JOINT STATEMENT ON THE REMOVAL OF MEMBERS BY CHARGE CONFERENCE ACTION

By the Bishop, the Cabinet, and The Florida Conference Work Area on Evangelism

(Updated to reflect the 2008 Book of Discipline)

There is a present concern regarding possible abuses to members whose names are removed from church rolls by Charge Conference action. While there are certain merits to cleaning church rolls, there have been occasional errors. The foremost error in the removal of such persons is the ignoring of disciplinary procedures established by the General Conference. It is with this concern in mind that the Bishop, the Cabinet, and the Conference Work Area on Evangelism issue this joint statement including an outline of the steps in **The 2008 Book of Discipline** as to how to remove members who are negligent or who become non-residents or whose whereabouts are unknown. The following is offered in an effort to assist pastors and local churches in maintaining a ministry of member care (see ¶228 of **The 2008 Book of Discipline**).

(1) If a professing member residing in the community is negligent of the vows or is regularly absent from the worship of the church without valid reason, the pastor and the membership secretary shall report that member's name to the church council, which shall do all in its power to reenlist the member in the active fellowship of the church. It shall visit the member and make clear that, while the member's name is on the roll of a particular local church, one is a member of The United Methodist Church as a whole, and that, since the member is not attending the church where enrolled, the member is requested to do one of four things: (a) reaffirm the baptismal vows and return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant in the church where the member's name is recorded, (b) request transfer to another United Methodist church where the member will return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant (see ¶ 239), (c) arrange transfer to a particular church of another denomination (see ¶ 240), or (d) request withdrawal. If the member does not comply with any of the available alternatives over a period of two years, the member's name may be removed. (See # [4].)

(2) If a professing member whose address is known is residing outside the community and is not participating in the worship or activity of the church, the directives to encourage a transfer of the member shall be followed each year until that member joins another church or requests in writing that the name be removed from the roll of professing members; provided, however, that if after two years the council has not been able to relate that member to the church at the new place of residence, the name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of # (4) below.

(3) If the address of a professing member is no longer known to the pastor, the membership secretary and the evangelism ministry group chairperson shall make every effort to locate the member, and circulate the list of names throughout the parish. If the member can be located, the directives of either # (1) or # (2) above shall be followed, but if after two years of such efforts the address is still unknown, the member's name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of # (4) below.

(4) If the directives of # (1), (2), or (3) above have been followed for the specified number of years without success, the member's name may be removed from the roll of members by vote of the charge conference on recommendation of the pastor and the evangelism ministry chairperson, each name being considered individually; provided that the member's name shall have been entered in the minutes of the annual charge conference for two consecutive years. On the roll there shall be entered after the name: "Removed by Charge Conference Action"; and if the action is on the basis of # (3), there shall be added: "Reason: Address Unknown." The record shall be retained in order that upon reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant the person may be restored as a member. Should a transfer of membership be requested, the pastor may, after consultation with the person, issue the certificate of transfer.

(10) Recognizing that the Church has a continuing moral and spiritual obligation to nurture all persons, even those whose names have been removed from the roll of members, it is recommended that a roll of persons thus removed shall be maintained. It shall then become the responsibility of the church council to provide for the review of this roll at least once a year. (See also ¶ 234.) After the review has been made, it is recommended that the pastor and/or the commission on evangelism contact those whose names appear on this roll, either in person or by other means, in the most effective and practical manner. The names and addresses of those who have moved outside the local church's area should be sent to local churches in their new communities that those churches may visit and minister to them.