



The Florida Conference

OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The following are a few core values related to the making of clergy appointments and itineracy in The Florida Annual Conference. These supplement the language found in *The 2016 Book of Discipline* (§337-338).

(This is an updated version of a statement originally released in 2013, and it is the consensus of the appointive cabinet of The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.)

1. It is all about the mission. The primary factor in making an appointment is the mutual desire of the church and clergyperson to *make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*. The district superintendent, as chief missional strategist, helps other members of the Cabinet consider:

- Can this pastor lead the local church to make disciples of its existing members and form new disciples?
- Where there is decline, can the pastor lead a "turnaround"?
- Does this church act to make disciples of Jesus Christ or does it desire chaplaincy to its members in such a way that an outward focus to its surrounding community is no longer a priority?
- Where there has been conflict or scandal, can the pastor be an instrument of healing and reconciliation?
- Where there is a plateau, can the pastor lead a church to strengthen its witness and expand its mission?
- Where there is growth, can the pastor help a community to dream even greater dreams?

We are sent into this mission by Jesus, who gives us the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and the Great Commandment (Mark 12).

2. Existing salaries do not determine the next appointment. We seek to avoid reductions in salaries for clergy, but new appointments sometimes come with a salary reduction. The financial generosity that underwrites the budget of every local church is an act of discipleship. Clergy must work in ways that inspire and increase the generosity of the congregation and consider funding opportunities through facility use or other faithful means. Laity are reminded that congregations will not find greater congregational vitality by repeatedly reducing their pastor's salary. Two contrasting truths must be considered: our value is not measured in our financial compensation, and fair and just compensation is normative in Christian community.

3. Graduating seminarian appointments are made first. We want younger and newer clergy to begin their ministries in settings that will give them the greatest opportunity for success.



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4. We honor ministry both within the local church and outside of it. Extension ministry is consistent with life and leadership in a tradition that has an extensive network of schools, children's homes, urban ministries, hospitals, counseling centers, justice ministries and camps.

5. Where the local church and the pastor are flourishing, longer appointments are appropriate and a sign of God's blessing. The appointment process recognizes that when the church is healthy, it is often wise not to change pastoral leadership. There are occasions when the annual conference has a compelling need to intervene when a pastoral transition has not been requested, but this is the exception. Clergy membership resides not in a local church or an extension ministry, but in the annual conference (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶336). In our ordination vows, clergy (including bishops and superintendents) make a promise to go where we are sent, believing this to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

6. We practice open itineracy, which means appointments are cross-cultural, and the gifts of women in ministry are honored (*The 2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶338, 425). We will continue to grow our support of leaders in cross-cultural appointments. Congregations and clergy must both engage in learning so that these appointments can be healthy and joyful. Congregations who welcome women or persons of color in pastoral leadership dramatically increase the pool of faithful and gifted clergy the Cabinet can joyfully appoint to them.

7. We pay attention to metrics and we are also attentive to the narrative beyond those metrics. Metrics such as worship attendance, professions of faith, and apportionment giving are essential factors of congregational vitality. Vitality is also found in factors more difficult to measure, such as the growth of Christian discipleship in personal and social holiness and mission initiatives. Congregations also face diverse factors such as the economic climate, congregational conflict, and the life cycle of their membership. All these factors are considered in appointment making.

8. We believe in shared vision and shared leadership. Effective clergy collaborate with gifted laity in seeking God's will for a congregation and its missional future.

9. Bishops and district superintendents are flawed and imperfect men and women, so are our clergy and laity. Our desire is to make appointments that bear fruit. That will not happen in every instance. Where clergy and laity have a shared commitment to Jesus Christ, a common desire to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and faithfully employ their gifts of ministry, we find God can use imperfect people to do remarkable good.



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10. **Some appointments will be received enthusiastically.** Others will be difficult to embrace. Churches or pastors requesting reconsideration of projected appointments should first consult with their district superintendent, and then write a letter to the bishop with a copy to their superintendent, outlining their rationale for the request. The letter should contain compelling missional reasons for reconsideration. The final decision will be made by the bishop in consultation with the cabinet.

Every appointment is made in an environment of deep prayer and discernment. We invite you to join us in prayer during this season of appointive cabinet work that our shared work with lead us to make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world. Pray with us for God's love and grace to come to the people who live in communities our churches and extension ministries serve. Pray for the pastors. Pray for the Staff-Parish Relations Committees. Pray for our bishop and appointive cabinet.

Appointments will be announced in local churches on Sunday, April 23, 2023, and will be public on our Florida Conference website by Monday, April 24, 2023. Appointments will be celebrated at Annual Conference (June 8-10, 2023) and will begin on July 1.