

A DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT'S FIRST YEAR

A report on research with new
United Methodist District Superintendents

by Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Lewis Center for Church Leadership
Wesley Theological Seminary

2005

Description of the Project

In 2004-2005, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary administered a four-part survey of new United Methodist District Superintendents in their first year of service. Forty-nine of the eighty-three superintendents appointed for the first time in 2004 participated in this survey. The goal of the research was to identify key leadership development issues for new superintendents.

The effort was addressed at identifying the competencies needed as individuals take on the role of District Superintendent, how well prepared they are, and where additional skills are needed to fulfill the new role. The research also resulted in series of more general findings about the relative importance of a superintendent's various activities and the challenges and opportunities facing their churches. The findings can help other new superintendents as they begin their work.

Four surveys were administered at four different times during the year, focusing on different seasons of a superintendent's year.

- **Becoming a District Superintendent.** This research addresses the time from when the new superintendents learned of their appointments until officially beginning after annual conference.
- **Before the Fall.** This section focuses on their early weeks and months in office.
- **The Charge Conference Season.** This part covers September through December.
- **The Appointment-Making Season.** The unit covers January until annual conference.

Most of the inquiries were open-ended questions. As patterns began to emerge in the responses, subsequent surveys used ranking methods to hone in on specifics and prioritize opinions. A series of snapshots emerged on issues and concerns related to the specific time periods. Across the four surveys, conclusions surfaced about perceptions of a superintendent's most important roles and the needs, and the problems and opportunities facing churches. The concluding survey sought an overall assessment of these more general issues.

The report that follows includes:

- 1) a profile of respondents
- 2) a summary of findings
- 3) general findings
- 4) recommendations
- 5) snapshots of questions and answers pertaining to the four time periods

Profile of Survey Respondents

Survey Pool

59% of Eligible New DSs Participated in the Survey

New DSs in 2004	88
Repeat DSs (subtracted)	5
Total Eligible to Participate	83
Participating in Survey	49 (59%)

Age

Average Age of Participants was 52

Average	52
Median (half older, half younger)	52
Mode (single age most represented)	53
Range	40 - 60

Gender

70% of Participants were Male

Female	30%
Male	70%

Racial/Ethnic

88% of Participants were White

Causasian/White	88%
African American	9%
Asian American	3%

Years since Ordination as Elder

The Average Number of Years Participants had Served as Elders was 22

Average	22
Median (half fewer years, half more)	23
Mode (number of years most represented)	24
Range	8-43

Jurisdiction

The North Central and Southeastern Jurisdictions were most represented in the survey

North Central	27%
Southeastern	27%
Northeastern	21%
South Central	15%
Western	10%

Summary of Findings

General Findings

- Survey respondents identified building trust and relationships, making good appointments, being present and visible, and promoting clergy effectiveness and accountability as their most important activities.
- The new superintendents identified skill in coaching congregations toward growth and renewal, conflict management skills, and supervision skills as the competencies they most needed to grow in to fulfill their new role.
- The survey found that making disciples, congregational revitalization, and leadership development were seen as the most pressing needs of their districts.
- The new superintendents viewed making disciples, clergy growth and development, and congregational revitalization as the greatest opportunities in their districts.
- When asked at the end of their first year if they could go back to when they were asked to be a superintendent, virtually all said they would still accept.

Findings Related to the Specific Time Periods

- The period before beginning their new role is often stressful for newly appointed superintendents, with the need to juggle preparing for their new responsibilities, caring for the congregation they are leaving, and family transition.
- Before beginning, many superintendents found it helpful for their predecessors to provide background information on churches and clergy and an orientation to the district office and procedures. They also appreciated orientation to conference/cabinet expectations.
- Many of the new superintendents reported they would have appreciated more help in understanding their new role and getting organized.
- In the early weeks, new appointees felt it important to learn by talking with district clergy and laity and with other superintendents. The importance of establishing healthy physical and spiritual routines and avoiding over commitment was noted.
- The first charge conference season was “learn as you go” for many. Looking back, they saw the need for more pre-conference preparation with clergy and congregations, better scheduling, and more effective formats and agendas.
- Superintendents emerge from their first round of charge conferences with a more informed understanding of the district, often encouraged by what they learned.
- The special needs and challenges of smaller churches became apparent to some of the new superintendents through charge conferences and appointment-making season.
- The new superintendents observed the need for thorough preparation as they approached appointment making, communicating with both pastors and SPRCs and studying relevant information such as compensation packages.
- Most new superintendents were pleased by their cabinet’s approach to appointments. Almost universally, they felt good about the collegiality and the discernment processes of the cabinet. They felt good appointments resulted.
- Some of the appointment challenges reported were difficulties in getting pastors to move, dealing with unrealistic clergy expectations, and placing ineffective pastors.
- If the Discipline were changed, 22% of respondents would discontinue “guaranteed appointments” and 17% would make it easier to exit ineffective pastors from the system.
- Sixty percent said a pastor’s initial appointment should be more than one year.

General Findings

A District Superintendent's Most Important Activities

- **Building trust and relationships**
- **Making good appointments**
- **Being present and visible**
- **Promoting clergy effectiveness and accountability**

Others: Encouragement, Leading and modeling deep spirituality, Dealing with conflicted situations, Leadership development, Mentoring and supporting clergy, Strengthening the connection, Congregational revitalization, Strategic planning

Areas of Competency Where New District Superintendents Report a Need to Grow

- **Skill in coaching congregations toward growth and renewal**
- **Conflict management skills**
- **Supervision skills**

Others: Knowledge of the Discipline, Knowledge of conference policies, especially health and pension; knowledge of candidacy and ordained ministry policies, Ability to manage time and set priorities, Administrative skills.

Most Pressing Needs New Superintendents See in their Districts

- **Making disciples**
- **Congregational revitalization**
- **Leadership development**

Others: Clergy morale/covenant, Visioning, Stewardship and finance, Apportionment payments

Greatest Opportunities New Superintendents See in their Districts

- **Making Disciples**
- **Clergy Growth and Development**
- **Congregational revitalization**

Others: Partnerships among congregations, Clergy morale/covenant, Leadership development, Visioning, Hispanic ministries, Starting new congregations

How Superintendents See the State of United Methodism in their Districts

- **Most life and energy is around mission engagement**
- **Greatest strength is mission engagement**
- **Greatest challenge is making disciples**

The Best News! Most Would Say "Yes" Again to Being a District Superintendent

When asked at the end of their first year, "Knowing what you do now, how would you have responded when asked to be a superintendent?" the responses were very positive.

- **70% would definitely say "yes" again**
- **19% would express reservations but serve if the bishop still felt it was the right appointment**
- **7% would say "yes" because of the connectional covenant but with some reluctance**
- **4% would ask not to serve and do everything possible with in the system not to serve as DS**

Recommendations

- **A superintendent's primary focus should be effective pastoral leadership.** No superintendent can make up for poor local leadership. Superintendents need to work daily to improve their district's pastoral leadership, not only through new appointments, but by retraining pastors and encouraging the truly ineffective to retire or exit the system.
- **Making disciples should be the key goal.** New superintendents identified making disciples, congregational revitalization, and leadership development as the three most pressing needs of their districts. Rather than seeing three separate concerns, making disciples can drive congregational revitalization and leadership efforts.
- **Mission energy should be harnessed to make disciples.** Since energy around mission engagement is the greatest strength in districts, it is imperative to build on this for making disciples.
- **Adequate training and orientation should be provided for new superintendents.** Their key new skills needs are in coaching, conflict, and supervision. In addition, conferences should provide an orientation to include cabinet policies and procedures; conference policies, especially those pertaining to health insurance and pensions; and the candidacy process.
- **New superintendents should schedule Sabbath time.** New superintendents need to build in Sabbath time both before their move and during the summer before the charge conference season. Few are prepared for the exhausting demands of the fall.
- **New superintendents should prepare more for charge conferences.** Superintendents felt more preparation would have improved their first round of charge conferences.
- **New superintendents should prepare more for appointment making.** Most superintendents spent much time preparing to make appointments, yet realized later they should have done more. Finding pastors for very small membership churches, often falling solely to the superintendent, had not been a concern soon enough for many.
- **When naming new superintendents, Bishops might consider the following factors:**
 - It helps to name new superintendents as early as possible.
 - As with any change, how the timing affects family issues should be considered.
 - Transition will be more difficult for superintendents selected if they have served in their previous appointment either a very brief time or a very long time.
 - Give great care in naming the new superintendent's successor. A good successor helps the superintendent's transition.
 - While new superintendents find it helpful to meet with the cabinet before taking office, doing so while still serving their churches is a great source of stress. Having them attend some but not all of the cabinet meetings might work better.

Snapshot I - Becoming a District Superintendent: Opportunities and Challenges before Moving Day

In what ways was your predecessor as superintendent most helpful to you during these months?

- **Background on churches, clergy, and district issues – 25% of responses to this question**
Gave me background on each including any issues that were particularly important at the moment...explained where there were issues, concerns and opportunities...left a short bio of each pastor and some reflections about each congregation.
- **District office files and records – 15% of responses**
Walking me through the office files and procedures...invited me to spend a day each of orientation with him and the administrative assistant...leaving good files and records...helping me to understand the files related to pastors and congregations, the location of congregations, the structure of leadership, and the finances of the district...an orientation to the office, its maintenance and operations...a marvelous filing system in place...understand how to handle expenses.
- **Caring extended to me and my family – 15% of responses**
Was very caring about the adjustment of my family...invited my family for dinner at the District parsonage and allowed us to look through the house, which meant a lot to my children...very gracious as we worked through moving arrangements...been very affirming...helpful to offer resources and give encouragement...returned calls quickly when I had questions...giving information about the parsonage, district and community...left maps and instructions for ongoing situations.
- **Resource person for my questions – 12% of responses**
Been a helpful resource for specific questions...easily accessible...willing to research answers to questions...been available to offer me insights and information as needed...instructions to call as needed.
- **Attending Cabinet meetings together – 10% of responses**
Sat by him at Cabinet meetings and he collected information for me when I was not able to be there...discussing the way the cabinet operates helped me understand the process.

What other information, advice, resources, and experience were you given before officially beginning that were particularly helpful?

- **Attending Cabinet meetings – 22% of responses to this question**
- **Conversations with other superintendents – 21% of responses**
Conversations with a former DS who is a personal friend...conversations with two DSs who served this district...other DSs on the cabinet...meals during cabinet meetings were particularly informative--the informal conversations were very helpful...She has also been available to talk about issues that come up for me as the only woman on the cabinet...conversations with former superintendents.
- **Conference planned training and manuals – 12% of responses**
One-day training with manual from the Cabinet...cabinet secretary provided a Cabinet Policy notebook and appointment information...Bishop shared appointment expectations...I received a binder showing the picture of each pastor, their church and parsonage, congregational profile and directions to each church...annual calendar with what needed to be done at various times of the year...a training was held to go over conference structure, pension/health insurance information.
- **Assigned a mentor and other acts of caring by cabinet – 10% of responses**
A mentor helped me process information, protocol, and procedure...the idea of the cabinet and spouses as 'family' was lifted up...a 'veteran' spouse 'adopted' each of the new spouses...colleagues prayed for me.

Please share any other observations you have about the period from learning of your appointment until beginning your official duties.

- **Difficulty of serving in current ministry and participating in Cabinet meetings – 23% of responses to this question**

It is difficult doing two jobs at once...It was a very busy time, trying to make all the cabinet meetings while continuing to pastor, and to help the existing church move toward transition...I was swamped...Extremely hectic schedule...Continued to be pastor of present appointment, - Immediately sitting on Cabinet, - Helping a church in transition...Very difficult to attend cabinet meetings and care for a congregation in grief over many changes...Worked two jobs for 6 months and then hit the ground running.

- **Stressful time, overwhelmed, especially family stress – 15% of responses**

Stressful for family...little time to process change...Family was greatly affected by this move...like to have had more notice to begin the transition...Little time to pull local church staff together before leaving as well as gearing up for new responsibilities.

- **Difficult local church transition because of length of tenure or mismatch in successor – 11% of responses**

Because I'd only been at my previous appointment. for a short time, the process of leaving was difficult for both me and the congregation...It was a difficult transition from the local church because I had not been there very long...It would have been helpful if my appointment had been interpreted better for the congregation...if the congregation had been in less pain, it would have been easier to come into the new position.

Looking back, what do you wish you had done, learned, or asked before beginning your official duties?

- **Help getting organized and with procedural details – 21% of responses to this question**

Needed some orientation materials or checklist from the Cabinet...knowing what to do to get started the first month...How to best allocate time, and arrange the charge conference and clergy interview schedules...I struggled to get organized after I started...the systems I had used in pastoral ministry did not work very well...more about how the office is set up...what do you do when a church member calls to complain.

- **Lack of time for what was needed because of late appointment – 17% of responses**

- **Understanding what I was getting into and better overview of position – 12% of responses**

There are many days when I wish that I had just said 'no' to the 'invitation'...I did not really understand what was involved in being a member of the Cabinet...I'm not sure that any amount of training can prepare you for the difference between being a local pastor and being a superintendent...What does it mean to be a superintendent?

Snapshot II – Before the Fall: Making the Most of the Summer Months

What did you do in these early weeks and months that was helpful and that you might recommend to other new superintendents to consider doing in the future?

- **Prayer and spiritual life, set healthy routines of exercise, rest, time off – 25% of responses to this question**

The most important thing I did was establish a daily spiritual discipline. . . Begin thinking about how you will set boundaries and set an example of healthy ministry and healthy living for the clergy. . . Gave close attention to my daily walk with God. . . Exercised regularly. . . I prayed a lot. . . I began a more intense devotional life, knowing I was moving into a very demanding position. . . I took time to rest after the chaos of the move. . . I tried very hard in the early months to get enough sleep every day. . . I kept in touch with family and friends. . . Prayer! . . . I secured a spiritual director. . . I took vacation before charge conferences began. . . I spent as much time as possible resting, and reflecting on what my priorities as a superintendent would be. . . Prayed for each congregation and pastor over and over.

- **Talk with clergy and laity of district – 20% of responses**

Listened to clergy and lay persons. . . I quickly met with groupings of pastors. . . Did the same with the lay leaders of all congregations. . . Held Listening Sessions. . . Met pastors and SPRCs. . . I visited pastors that the previous DS had identified as having problems in their congregations. . . I visited every congregation and asked three questions: 1) What is happening here in ministry that is exciting? 2) Given your present circumstances, what do you believe God wants you to do? 3) What do you expect from your DS?

- **Talk with other current and former superintendents – 17% of responses**

Constantly consulted other superintendents for their advice. . . I talked with other superintendents on my cabinet and superintendent friends from other conferences. . . I asked for help from other superintendents and their assistants. . . Talked with friends who are former DSs. . . Regular consultation with mentors on Cabinet.

If you did any things in this early period that were not helpful or did not work, what were they?

- **Tried to do too much, calendar issues, over commitment – 22% of responses to this question**
- **Didn't ask enough questions and consult with other DSs enough – 17% of responses**
- **Files, office, administrative assistant, and organization should have received more attention – 17% of responses**
- **Time for rest and renewal – 11% of responses**

What spiritual, professional, personal, or other patterns were most disrupted by your transition to this new role?

- **Spiritual practices of Bible study and prayer – 20% of responses to this question**
- **Family life and adjustments – 19% of responses**

Snapshot III - Making the Rounds

The Charge Conference Season

What did you do to prepare for Charge Conferences that was helpful that you might recommend to other new superintendents?

- **Have Charge Conference reports turned in BEFORE the conference – 11% of responses to this question**

Looking back, what do you wish you had done, learned, or asked before beginning Charge Conferences?

- **DS preparation or pre-conference actions – 26% of responses to this question**

I wish I had created a form to help them self describe their goals, values, and accomplishments. . . I wish that I had given more complete directions about expectations. . . Knowing better where some of the churches were and travel times between. . . I wish that I had asked to meet with the PPRC before the conference. . . I wish that I had asked for representatives of youth ministries to speak at the conferences. . . I met with the SPRC Committees one hour before but did not make myself clear on what I wanted. . . I wish I had asked pastors to place greater emphasis on preparing for the nomination of the Committee on Lay Leadership. . . The process of nominations from the floor was sometimes long and awkward. . . I would have absolutely required that all materials be in my office three days ahead of time. . . I wish I had supplied a sample pastoral reporting outline for the pastors' written reports. . . it would have been good to have gotten more background on the churches by reading files, histories, etc.

- **Pastor's role and preparation – 23% of responses**

Insist that pastors be present at least half an hour early prepared to go through the paperwork...I wish I had asked more direct questions of the pastors in the one-to-one supervisory meetings that took place 7-10 days prior to each charge conference. . . I might have indicated to the pastors that part of my supervision would be based on the quality of the charge conference. . . Studied previous charge conference papers to judge the level of skill of pastor in preparations. . . pastor's report was too long. . . prepared guidelines for some, especially part time local pastors.

- **Scheduling – 20% of responses**

I will schedule more of them earlier in the fall. . . Scheduled the conferences differently...more on weekends, including Saturdays, fewer evenings...more in clusters. . . allow fewer scheduling changes. . . I wish I could have begun the conferences earlier.

- **Format – 11% of responses**

I wish I had used more of a worship format. . . I wish I had not asked so many questions of them. . . I would be more encouraging of interactive and participatory charge conferences. . . I wish I had incorporated the reports and actions into an act of mission.

In conducting Charge Conferences, what did you do that served you well and from which other new superintendents might learn?

- **Focused on getting to know and getting to be known – 18% of responses to this question**
- **Had a question or set of questions I asked at each conference – 18% of responses**

What is one thing that makes this church special to you?...What is one thing your church has done recently that you're really proud of?...What is a dream you think God has for your church and its future?...What ministry of the church are you passionate about?...What character of the Bible tells some aspect of your personal story?...Tell me what else I need to know about your church.

- **Focused on a celebration of ministries and kept everything positive – 15% of responses**

If you did any things during Charge Conferences that did not work well, what were they?

- **Format and agenda issues – 33% of responses to this question**

Needed to encourage the pastors to include lay leaders more...asking too many questions in the preparation packet...poor multimedia reports.

- **DS preparation issues – 17% of responses**

I did not always adequately respond to the anger at 'The Conference' in the difficult situations...some churches were threatened by the cluster charge conferences...needed to do a better job of preparing churches that did not have their own charge conference...multiple point charges make preparing and receiving forms difficult...

- **Pastor and local church preparation issues – 17% of responses**

Churches need to take it more seriously...The review of the churches plans for the future was weak in a lot of places because the planning was weak in the church.

- **Reports issues – 17% of responses**

Reports not completed...salary worksheets were often incomplete and incorrectly done.

- **Schedule issues – 17% of responses**

One was on a Sunday morning during worship, never again...too many nights...too many date changes.

In what ways have your perceptions of your district changed based on the Charge Conference experiences?

- **Greater understanding – 31% of responses to this question**

I have a better understanding of the challenges and struggles of various charges and pastors. . . Know which churches are doing well, which need help, which pastors are providing good leadership. . . Before conferences, my perceptions were not very informed; now they are. . . I think I got a more realistic picture of the health of each congregation. . . I was able to form my own opinions and they were not necessarily the same as the pastor's assessment.

- **Encouraged – 28% of responses**

Most of the charges are doing very well. . . There is much more vitality in the churches than I anticipated. . . significant sharing of the Good News is occurring. . . The UMC continues to have a significant presence in communities. . . An overwhelming sense of strength in the local church. . . Small rural circuits doing effective evangelism, mission support and hands on caring ministries. . . I was delighted to discover the ministries in the congregations. . . They are much healthier than I'd been led to believe. . . It was very encouraging to hear positive reports of ministry from almost every church. . . I am very encouraged.

- **Needs of small membership churches – 10% of responses**

Snapshot IV – It Always Seemed So Simple Before: The Appointment-Making Season

What did you do to prepare for appointment making that was helpful that you might recommend to other new superintendents?

- Met with pastors to discuss appointments – 26% of responses to this question
- Studied information on churches and pastors desiring a change – 22% of responses
- Met with SPRCs or chairs to discuss appointments – 20% of responses

Looking back, what do you wish you had done, learned, or asked before beginning appointment making?

- Done better preparation – 29% of responses to this question

I wish I had had the details of pastors' compensation packages more firmly in my mind... thought more about two-point moves and cooperatives ...more familiar with all the clergy in the Conference... Anticipate changes and think through possible appointment runs...I tried to put together some new charges during the appt process and under estimated the amount of time it would take.

- Realized the difficulty of filling smaller churches – 16% of responses

I wish I had been trained on how to do a search for pastors when there is a shortage...spent more time getting to know the retired clergy of my district since I have empty pulpits staring at me... During the end of appointment making when part time positions are left and possibilities were slim it was "each DS for him/herself"...did not realize that it was almost completely on me to find and place pastoral leadership in small churches...I didn't know some of the capable Lay Speakers who might ...supply part time appointments.

- Given attention to cabinet process – 16% of responses

Had a practice session with the cabinet prior to the actual session...had challenged our cabinet to talk about the unspoken rules, ...Such things include we don't want pastors to take a cut in pay or to be increased in salary by more than a certain percentage and we want to protect the pastors on our districts from moves as if we own them...I had been more insistent that ALL appointments be done in the order of salary rather than giving in to an anxious DSs...I could have observed last year's appointment process.

In the appointment making process, what went well?

- Careful discernment process by cabinet – 28% of responses to this question

All superintendents showed a real concern for making the best appointment for all the churches ... not just for their districts...prayerful discernment of the whole cabinet... when a pastor was appointed who needed some work, we made ... a plan to get him or her help they might need...allowed people to say no for missional reasons without being threatened...Making sure missional strategies are foremost.

- Collegial spirit of the cabinet's work – 24% of responses

Communication went well...working relationships in the Cabinet...Collegiality...Cabinet worked well as a team...good ...I felt 'heard' by the cabinet most of the time...relatively little conflict...

- We made good appointments – 15% of responses

I was able to place new pastors effectively...All full-time appointments I had were filled easily, ...very creative appointments made... in my District I got some very good leadership in churches that have potential to grow...our process worked well to match pastors and churches...

- Introductory meetings went well – 13% of responses

The process of meeting with SPR committees and the introduction of pastors went well with only one exception...Most PPR Committees seemed very open to receiving a new pastor, even when they were grieving the loss of a much loved and appreciated pastor...Most introductions of pastors went well.

In the appointment making process, what did not go well?

- **Difficulty in getting pastors to move – 20% of responses to this question**

Dealing with a pastor who did not want to move and ended up taking a salary cut...Moving a pastor who had been in place many years and who does not know how to say good-bye...Elders need to really understand they are truly itinerate preachers ...there was more resistance to certain appointments than in previous years ...Some pastors lacked greatly a servant spirit... Special limitations expressed by the pastors who either needed to move or who wanted to move were a pain ...The authority of the bishop and cabinet was greatly questioned by some pastors and spouses...churches and pastors that did not understand the process and were not willing to compromise...

- **Cabinet process – 15% of responses**

Sometimes we forced appointments rather than taking the time to listen to one another... Trying to be creative opened door to problems...There were some major back-ups necessitating re-running several chains... Though we agreed to be truth telling to pastors and churches, not all the DSs were and that came back to bite the process...I felt like I was always a step behind everyone else...I also felt that as the rookie, others were trying to see how far I would go in accepting the "less desirables."

- **Unrealistic expectations by clergy – 11% of responses**

Cranky clergy, expecting all of their location, situation, and salary demands to be met... They have higher expectations than are realistic, or do not want to live in most of the areas of the conference...Clergy who wanted/needed to move but did not want to lose salary and only wanted to move to certain places...Itinerancy is not well understood in the days of two employment families...

- **Placing ineffective clergy – 11% of responses**

Having to place elders who are not effective...Pastors who are difficult to place... The struggle over those who are ineffective...Too many ineffective clergy on the table, not enough really good leadership to go around.

Based on your experience in appointment making this year, what will you do differently next year?

- **Understand churches and pastors better – 25% of responses to this question**

I will try to get a better understanding of the gifts and graces for those clergy who are on the move list...Try to develop a greater knowledge of the spirit of churches...more conversations with pastors/churches...Monitor and document the effectiveness of pastors...push hard and early for church profiles to be done...have all of the church profiles and the pastors' profiles on a CD for my laptop...make sure I have every pastor's age.

- **Communicate more with Staff Parish Relations Committees – 16% of responses**

Speak personally with the chairs of the SPRCs where I may be receiving ambiguous messages...Meet with more SPRCs in the process...Consultation with SPRCs in those churches where a change in pastoral leadership or in charge alignment might be needed to enhance missional effectiveness...Being much more intentional in having SPRCs describe who they are and what they need...do assessments at our SPRC meetings that precede church conferences this fall so we'll have information earlier...

- **Be more strategic and proactive – 16% of responses**

Perhaps not disclose the options for the clergy up for a move...it may have set them up for disappointment...I will not share as quickly churches that I feel might need a change...once that information is out you cannot get it back...have more definitive appointment plans prepared rather than trying to depend upon my colleagues to assist...be more assertive in pre-appointment making conversations with pastors.

- **Reinforce Itinerancy – 13% of responses**

Encourage more moving...Be more directive...Some pastors need to be reminded that if they are not open to the entire conference may not have an appointment available to them...Everyone will be offered an appointment, but if they turn them down, they might be encouraged to do something different...being more concise with pastors in supervisory conversations about what exactly their 'tethers' are...Prepare my moving clergy with a 'reality' conversation: no guarantees of salary increases, no guarantee all conditions will be met, and try to get them to prioritize what is most important on their appointment 'wish list'...The bishop is considering asking clergy to sign a statement next fall regarding their willingness/ability to be fully itinerant.

Given the provisions of the current Discipline, how would you suggest changing appointment procedures in your conference?

- **None – 24% of responses**

- **Issues around non-itinerating clergy – 19% of responses**

Weed out people who are not truly itinerant and bring location issues before the cabinet that have merit...strongly remind the elders of our covenant to itinerate...clergy who are fully itinerant should be given priority over those who are not...have a provision for elders who do not want to iterate to lose their right to an appointment.

- **Salary issues – 14% of responses**

Move away from salary and tenure issues toward leadership qualities and congregational needs...compensate clergy on years of experience as well as merit, so there would not be such huge salary disparities and so people could be assured of a decent income even if they are moving to a smaller area.

- **Which appointments should be made first – 14% of responses**

Each district was allowed to identify churches with a lot of potential and to make those appointments first...Work on problem appointee's at the very first...if the problem persist all during the process then start serious discussions with BOM.

If the Discipline were changed, how would you suggest changing the appointment process?

- **Discontinue “guaranteed” appointments – 22% of responses**
- **Make it easier to exit ineffective pastors – 17% of responses**

Should the initial appointment of a pastor to a congregation should be for longer than one year?

- **Yes – 60% of responses**

Of those saying yes, 53% thought the initial appoint should be three years, 27% said two years, 13% said five years and 7% said four years.

- **No – 40% of responses**

About the Study

This research was made possible by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., as part of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Initiative.

Lovett H. Weems, Jr., is the designer and primary author of the study. Dr. Weems is distinguished professor of church leadership and founding director of the G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. Previously, he served eighteen years as president of Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. Previously, he was a local pastor in Mississippi for many years. Ann A. Michel, associate director of the Lewis Center edited the report. Joe Arnold, executive assistant of the Lewis Center was research assistant.

About the Lewis Center for Church Leadership

The G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership seeks to advance the understanding of Christian leadership and promote the effective and faithful practice of Christian leadership in the church and in society. The center is building a new vision for church leadership grounded in faith, informed by knowledge, and exercised in effective action. It seeks a holistic understanding of Christian leadership that brings together theology and management, scholarship and practice, research and application.

Supporting Wesley Seminary's mission as a church-based seminary, the Lewis Center serves as a resource for clergy and lay leaders, congregations, and denominational leaders. Through teaching, research, publications, and training, the Lewis Center supports visionary spiritual leaders and addresses those key leadership issues so crucial to the church's faithful witness. Current initiatives focus on encouraging excellence in the early years of ministry, sustaining pastoral excellence, and supporting vital congregations.

Those wishing to view or subscribe to the Center's free bi-weekly online newsletter may go to www.churchleadership.com.

For more information about the project, contact Lovett H. Weems, Jr., lovettw@wesleysem.edu, or Ann Michel, amichel@wesleysem.edu. For a pdf file of the report, contact Joe Arnold, jearnold@wesleysem.edu.



Building a New Vision for Church Leadership

4500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
202-885-8757
lewiscenter@wesleysem.edu
www.churchleadership.com