the membership of the local church;
  - b) fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the annual charge conference;
  - c) Establish the budget on recommendation of the committee on finance and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;
  - d) Recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations);
  - e) Review the recommendation of the committee on pastor-parish relations regarding provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s), and report the same to the charge conference for approval. Housing provisions shall comply with the annual conference housing policy and parsonage standards. Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration.
5. *Membership*—The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. Members of the church council shall be involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation as

defined in ¶ 252.2. The membership of the council may consist of as few as eleven persons or as many as the charge conference deems appropriate. The council shall include persons who represent the program ministries of the church as outlined in ¶ 243. The membership shall include but not be limited to the following:

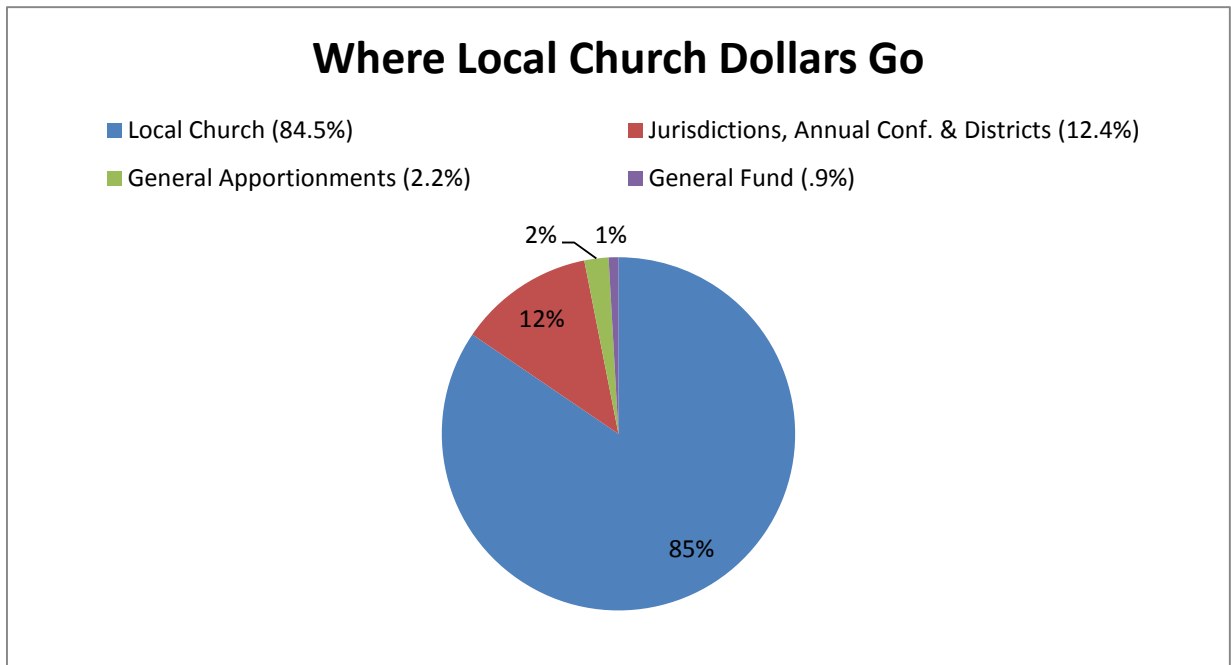
- a) The chairperson of the church council;
- b) The lay leader;
- c) The chairperson and/or a representative of the pastor-parish relations committee;
- d) The chairperson and/or a representative of the board of trustees;
- e) The chairperson and/or a representative of the board of trustees;
- f) The church treasurer;
- g) A lay member to annual conference;
- h) The president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Men;
- i) The president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Women;
- j) A young adult representative
- k) A representative of the United Methodist Youth;
- l) The pastor(s).

6. *Quorum*—The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

### III. Apportionments

Apportionments are funds the local church pays each month to the Kentucky Conference. These monies are sent to the General Conference where they are divided among different agencies engaged in outreach on behalf of The United Methodist Church. For more specific information about apportionments go to the General Conference website at <http://www.umc.org>, or to the Kentucky Conference website at <http://www.kyumc.org>.

United Methodists join John Wesley in affirming the divine call to do good works that show God’s love wherever we can. We are mutually connected—organized—so that our individual efforts blend with the work of others to be more powerful than any one person alone. Our budgets support our “good works” and express our covenant to connectional service and multiply God’s love in tangible ways.



### Apportioned Funds

#### World Service Fund

The World Service Fund provides the basic financial resources for the core ministries of our denomination. In most annual conferences, World Service is listed with conference benevolences—the key missional efforts in the immediate area.

Through the World Service Fund, United Methodists. . .

- Undergird a network of missionaries and others who serve in the name of Christ and The United Methodist Church around the world.
- Strengthen evangelism efforts, stimulate church growth, expand Bible studies and nurture spiritual development.

- Support specific local church work with children, youth, singles, students, persons who are mentally and physically challenged, adults and older persons.
- Enrich our congregational life with worship, retreat and camping resources, leader training and stewardship development.
- Continue nearly 200 years of commitment to quality college and graduate education.
- Provide the means to equip and nurture our ordained, diaconal and lay leaders through education and professional support.
- Support a program of certification to chaplains.
- Support programs of certification in United Methodist Christian education, communication, music and business administration.
- Assure that United Methodists speak and work to help build a more ethical, just and human world.
- Continue a proud tradition of cooperation and dialogue with other faith traditions through interdenominational and ecumenical work.
- Give our denomination a presence in the mass media and make new communication technologies accessible to the church.
- Express our commitment to God's reign through ministries of peace and efforts to build a church and a society that are truly inclusive of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or handicapping condition.

Through the **Africa University Fund**, we . . .

- Continue the development of the first private university in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Offer post-secondary education for students from all of Africa through schools of agriculture, theology, and management and business.

Through the **Black College Fund**, we . . .

- Help 10 historically Black colleges and a medical school to have well-equipped buildings, solid academic programs and strong faculties.
- Nurture and encourage students in each new generation to affirm and celebrate African-American heritage and culture.

Through the **Episcopal Fund**, we . . .

- Provide salaries, benefits and other expenses for bishops, the church's spiritual and administrative leaders.

Through the **General Administration Fund**, we . . .

- Implement a trustworthy system of administrative oversight and fiscal accountability.
- Underwrite the legislative work of General Conference.
- Fund the work of the Judicial Council to adjudicate questions of church law.
- Maintain United Methodism's official documents and historical artifacts and designate heritage landmarks and historic sites.
- Participate in the World Methodist Council.
- Provide leadership and coordination for denominational ministry with youth.

Through the **Interdenominational Cooperation Fund**, we . . .

- Enable United Methodists to have an effective presence in ecumenical arenas such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Consultation on Church Union (COCU).
- Provide the United Methodist share of the basic budgets of those organizations which relate to the ecumenical responsibilities of the Council of Bishops and of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. These are the WCC, NCC and COCU.

Through the **Ministerial Education Fund**, we . . .

- Enable annual conferences to identify, recruit and provide credentials for tomorrow's ordained and diaconal ministers.
- Provide educational support through funding for theological schools and continuing education.

Six other churchwide **Special Sundays** are designated for special offerings which emphasize 13 ministries of our church. These include:

- Human Relations Day
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Native American Awareness Sunday
- Peace with Justice Sunday
- World Communion Sunday
- United Methodist Student Day



## **IV           ROLE OF LAY LEADER**

The lay leader's duties vary from church to church depending upon the make-up of the congregation, the interaction of its people, the leadership abilities of the minister, leadership abilities of the Administrative Council/Church Board, etc. There are certain core facets of the lay leader's duties that remain consistent throughout every church. They include:

- Advocate
- Model responsible and faithful discipleship
- Build awareness within the congregation
- Meet with the pastor
- Serve on various committees
- Continue to study
- Assist the church council
- Inform the laity of educational opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

### **Advocated**

The lay leader advocates on behalf of the congregation to the minister. The lay leader is a conduit of information about the pulse of the congregation to the minister. Conversely, the lay leader can advocate on behalf of the minister to the congregation. Keeping open lines of communion between the minister and the congregation help to defuse and minimize any conflicts that may arise.

### **Model responsible and faithful discipleship**

The lay leader must model responsible and faithful discipleship. Good leaders know that they must lead by example to be effective. There can be no better leader to emulate than Christ. People will follow a leader if they believe that his/her motives are pure and that the only agenda the leader has is to build the church.

### **Build awareness within the congregation**

The lay leader must build awareness within the congregation. The lay leader should strive to make the congregation aware of each person's individual responsibility to lead a Christ-like life. The lay leader can achieve this by pointing out it is not our responsibility to judge others, become hypocritical, or develop a sense of closeness around the church.

The lay leader must promote a policy of understanding rather than judging when people appear to do things contrary to the teachings of Christ. People who hurt people are themselves, "hurt people." People who are hurting need to find Christ in the midst of their lives instead a haughty judgmental attitude from the church. Eight-seven (87%) of people between the ages of 16 to 29 attribute their judgmental attitude from observing people who profess to be Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> This list of responsibilities came from *Lay leader/Lay member* 2009-2010. Copyright 2008 by Cokesbury. Used by permission.

The world already perceives the church as hypocritical, so we must strive to overcome this perception. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of people between the ages of 16 to 29 who do not attend church say that they view the church as hypocritical.<sup>2</sup> They obtained this attitude from only one source—watching Christians interact with the world. The lay leader should make the congregation aware of these statistics and encourage others to a Christian response to a hurting world.

The lay leader must promote openness of the church to a community desperately in need of a helping hand. Openness can include sponsoring Narcotics Anonymous, Scouts, and other programs that include people who are members of the church.

### **Meet with the pastor**

The lay leader must meet with the minister occasionally. Although daily contact is not necessary, you should talk to him/her at least once a week. You should let the minister know the state of the church and if any problems are arising that he/she can resolve. The best way to resolve any potential problems is to talk to the parties involved.

### **Serve on various committees**

The Book of Discipline automatically places the lay speaker on various committees including the charge conference, church council/administrative council, finance committee, nominations lay leadership committee) (leadership development committee, and staff/pastor-parish relations committee. It is important to note that most of the time these committees will already have various committee chairpersons. It will be your role to assist the committee work through their agendas.

### **Continue to study**

Today, most people in the United Methodist Church have little understanding of Wesleyan theology. As the lay leader it is important to understand the common core of Wesleyan beliefs and how it fits into the universal church. We need to be aware of the common core of beliefs to:

- Understand what binds us instead of what separates us as the universal church.
- Today's religious environment spawns "churches" with leaders that don't always understand the core Christian beliefs. Hence, they have the potential to lead people astray and have an incomplete of what Christian's actually believe.
- You will be able to discuss theological issues with the minister gaining a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues that can disrupt the harmony of a church.
- Studying the Discipline helps you to understand the polity of the church helping to keep the church on tract both theologically and procedurally.
- Reading and studying Christian literature helps you to gain a deeper understanding and experience of your own spiritual journey.

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<sup>2</sup> *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . And Why It Matters*, David Kinnaman and Gage Lyons, Page 29, (BakerBooks, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2007)

## **Assist the church council**

Your role as the lay leader places you in a unique role with the church council/administrative board. You can assist the church interpret not only procedural and theological issues in governing the church, but also, “assist the council to look for and take advantage of opportunities to interpret the mission and ministry of the congregation to the community”<sup>3</sup>.

## **Inform the laity of educational opportunities**

The United Methodist Church is a connectional church. This means that we combine our efforts with other Methodist churches in an effort to strengthen our own church. We share common songbooks, educational material, worship services, yet each is free to express their worship of God through unique missions and worship. We combine our efforts through agencies such as UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to reach out to a hurting world. Through our combined efforts we are able to reach out farther, faster, and with more relief than if each of us tried to “go it alone”. Such a church requires careful planning and organization in order to make it a viable place that reaches out to a dying and hurting world. To keep this dynamic church active with the ability to make a difference in the world, it is necessary to continuously educate our congregations and ministers in the theology, polity, and outreach of our church.

As the lay leader you will serve on various boards. From time to time you will be asked to attend workshops sponsored by the district and conference that are necessary to keep our church active and strong. By attending these workshops you will become aware of various educational opportunities. It is critical that you pass this information on to your congregation and leadership so that each local church remains strong and viable places of worship who can reach out to the community.

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<sup>3</sup> From *Lay leader/ lay member: Connecting Your Congregation and Your Annual Conference*, Jackson, Sandy Zeigler,, 2009-2010, page11, (Copyright 2008 by Cokesbury. Used by permission)

## V. CHURCH CONFLICT

If you are a successful lay leader, then at some point in your leadership journey you will encounter conflict. Do not become alarmed! It is a natural and predictable occurrence. You cannot always predict when it will strike, but rest assured it will.

As a successful lay leader you will introduce some changes into your church. You will be able to see the need for changes and how they can help improve the church. People resist change. They may tell you, "...that is not the way we do it here." They may get mad and leave because a pastor stays, or goes, or says something they don't agree with, even though the pastor may be Biblically correct. They may withhold giving, hoping to "sweat out" a pastor. "Sweating out" a pastor is highly successful. It works – particularly in smaller churches. You may do nothing to another person, but they become jealous of you because of your successful leadership. You may not even be the problem. They may get angry at someone in the church over something in the secular world totally unrelated to church, but bring the conflict into church to continue to wage war.

Conflict occurs as a result of sin in the world. It is the forces of the secular world that operate trying to tear down the spiritual forces of good that come from God. Conflict is not good for a church. It is destructive! Unfortunately, it cannot be avoided—so we must learn how to manage it. The Bible teaches certain principles to deal with conflict. This chapter lays out principles that will assist you in managing conflicts. When you encounter one, sometimes these principles will not resolve it. As you try to manage the conflict as a responsible church leader, it will drain the forces of life from you. It can destroy your own faith if you allow it. Thus, it becomes critical that you stay connected to God through prayer, Scripture, and Christian fellowship with other Christians whom you trust not to reveal any confidences.

### Conflict Outline

#### A. Effects of Conflict

All congregations experience conflict. Actually, conflict is a very natural process. It occurs whenever two or more people desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both. Conflict describes those experiences of individual people and groups of people trying to achieve goals that are incompatible or appear to be so. Whenever conflict occurs in the church it can have two possible outcomes—a positive outcome or a negative outcome. A positive outcome occurs when the factions use the conflict to achieve reconciliation and spiritual growth in the congregation. A negative outcome occurs when the parties fail to communicate. This failure to communicate can be due to one faction refusing to speak, or both factions refusing to speak. Either way, if communication does not take place, then the conflict will be a negative one. Reconciliation does not take place and both factions are left with the hurt and pain that comes with conflict. If one party desires reconciliation and the other do not, then reconciliation between the factions will not take place. The faction that desires reconciliation must move to acceptance and forgiveness even if the other faction does not desire reconciliation.

The leaders of the church can cause a positive outcome if both factions desire reconciliation. If only one faction desires reconciliation, but not the other, then reconciliation will not take place.

The best the church leaders can hope for is to minimize the damage. Church leaders can optimize the chances for minimum damage by following the principles in this chapter.

### B. Inevitability of Conflict

Conflict is inevitable whenever you have two or more people working together to achieve a goal. They can conflict over the route one takes to achieve that goal, the goal itself, or any number of other issues. Since conflicts will arise it is important you manage them properly, so they do not become destructive. If managed properly, they can become positive experiences that strength the church.

### C. Conflict Avoidance

Sometime during a conflict you may hear someone say, “I avoid conflict at all expense because I can’t stand it.” One of the persons in the conflict will withdraw from it and no longer participate in the dialogue. This approach will not eliminate the underlying causes of the conflict. You must draw the participant’s difference of opinions into the open. Only then can you resolve the issues. Otherwise, the person who withdraws remains a conquered individual who lost that particular conflict. This does not make for a happy church member. It may be that their approach to solving the problem was best for the church. Their idea will never materialize just because they would rather lose the issue just for the sake of avoiding the conflict rather than express their thoughts.

### D. Conflict Management Rather Than Conflict Avoidance

Preventive Medicine. The best approach church leaders can take is to structure their committees and church organization such that the potential for conflicts is kept to a minimum. Church leaders do this by structuring their organization such that the power is distributed evenly among the various groups in the church. Church leaders should match people’s gifts with the nature of the job they hold. Church leaders should be people who live out their faith, take their duties seriously and be responsible in implementing their duties.

Even with this preventive approach, leaders will often find themselves involved in a conflict before they know it. The church leaders must know what to do when they find themselves in this situation to insure that the outcome of the conflict becomes a positive experience. This causes the congregation to grow spiritually bringing about reconciliation instead of destruction. Even if the conflict fails to bring about reconciliation, at least a minimum amount of damage is done.

### E. Sources of Conflict

Conflict arises from four sources. These four sources include attitudinal issues, substantive issues, emotional issues, and communicative issues. The leaders dealing with the conflict must determine the source of the conflict because it will assist them in determining how to handle the conflict.

- Attitudinal issues occur when individuals have differences of feelings or perspectives about persons and issues. People who carry these attitudes find themselves running into each other in ways that cause conflict.
- Substantive issues of conflict occur when people carry difference of opinions about facts, goals, ends, or means. People who disagree about whether to build a rectangle or square

addition to the church have substantive issue conflicts. These types of conflicts are the easiest to deal with because reasoning and logical arguments often resolve the debate.

- Emotional issues occur when people attach personal value to attitudinal or substantive conflicts. Logical arguments will have little effect in resolving emotional conflicts. People who attempt to change the attitudes of people embroiled in emotional conflicts often receive attacks themselves.
- Communicative issues of conflict are by products of open communication about the sources of conflict. (McSwain, pages 24-26)

## F. COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO MANAGING CONFLICTS!

### **OPENING UP LINES OF COMMUNICATION**

#### Identify the Type of Conflict

Before you attempt to open up a line of communication, you must first understand the nature of the conflict with which you are dealing. You must identify the type of conflict. Knowing the type of conflict will help you determine the best approach you take in trying to manage it.

#### Spatial Proximity

Sometimes you open up lines of communication by spatial proximity. This means just putting people literally close together so they can discuss their differences. For example place two people next to each other at a church dinner. This works best for substantive conflicts. People engaging in recreation together can also open up communication lines. (Cosgrove & Hatfield, p.134)

#### Humor

Weaving humor into different situations can also prove to be an effective strategy for developing affiliations. (Cosgrove & Hatfield, p.135)

#### Substantive and Communicative Conflicts

If the conflict is substantive or communicative, seek a win/win solution. This means to seek a solution where both parties feel that they have been heard and part of the solution is something they desired. If you get your way entirely and the other party does not, then this is a win/lose solution. Win/lose solutions only result in hard feelings. Win/lose solutions result from such conflict solving techniques as voting on the issue. The best way to resolve a substantive conflict is to develop a consensus of how to solve the conflict. Consensus does not mean that everybody agrees as how to solve the problem. In fact most of the time everybody will not agree. A consensus means that everyone can live with the decision and support it to other people. In developing a consensus, the communicator should state his/her objective clearly and directly. Leave no room for a misinterpretation. Otherwise, you might find yourself trying to resolve a communicative conflict. You should communicate in a variety of ways. This would include verbal and nonverbal messages. Give the receiver an opportunity to restate the communication to insure that he/she accurately received the message.

Soft vs. Hard Words

You can learn effective verbal communication techniques from the Bible. In Proverbs 15:1 it says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.” A “soft answer” is one that does not provoke the other party. A “soft answer” states your position without blaming, accusing, or antagonizing the other party. The other party does not have to feel defensive about your communication. Thus, it decreases tension between the two of you. “Hard words” escalate the tension between the two of you, thus impeding effective communication.

One technique to use in saying “soft words” to the other party is to indicate how you feel about a subject instead of focusing on the behavior of the other party. (Huttenlocker, p. 68)

*Soft Words* – Soft words include “I” messages. Hard words include “you” messages. “I” messages give the other person the freedom to reject the message, yet not feel that you attacked them. “I” messages also allow the speaker to assume responsibility for his/her own decisions.

*Hard Words* - Hard words include “you” messages. “You” messages are judgmental and place the other person on the defensive. The other person will not hear accurately your communication. Instead, they perceive that your message moralized, criticized, or ridiculed them.

Examples of “Soft” vs. “Hard” Words (McSwain, pages 95-96)

| SOFT WORDS  | HARD WORDS   |
|---|--|
| Confront: “I find it difficult when you . . . “   | Condemn: “You have no business. . . “  |
| Disagree: “I see that issue in a different light.”  | Discredit: “That idea is stupid and it will never work.”   |
| Accentuate: “This issue is of major concern to me.”   | Exaggerate: “I cannot imagine anything worse!”   |
| Indicate: “I can live with this decision and I will support it.”  | Dictate: “You either do it this way or I will leave the church.”   |
| Express Concern (State facts that document the existence of a problem): “The children running loose in the sanctuary during the sermon can be disruptive to the pastor and the congregation.” | Place Blame (Don’t make generalizations that implicitly or explicitly indict another.): “It seems to me that parents could control their brats better during a service.”   |
| Request: “In the future would you please . . . “  | Demand: “From now on you better keep your children from walking around the sanctuary during the service.”  |
| Confess injury (Relate an event or remark that caused pain): “When you told me to control my children better, that really hurt me.”   | Inflict (Don’t induce shame on other people for their conduct or words.): “You should know better than to let your children run loose in the sanctuary during the sermon.” |

### Don't Talk Down

True communication can only occur when you talk to the other party as if he/she is a responsible adult.

### Don't Lose Your Temper

If you lose your temper, then you develop two problems—the conflict you originally had, and your own inability to effectively communicate.

Using these techniques can help you effectively communicate in managing conflicts. (Huttenlocker, p. 73)

#### A. Emotional and Attitudinal Conflicts

1. If you assess that you have an emotional conflict, then you must approach it in a slightly different way. You use the same techniques discussed above. Remember, people find emotional conflicts more difficult to resolve. In emotional conflicts you can easily become the target of the other party's frustration. If the other party does attack you, refuse to launch a counterattack. Instead, tell them you will discuss it with them later. Do not get mad, even though they may be mad! Give them time to cool off, then resume the dialogue.
2. Four Approaches to Managing Emotional and Attitudinal Conflicts
  - a. Do Nothing. First, you can work it out alone. Another way of saying this is to do nothing. Sometimes this is the most desirable method. You may want to take this approach if the risk of confronting the person exceeds any benefit. You will have to make this judgment call.
  - b. One On One. Second, just you and the other person can discuss the problem. This approach is appropriate only when there exists a high degree of trust between you and the other person. Using this approach you must determine that the benefits of keeping the relationship intact clearly outweigh the risks. Many conflict experts believe that two Christians can resolve emotional conflicts most of the time.
  - c. Third Party. Third, if there exists little trust between you and the other person, then it might be necessary to bring in a third party consultant. This is the least desirable of the above options. If it does become necessary, then it is best if you and the other party can agree on who the third party consultant is.
  - d. Group Setting. Fourth, you can utilize a group setting to manage a conflict. This approach is desirable if the entire group has a stake in the outcome of the conflict. You should use this technique only when failure to do so would be detrimental to the entire church.

### Triangulation

Sometimes the special problem of triangulation occurs. This occurs when two people refuse to talk to each other, but carry on communication through third parties. This type of communication is only harmful to the church. The best way for people to deal with triangulation is to make sure nobody acts as the third party. Instead you force the conflicting parties to communicate with each other. The conflict has a better chance of effectively being managed when the third party is eliminated. If you find yourself in this situation, refuse to carry the messages. (Cosgrove, p. 171)



### Unresolved Emotional and Attitudinal Conflicts

Sometimes you will be unable to resolve emotional and attitudinal conflicts. In this situation you try to keep the lines of communication open to the conflicting party. Inform them when they should attend a committee meeting, if they belong on the committee. Even if they choose not to attend, at least you have given them an opportunity to be heard. Then, they cannot tell others that they didn't know about the meeting. You may not be able to resolve it, but at least it can be managed so that it does as little damage as possible.

Sometimes a person may leave the church if the conflict does not get resolved to their liking. If you have maintained a Biblical, fair and good faith approach to attempting to resolve the conflict and the person leaves, then you must accept the situation. It may very well be that the person's needs are not being met at the church and for them to continue to stay will be detrimental to you, them, and the church. Perhaps their needs will be met in another church. Remember, you are not responsible for the ugly conduct of others. You are only responsible for your own conduct. Be sure to conduct yourself in a way pleasing and acceptable to God, even if the other person does not.

## **HOW TO CONFRONT**

We have learned the proper communication techniques. We are now ready to develop a strategy to confront a person in such a way that the risks of creating a negative outcome from the confrontation are minimized.

1. **Select Appropriate Site.** First, you should ask the person to meet you at a time convenient to them. Ensure that you meet in a place that is private and you will have no interruption.
2. **Set the Stage.** Second, you must come to the point quickly and directly. You should leave no room for the other person to misinterpret your intentions. State your intentions clearly and concisely. If you are dealing with a person who easily becomes defensive and angry, then address this directly and in the beginning. Say something like, "This is a problem that has caused me a great deal of stress and concern. When we discuss it, please don't become angry because we won't be able to communicate effectively." By letting them know initially that you are afraid they may become angry or defensive, that person becomes aware of their emotions. This in turn assists them in controlling their emotions.
3. **Admit Responsibility.** Third, you must be responsible for any contribution you may have made in creating the problem. Let them know up front that you realized that you have been a contributor to the problem. This causes them to become less likely to become defensive. You must describe specifically the behavior you are confronting. Do not judge the other person. For example say, "I become upset when you criticize my ideas for improving Sunday School." Don't say, "You have not been a Sunday School superintendent like I have; therefore, you don't understand the positive effect my ideas would have on improving your Sunday School classes." Also, never attribute some type of motive to the other person's behavior.
4. **Be a Good Listener.** Fourth, you must listen and acknowledge when the other person speaks. When they are speaking, give them all of your attention. You should nod your

head, gesture, or interject some appropriate responses to let them know that you are listening to them. After they have spoken, repeat back to them what they said. This will insure that they know you accurately received their message. Say, “If I am hearing you correctly, you are saying that . . .”

5. Fifth, negotiate using caring and confronting messages. After you listen to the other person, let them know what specific behavior changes you want. At the same time they will let you know what changes they want. In other words, it is time to negotiate. (McSwain, pages 94-95) People approach negotiation from five options:
  - a. “I’ll get him” is the option where I win and you lose. You direct this option towards achieving a goal. Someone must win, and someone must lose. The winner achieves the goal through power. You may solve the problem, but someone will walk away with hurt feelings sowing the seeds for future conflict.
  - b. “I’ll get out” is the option where you say, “I refuse to try to achieve my goal, therefore, I withdraw from the negotiation.” This type of option says that it is better to avoid conflict at all costs. It also creates a winner and loser. The winner achieves the goal through power.
  - c. “I’ll give in” is the third option. Here, you yield to the demands of the other party simply to be nice and maintain their friendship. The two of you still maintain contact and an open line of communication, but you become frustrated and tense on the inside. Again, this creates a winner who achieves the goal through power.
  - d. “I’ll meet you halfway” is the fourth option. Although this option is better than the other three, it operates from the premise that I have only half the truth and I need your half of the position. Thus, you are willing to compromise. Compromise is not bad in itself, but if you begin with the decision to compromise, you run the risk of combining two half-truths that don’t always add up to a whole truth. The purpose of negotiation is to find a solution satisfactory to both sides that achieves the best solution for the church. This causes each of you to grow, keeping your Christian relationship intact. Thus, you must consider the fifth option.
  - e. “I care enough to confront” is the fifth and best option to approach an individual during negotiation. In this approach you are saying that you want to maintain a Christian relationship (one where each of you still love and respect each other), yet the solution to the problem is honest. It solves the problem from a truthful standpoint. The solution is in the best interest of the church. You work through differences while sending messages of “I care” and “I want.” This approach confronts, yet sends the message to the other person that you want to stay in a respectful relationship with them. You convey your message while letting the other person know where you stand and what you are feeling, needing, valuing and wanting. (McSwain, p. 96)
6. Five options for approaching negotiation. The following examples illustrate how to send caring and confronting messages during times of negotiation. Compare the underlying messages in each set of contrasting statements.

**CARING**

I care about our relationship.

**CONFRONTING**

I feel deeply about the issue at stake.

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>CARING</b>      | I want to hear your view.   |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want to clearly express mine.   |
| <b>CARING</b>      | I want to respect your insights.  |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want respect for mine.  |
| <b>CARING</b>      | I trust you to be able to handle my honest feelings.                        |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want you to trust me with yours.  |
| <b>CARING</b>      | I promise to stay with the discussion until we've reached an understanding. |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want you to keep working with me until we've reached a new understanding. |
| <b>CARING</b>      | I will not trick, pressure, manipulate, or distort the differences.         |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want your unpressured, clear, honest view of our differences.             |
| <b>CARING</b>      | I give you my loving, honest respect.                                       |
| <b>CONFRONTING</b> | I want your caring, confronting response.                                   |

If you take this approach during the negotiation phase, you are more likely to achieve the best solution to the problems. You achieve a solution while maintaining a caring, loving, and respectful relationship with the other party.

7. Seventh, you must confirm the agreements. Repeat the agreement to the other party to be sure each of you understands it. Arrange a time for both of you to get together to see how the agreement is working. Point out to the other party how the new understanding strengthens your relationship.

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