

**The Nashville Area of
The United Methodist Church
The Memphis and Tennessee Conferences**

***Identifying and Strengthening
Effective Clergy Leadership***

**A Plan from the Joint
Clergy Effectiveness Task Force**

October 2006

Introduction

In June 2005, Bishop Richard Wills named persons from the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences to a 'clergy effectiveness task force' convened by Bishop Robert Spain. By general consensus, we understood our task to be to "create a workable 'vehicle' to address ineffectiveness among clergy." We recognized our task could include establishing an evaluative tool, identifying opportunities for training and/or retooling, and if indicated, a process to help persons transition to other areas of ministry or to secular employment.

Through our discussions, we reached several assumptions: It appears we -- the church -- have sometimes operated in a 're-active reality,' regarding ineffectiveness: our primary response has often been a punitive/surgical-removal mode. We have done what we can to stop the bleeding without diagnosing the causes and prescribing treatment and/or surgery. This responds to the churches' cries, but does little for the individual clergy person. And, to some extent, the diagnoses of ineffectiveness may have been subjective, not objective, and often highly emotional.

We believe churches can and do expect certain competency levels from the ordained clergy. When competency is lacking in currently ordained clergy, all aspects of the work of ministry *are* compromised, low morale grows and support for the denomination deteriorates. Yet because we profess to be the Body of Christ, we must respond with care and concern to the individual clergy whose work is less than effective.

We recognize that dedicated Boards of Ordained Ministry, through their evaluation of candidates for ordination can, with increased use of testing, psychological analysis, consideration of written work and probing interviews, and probationary periods, defer or discontinue marginally competent candidates. While that pro- active climate is imperative, our present reality demands we address clergy ineffectiveness as it exists here and now.

Our faith, our polity, our Annual Conferences, our historic sense of justice, and most especially our churches and our clergy deserve more. As Methodists, we seek a more methodical way.

After several meetings of discussion and discernment and with the help of work done by numerous other conferences, we submit this document. In it we include definitions of effectiveness and ineffectiveness, intervention proposals, exit strategies and procedures. We pray for God's wisdom and grace for those who administer and those who receive this work.

Characteristics of Effective Clergy

An effective clergy leader is *centered in Christ* and demonstrates strengths in *pastoring, proclaiming, leading, and disciple-making*. Characteristics are identified below.

Leadership Qualities

- A maturing spirituality: A disciplined spiritual life, maintaining healthy boundaries and being accountable for one's work and actions.
- Integrity: Behavior that is in alignment with Christian beliefs, practices, and a healthy relationship with God.
- Sound theology: The minister who understands, knows, and celebrates the power of Jesus Christ to bring healing and wholeness, forgiveness and conciliation, justice and peace, to the lives of individuals, congregations, and communities.
- A caring heart: A servant leader who cultivates the gifts of the spirit and empowers others to claim their call and find their place in ministry.
- Team player: A leader who knows and supports United Methodist theology and polity, gives clear support for connectionalism and obedience to his/her ordination vows.

Competency Skills

- Proclamation: Possesses and articulates a working knowledge of biblical faith; demonstrates the ability to communicate and apply the gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways to the diverse population groups of our conferences.
- Relational skills: Ability to listen, develop working teams, equip persons for ministry, and manage conflict in a way that leads to healthy resolution.
- Visioning and implementation skills: The ability to identify and articulate the vision plus the assessment and administrative ability to make the vision become reality.
- Self Care skills: Possess the time management skills that lead to a healthy balance between self, work, family, and relationship with congregation.
- Administration: Demonstrated administrative, management, and supervisory skills.

Said another way-

CENTERED IN CHRIST

- Demonstrates faith in and commitment to Christ
- Practices personal spiritual disciplines
- Shows evidence of the Fruits of the Spirit
- Lives the highest ideals of the Christian life

PASTORING

- Effective in counseling and nurturing
- Maintains confidentiality
- Teaches and models spiritual disciplines
- Shows compassion, integrity, authenticity
- Evidences personal humility, openness, approachability
- Demonstrates passion for winning people to Christ and for ministry in general

PROCLAIMING

- Effective and prepared biblical preaching
- Makes teaching a priority
- Communicates effectively
- Leads both the preparation of, and the worship of the congregation

LEADING

- Presents and leads toward a vision
- Is committed to excellence
- Remains teachable
- Takes responsibility for personal actions and for the life of the congregation
- Demonstrates skills in time-management, administration, and organizational management
- Displays skills in group dynamics
- Delegates well
- Partners with laity to make and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ
- Shows commitment to the denomination in the Wesleyan tradition, including itineration (elders)

DISCIPLE MAKING

- Demonstrates missionary zeal and concern for the lost
- Is outreach-focused
- Focused on witnessing for Christ and faith-sharing
- Seeks to transform and engage the community

Recognizing Ineffectiveness

It is common—and wise—for individuals to recognize the need for professional development and skill building. Clergy are encouraged to increase their effectiveness through continuing education and seminars.

We recognize that a good relationship between a pastor and the parish depends on many factors. However, ineffective clergy may exhibit two or more of the following characteristics:

- An unwillingness to focus on the work of the parish.
- Poor relationship building skills
- A consistent pattern of indolence or laziness.
- The inability or unwillingness to provide pastoral care.
- The lack of personal responsibility and initiative.
- Consistent refusal to participate in the connectional system, uphold the denomination's theological positions, abide by our polity, or follow the counsel of those in authority.
- A service record characterized by frequent moves, for example, consecutive appointments lasting one or two years.
- Poor evaluations from the local Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee. (See *Responsibilities and Duties of a Pastor*, PP 331)
- Poor reports and feedback by the District Superintendent.

The District Superintendent is responsible for recognizing patterns of ineffectiveness, and for initiating processes for remediation or redirection for the benefit of both the struggling clergy person and for the entire Church.

Policy Statement

The Taskforce on Clergy Effectiveness recommends the following procedure to address ineffectiveness:

1. Clergy recognized by the Cabinet as exhibiting several signs of ineffectiveness will begin a process of intervention and support within 30 days of identification.
2. An Intervention Team, which will include the identified clergyperson, will be formed.
3. The clergyperson will be advised that failure to make improvements in areas of concern may lead to administrative action and exit procedures.
4. Areas of needed improvement will be identified, resources to address weaknesses will be recommended, and a plan for improving ministry skills and competency will be devised.
5. If substantial progress on the improvement plan is not made, the Cabinet will initiate appropriate action in keeping with *The Book of Discipline*, which may include recommendation for discontinuance of ministerial orders.
6. Rather than complete a plan for improvement, the clergyperson may voluntarily consider exit options as provided for in *The Book of Discipline*.

Note: *Intervention is a one time process.* If persons who have successfully completed the Intervention process receive another negative SPRC evaluation, are again identified by the D.S. as ineffective, and are asked to move in less than a three year period following Intervention, they may be immediately subject to the exit process.

Intervention Plan Specifics

Timeline

A minimum of twelve (12) months is designated as the period of intervention.

A clergy person is identified by the Cabinet as exhibiting the characteristics of ineffectiveness, and as a person for the Intervention process.

Within one month of identification: The District Superintendent will meet with the individual clergy person, notifying her/him that she/he is exhibiting several characteristics of ineffectiveness in ministry, as listed in the Clergy Effectiveness Document. The D.S. will describe the Intervention process, the support available, and the hope for remediation. The D.S. will describe the leave options available to the clergy person including honorable location, disability, or retirement. He/she will clearly state that if progress toward effectiveness and integration of learnings are not evident within the next twelve months, then the Cabinet and Bishop, along with the Executive Committee of the Board of Ministry, will recommend exit from the ministerial order. *ALL* these conversations will be carefully documented.

The individual clergy person will choose either 1) one of the exit options for clergy as provided by *The Book of Discipline*, or 2) participate in the Intervention Process, and will report that decision *in writing* to his/her District Superintendent within one week. *(It is noted that the clergy person may at any time choose to discontinue the Intervention Process and to voluntarily initiate an appropriate leave option as stated in The Book of Discipline.)*

Within one month of initial intervention: The Intervention

Team will meet. That Team will include the District Superintendent, the individual clergyperson, the chair or representative member of the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee, the District Lay Leader, a *clergy* BOM representative, and a (non-voting) clergy advocate of the individual clergyperson's choice. *The intervention process shall be administered consistently within The Nashville Area.* The Intervention Team's first tasks will be to

- Help the clergyperson realize and accept that he/she has become ineffective.
- Seek to understand the areas of ineffectiveness and the factors or variables that make for ineffectiveness.
- Determine a course of action to assess the clergyperson's areas of needed growth.

Within three months of initial intervention: With the guidance of Annual Conference clinicians, required clinical testing and evaluations are completed. This testing may include some or all of the following instruments of assessment: (the cost of testing could be as much as \$7,500-10,000 per person)

- Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- 16 Personality Factors
- Maslach Burnout Inventory
- MMPI-2 and MCMI-III
- Psychological testing
- Complete Health Physical
- Career Counseling

Within one month of team receipt of results: The Intervention Team will assess all data and create a firm plan of remediation that may lead to increasing the clergyperson's ability and skill level so as to produce effectiveness.

Within six months of formation of remediation plan: With the clergyperson present, the Intervention Team will meet for a Progress Evaluation. It will seek evidence of substantial progress on the improvement plan. Based on the findings, it will make recommendation

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to the Cabinet. That recommendation may include continuation of appointment, redirection of ministry, disability or retirement, or exit from this ministerial order by charges of ineffectiveness. The reports will be kept with the clergyperson's permanent file.

Within one month of the Intervention Team's recommendation: The Cabinet will receive the Intervention Team's recommendation and make a decision, with full documentation, based on the evidence of progress toward effectiveness and integration of learnings. If there is insufficient evidence of growth, the Cabinet will initiate the exit process.

Within two weeks of the cabinet's decision: The District Superintendent will meet with the clergyperson to present the Cabinet's decision, and to provide information about any severance package that is being offered, about further career counseling, pensions, and health benefit issues.

The clergyperson will again be offered the opportunity to exit voluntarily by signing the *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office* (See the current Book of Discipline.)

If the clergyperson declines to exit voluntarily, then a complaint will be filed by the District Superintendent and the procedures for due process in an administrative complaint, as outlined in the current *Book of Discipline*, shall be followed.

With the Board of Ordained Ministry's recommendation for exit, the clergyperson (and spouse if desired) will be given the opportunity to meet with an Exit Team consisting of the

- Pensions and Health Benefits Officer
- Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry
- Dean of the Cabinet, and with
- A Career Counselor.

At the next Annual Conference: The action for discontinuance of ministerial orders will be effective.