



**Information
about
The Making of Pastoral Appointments
in the
Arkansas Annual Conference
prepared by
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October 1, 2021**

A New Challenge Has Emerged in the Making of Pastoral Appointments

Making pastoral appointments is a sacred undertaking. The bishop and appointive cabinet have designed a process for making pastoral appointments that is shaped by the church's mission, transparency, collegiality, prayer, and data about the congregation, mission field and pastor. This process is so integral to the appointive cabinet's work that it is regularly reviewed and revised.

At the same time, making appointments is also increasingly a challenge because far more pastors are retiring than entering into ministry. Several factors have contributed to this. The growing secularization of the culture and subsequent decline of the United Methodist Church means that fewer young people are entering into ministry. The uncertainty about the future of the church has caused many who may be feeling God's call to wait and see how things turn out. Weariness from COVID19 is causing people to retire early or drop out of ministry entirely. While the Arkansas Conference is taking proactive steps to address this reality through the excellent leadership of the Culture of Call, the shortage of pastoral leadership in the coming years will have an impact as congregations experience pastoral changes.

The 'Why' Behind the Making of Pastoral Appointments: The Mission of United Methodist Congregations in Arkansas

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20 NRSV)

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ,
who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world.



The congregations of the Arkansas Annual Conference share a common mission: *to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities, and the world.* While Jesus gives this purpose to the Body of Christ in Matthew 28, congregations embrace it passionately as their own because they want others to experience the same difference in their lives that they already have experienced when Jesus is welcomed as Savior and Lord. This is the “why” that guides the making of all pastoral appointments to congregations.

What Pastors Are Appointed to Do

Pastors have so many responsibilities that it can become difficult to focus on what matters most among all the important things they do. The appointive cabinet makes pastoral appointments with the understanding that pastors are appointed primarily to carry out one main responsibility: to provide spiritual leadership that enables congregations to become more vital in their unique settings as they make disciples of Jesus Christ who make disciples. While vitality manifests itself differently in different contexts, pastors are expected to lead congregations in doing the three things that vital congregations consistently do:

- Grow members into disciples of Jesus Christ;
- Send out disciples who make more disciples of Jesus Christ; and
- Equip and send all disciples to transform lives, communities and the world.

This means that pastors are appointed to serve ‘members who are already a part of a church family,’ but also are appointed to reach “those who are not yet a part of a church family.” It’s why a pastor is appointed both to a congregation and to the mission field in which that church is located.

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the Process Used in the Making of Pastoral Appointments

Why are pastors appointed by the bishop and not hired by congregations? United Methodist pastors are not called or hired by congregations. Rather, they are appointed by the bishop one year at a time in order to best use their unique gifts, experiences and passion. This ‘sent ministry’ is such an essential part of the Wesleyan DNA that United Methodist clergy enter into a sacred covenant to go where the bishop sends them.

How much say do pastors have about where they are appointed? The appointive cabinet and bishop care deeply about the well-being of pastors and their families. Through ongoing supervision, conversation and the formal consultation process, district superintendents spend a great deal of time

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and prayer understanding their needs. This is especially the case as the COVID19 pandemic continues and places enormous stress on pastors as they lead their congregations in a landscape for which they have not been prepared. The district superintendent will consult with a pastor prior to the bishop finalizing an appointment in order to confirm that she or he will be able to lead that congregation.

What's the time frame for making appointments? The appointment process begins soon after the start of each new conference year on July 1 and seeks to conclude its work by late April each year.

What information is used in making pastoral appointments? The process includes fall conversations with pastors, fall meetings with congregational leaders, information from The Appointment Consultation Forms filled out by pastors and Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees, year-end statistical reports, Pastoral Profiles, Church Profiles, and consultation conversations with pastors and congregations.

Can only certain pastors go to certain places (Part 1)? The bishop and appointive cabinet fully support the 'open itinerancy' mandated by both the Gospel and the United Methodist church, and engage in intentional efforts to be certain that clergywomen, clergy couples and ethnic clergy are appropriately considered for every appointment.

Can only certain pastors go to certain places (part 2)? Compensation, personal preference and tenure will not be the primary drivers as pastoral appointments are made. Pastors will be appointed based on the best possible match of their unique spiritual gifts, experience, talent with congregations and the mission field. Pastors who have demonstrated excellence or have a promise of fruitfulness will be appointed to those congregations most willing to courageously engage the mission field.

For how long are pastors appointed? Pastors are appointed by the bishop for one year at a time. Whenever possible, however, the appointive cabinet pursues longer tenures for pastors because this plays a major role in congregations growing in their vitality and fruitfulness.

What can bring about a change of pastoral appointment? A number of varied factors can be involved in a change in pastors, including churches or clergy seeking a move for a variety of reasons, retirements, leaves of absence, new clergy and seminary graduates entering the appointment system, changing financial situations in congregations, and determination by the appointive cabinet that a change needs to occur in order to increase congregational vitality.

What happens next when it's been determined that a pastor is leaving? The district superintendent will collaborate with the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee to develop a profile of its congregation, mission field and pastoral leadership that will be used to guide the appointive cabinet in its work.

What happens after a pastor's appointment has been announced? In churches with a full-time appointment, an 'appointment letter' that outlines the rationale for the appointment and the expectations



for achieving vitality in that congregation and mission field will be shared with the pastor and Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee following the introduction of the pastor. The pastor and SPRC chair will be invited to participate in a transition seminar prior to the beginning of the new conference year.

Information Concerning the Appointment Process Contained in “The 2016 United Methodist Church Book of Discipline”

¶¶425-430 of The 2016 Book of Discipline outlines the key components that are part of the consultation and appointment process:

- “The bishop and cabinet shall consider all requests for change of appointment in light of the profile developed for each charge and the gifts and evidence of God’s grace, professional experience, and family needs of the pastor.” ¶428.2
- “When a change in appointment has been determined, the district superintendent should meet together or separately with the pastor and the committee on pastor-parish relations where the pastor is serving, for the purpose of sharing the basis for the change and the process used in making the new appointment.” ¶428.3
- “The district superintendent shall confer with the pastor about a specific possible appointment (charge) and its congruence with gifts, evidence of God’s grace, professional experience and expectations, and the family needs of a pastor, identified in consultation with the pastor.” ¶428.5a (see also ¶ 427.2)
- “The district superintendent shall confer with the receiving committee on pastor-parish relations about pastoral leadership,” ¶428.6 (see also ¶427.1)
- “If during this consultation process it is determined by the bishop and cabinet that this decision should not be carried out, the process is to be repeated until the bishop, basing his or her decision on the information and advice derived from consultation, makes and fixes the appointment.” ¶428.8
- “When the steps in the process have been followed and completed, the announcement of that decision shall be made to all parties directly involved in the consultative process before a public announcement is made.” ¶428.10