

Bishop's Report To The Judicial Council Of The United Methodist Church

1. This is the form which the Judicial Council is required to provide for the reporting of decisions of law made by bishops in response to questions of law submitted to them in writing during the regular business of a conference session. The reporting of such decisions is mandatory, whether or not they are appealed. (See ¶¶ 56, and 2609 of 2008 *The Book of Discipline*, and Judicial Council *Decision* 153, ¶ 3 under "jurisdiction.")

2. This form may also be used to report decisions on questions of law when such decisions are appealed by one-fifth of the members of the conference. (See ¶¶ 56 and 2609 of 2008 *The Book of Discipline*, and Judicial Council *Decision* 153, ¶ 2 under "jurisdiction.")

Please check whether this report is under 1 or 2

Report of an episcopal decision made by Bishop Alfred Wesley Gwinn, Jr.

during the session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, meeting at

Raleigh, NC on June 14, 2012

Subject: The Reverend William C. Simpson, Jr., retired elder in full connection, requested a ruling of law with five questions about the Report of the Transition Team leading our transition from 12 districts to 8 during the general session of The North Carolina Annual Conference meeting at Raleigh, North Carolina.

Please attach the following relevant documents and information:

If under No. 1 - The text of the written request for decision; the decision, and, optionally, the reasoning behind it; notation of appeal, if taken; pertinent background information, etc.

If under No. 2 - The parliamentary situation; the decision, and, optionally, the reasoning behind it; transcript of the appeal taken; pertinent background information, etc.

DECISION OF LAW

Bishop Alfred Wesley Gwinn, Jr.

North Carolina Conference, Southeastern Jurisdiction, of the United Methodist Church

WRITTEN REQUEST FOR DECISION ON QUESTIONS OF LAW:

On June 14, 2012, during the general session, of The North Carolina Annual Conference meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina (the "Annual Conference"), Bishop Gwinn received into the record of the Annual Conference a written request for decisions of law on a series of questions made by The Reverend William C. Simpson, Jr., an elder in full connection and retired pastor in the Annual Conference. Rev. Simpson posed his questions after the submission by the Conference Transition Team of its report and during a period open for questions from the floor addressed by the Transition Team Chairperson, The Reverend Linda Taylor, and by team member The Reverend Harold Cleveland May III. A copy of Rev. Simpson's request, with appendices and a supporting brief, is attached in its entirety and labeled as "Exhibit 1." The Transition Team Report (attached hereto and labeled as "Exhibit 2") was subsequently accepted and approved by the Annual Conference. A copy of the minutes of the Annual Conference has previously been submitted to the Secretary of the Judicial Council by the Annual Conference Secretary.

The request from Rev. Simpson was phrased in the form of five questions. Rev. Simpson's questions were as follows:

Question 1. Did the Transition Team established by the 2012 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference and other officials of annual conference have authority under the 2008 Book of Discipline to take actions resulting in changing the structure of the Annual Conference, namely in the closing of all district offices, terminating administrative employees in the districts, and moving all administrative functions to a centralized conference office without disclosure, discussion, debate or approval by the Annual Conference?

Question 2. Does the North Carolina Annual Conference have authority under the 2008 Book of Discipline to take actions changing the role and function of district superintendents? Namely, do the Transition Team and the Bishop of the North Carolina Annual Conference have authority to determine primary tasks of the superintendent as other than those defined in ¶¶ 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, and 424, by affirming,

that the primary tasks of the district superintendents are coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision casting and that the superintendents must be freed for relationship building among congregations and pastors for those tasks.

Question 3. Do the Transition Team and other officials of the Annual Conference have authority to change the structure of the conference in creating a new office (separate and distinct from administrative assistants) termed assistant district superintendents (who may be lay or clergy), the new assistants being named by the Bishop, giving them responsibilities formerly reserved to district superintendents (under ¶¶ 419-424 of the 2008 Book of Discipline)?

Question 4. Do the actions being taken with regard to changing structure, closing of districts, changing of the role and function of the district superintendent and provision for new district officials, viz. assistant district superintendents, usurp the powers reserved to the General Conference in Article IV of the Constitution, ¶16.15? This paragraph states,

The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional, and in the exercise of this power shall have authority as follows: ...To allow the annual conferences to utilize structures unique to their mission, other mandated structures notwithstanding. [Book of Discipline, ¶ 16 & ¶ 16.15]

Question 5. Does the action taken by the Transition Team discriminate against rural church, clergy and laity in sparsely populated areas by distancing them from district superintendents and the supervisory connection thus giving unfair advantage to the churches located in the urban areas?

THE DECISION OF BISHOP GWINN AND REASONING BEHIND THE DECISION

Question 1. The 2011 Annual Conference approved the Report of the Task Force on District Superintendency, which is reproduced, labeled as “Appendix A,” and attached to Rev. Simpson’s questions. Presumably, Rev. Simpson meant to refer to actions taken by the 2011 Annual Conference, not the 2012 Annual Conference in reference to that report. By his first question, Rev. Simpson asks whether the Conference Transition Team, which reported to the 2012 Annual Conference, had the authority to “take actions resulting in changing the structure of the Annual Conference, namely in the closing of all district offices, terminating administrative employees in the districts, and moving all administrative functions to a centralized conference office without disclosure, discussion, debate or approval by the Annual Conference.”

The 2011 Annual Conference approved the recommendations of the Task Force on the District Superintendency made after two years of study, which recommendations included without limitation the following:

- “That the number of districts be reduced from twelve to eight (*The Book of Discipline* reserves to the Bishop, in consultation with the Cabinet, the setting of the district lines subsequent to the Annual Conference setting the number – see para. 415.4).
- “That each district have a full-time administrative assistant to handle all non-appointive and nonjudicial administrative matters related to the work of the district, thus freeing the superintendent for more time in the charges and with the pastors.
- “That the Bishop name a transition team to assist the various districts in matters of transfer of property and assets, and creating new district boards and agencies.
- “That district offices be relocated out of the district parsonages where this is still the practice.”

Although the Report of the Task Force on District Superintendency was mistakenly omitted from the 2011 Conference Journal, it was clearly adopted by the Annual Conference and was made

available on the Conference's website by a link immediately alongside one for the 2011 Conference Journal.

The Report of the Transition Team was presented in detail to the Annual Conference on June 14, 2012 by the Chairperson, The Reverend Linda Taylor, and by The Reverend Harold Cleveland May III, a member of the Team. After extensive questions and discussion, the report was accepted and approved as submitted. The report addressed in detail how the district superintendents would be expected to model leadership for all pastors, connecting personally with each pastor on a regular basis, and acting as a coach, mentor and team builder. This would be facilitated by the district superintendent working from a "virtual office" and supported by an Assistant to the District Superintendent. Located in the United Methodist Building in Garner would be a District Receptionist, a District Administrative Coordinator, and a District Systems Administrator. The Report proposed that all district parsonages be sold and recommended that the funds from these sales be placed in an account to be used to pay housing allowances to the district superintendents.

Insofar as Rev. Simpson challenges the Transition Team's authority to take any of the above-named actions, the Conference's approval of the recommendations of the Task Force on District Superintendency and subsequently the Report of the Transition Team clearly rebuts any such argument. The 2011 Annual Conference not only approved this reorganization of the districts as envisioned by the Task Force, but approved the creation of the new positions as full-time administrative assistants with an entirely new set of job descriptions. This necessarily required termination of the former assistants and hiring for the new positions. Each District Board of Trustees, and then the 2012 Annual Conference, essentially approved the relocation of the district offices to "virtual" offices wherever the district superintendent resides, the hiring of the new full-time employees, and a centralized district office with a small number of support staff located in the Conference's building. The Transition Team also made recommendations concerning the transfer of district property and assets, including the sale of district parsonages. These actions were approved by the various District Conferences conducted pursuant to Paragraph 2517.2 of *The Book of Discipline*.

The Book of Discipline 2008 does not mandate any certain method of organizing district offices or the hiring of certain district staff. Instead, the *Discipline* gives the Conference Council on Finance and Administration ("CF&A") the duty to estimate the amount of financial support required for the district superintendents, their compensation, travel, staff, office and housing and to make recommendations to the Annual Conference for action. *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 614.1(a). The Conference CF&A approved this reorganization and budget as required by the *Discipline*.

Rev. Simpson in his Brief, a copy of which is attached hereto, chiefly argues that the Conference violated the requirements of Paragraph 610 of *The Book of Discipline 2008*. That Paragraph provides in part that "[t]he annual conference is responsible for structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to accomplish its purpose (¶ 601), with the exception of the mandated provisions of ¶¶ 635, 636, 639, 640, 647, 648." Rev. Simpson specifically cites Judicial Decisions 1147 and 1204 to support his claims.

In Decision 1147, the Judicial Council reversed the bishop's decision of law for the Dakotas Annual Conference based on that bishop's misinterpretation of Paragraph 610 of the *Discipline*. Contrary to the interpretations by that Annual Conference and bishop, the Judicial Council noted that an Annual Conference under Paragraph 610 has the responsibility to structure its ministries and administrative procedures in a manner that will enable it to accomplish its purposes, as defined in ¶ 601. But the second part of the same sentence (quoted above) limits the scope of how a Annual Conference may structure its operations and prohibits any changes to mandatory provisions contained in those paragraphs, including the composition, membership terms, lines of accountability, mission structure, etc., as well as any other mandatory provisions found elsewhere in the *Discipline*.

Decision 1204 was a declaratory decision by the Judicial Council which held that the South Carolina Annual Conference's newly adopted Transition Plan failed to "abide by all disciplinary mandates and Judicial Council Decisions in the creation of its new structure" as required by Judicial Council Decision 1147. The Judicial Council found that the South Carolina plan was deficient in terms of disciplinary mandates, particularly in its failure to give the Commission on Archives and History a place either in its programmatic organization or in the conference budget or budget for conference benevolences.

Here, Rev. Simpson fails to identify any fatal portion of the N.C. Annual Conference's plans that omits a structure or procedure mandated by the *Discipline*. There is no requirement in the *Discipline* that each district superintendent have a parsonage, a bricks-and-mortar office, or a clerical employee dedicated to that district superintendent. Instead, Rev. Simpson argues that certain portions of these changes were not voted upon by the Annual Conference. However, when necessary, each of these actions were taken by the appropriate District Conference or District Board of Trustees in accordance with Paragraph 2517.2. With respect to Rev. Simpson's question of intangible property held by the districts, such property would necessarily go to the surviving entity in the event of a merger under state nonprofit corporation law, since there is no contravening disciplinary provision. (See Paragraph 2517.) Although Paragraph 2517.3 contains certain provisions concerning distributions from the sale of parsonages, the Transition Team recommended, and the District Conferences and/or Boards of Trustees approved, transfer of the proceeds from the sale of district parsonages to a centralized fund to be used for a housing allowance for all the district superintendents. These steps were affirmed by the 2012 Annual Conference in accepting the Report of the Transition Team.

Question 2. In Question 2, Rev. Simpson questioned the Conference's authority under *The Book of Discipline 2008* to establish that the "primary tasks of the district superintendents are coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision casting," as was set forth in the Report of the Task Force on District Superintendency and approved by the 2011 Annual Conference.

The principles set forth in the Task Force's Report were not an attempt to override, and will not have the effect of overriding, the duties outlined in the *Book of Discipline* for a district superintendent. The tasks cited by Rev. Simpson do not conflict with the superintendent's role outlined in *The Book of Discipline* but actually complement the disciplinary provisions. For example, Paragraph 419 of the *Discipline* states that

The district superintendent shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy and of the churches in the communities of the district . . . by giving priority to the scheduling of time and effort for spiritual leadership, pastoral support, supervision, and encouragement to the clergy and to the churches of the district; [and] by encouraging their personal, spiritual, and professional growth;

This language sounds very much like coaching and mentoring and certainly does not conflict with the language of the Task Force and Transition Team reports. Similarly, Paragraph 420 emphasizes the spiritual leadership of the clergy in the district by modeling and encouraging spiritual formation, counseling with clergy and encouraging the building of covenantal community among the clergy. *The Book of Discipline* supports, and is consistent with, the superintendents' role envisioned by the Annual Conference. The use of the term "primary tasks" of the district superintendent was in no way an attempt to re-define the basic role of a superintendent under the *Discipline*. Instead, it was a means of focusing the attention of the superintendents and the entire Annual Conference on what is already identified as the "priority" in Paragraph 419. Nor does it remove any of the superintendents' other responsibilities as set forth in the *Discipline*.

Question 3. By Question 3, Rev. Simpson asked whether the Transition Team and officials of the Annual Conference have the authority to create new positions to be called "assistant district superintendents," who may be lay or clergy, and by giving them responsibilities formerly reserved to the district superintendents under *The Book of Discipline*.

Unfortunately, Rev. Simpson is mistaken on several counts. First, the Transition Team did not recommend the creation of new positions entitled "assistant district superintendents" but instead "assistants to the district superintendents." This distinction is important, because this was not a new "office," separate and distinct from the office of superintendent, but is a support person as mentioned in Paragraph 423.2 of *The Book of Discipline 2008*.

Second, the role envisioned for the assistants is to help with some of the scheduling and administrative duties of the district superintendent and thus free the district superintendent to do the primary tasks of coaching, mentoring, teaching, team building and vision casting. The Report of the Transition Team envisions that "[w]ork[ing] under the direct supervision of the superintendent," the assistant would "answer disciplinary questions, conflict management, property issues including closed churches, and resource district committees." Obviously, these duties focus primarily on administration rather than spiritual leadership, and the assistant would be closely supervised by the district superintendent in these respects. We are aware of no disciplinary provision which prohibits a district superintendent from overseeing support staff to accomplish some of these duties. In fact, some of these duties have been ably performed by experienced administrative assistants under appropriate supervision for many years.

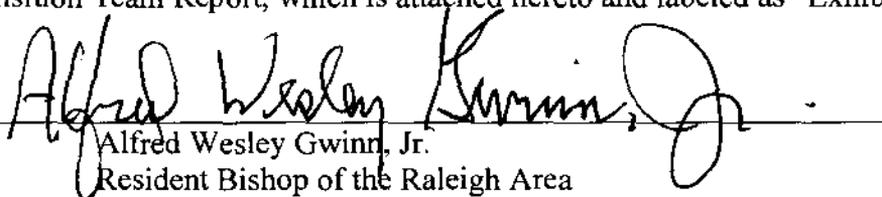
Finally, contrary to Rev. Simpson's claims, the new assistants were not named by the bishop but were hired after being interviewed by the leadership committee of the Transition Team and by each of the district superintendents in the eight new districts. The assistants will still be supervised by their respective superintendents, and their roles do not contradict any of the responsibilities of superintendents as set forth in *The Book of Discipline*.

Question 4. In Question 4, Rev. Simpson asks whether the actions recommended by the Transition Team and approved by the Annual Conference “usurp the powers reserved to the General Conference in Articles IV of the Constitution, ¶ 16.15.” As set forth in detail in response to the previous questions, the Annual Conference and its Transition Team did not change any mandated structures for annual conferences set forth in *The Book of Discipline*. Thus, the plan is constitutional and fully complies with Paragraph 16.15 of the *Discipline* and the criteria identified for changes in conference structure in Decision 1147 and the other applicable decisions of the Judicial Council.

Questions 5. By Question 5, Rev. Simpson asks whether “the action taken by the Transition Team discriminate[s] against rural church, clergy and laity in sparsely populated areas by distancing them from district superintendents and the supervisory connection thus giving unfair advantage to the churches located in the urban areas.” In his accompanying Brief, Rev. Simpson argues that the reorganization and geographical expansion of the districts will further distance the superintendents from local churches in the rural areas which make up much of the Annual Conference.

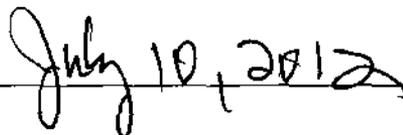
Because this question is wholly speculative and not supported by any facts evident in the Annual Conference’s actions, it is moot, hypothetical and improper and does not require a substantive response. In fact, it ignores the clear intent and assumptions of the Transition Team; namely, that the new model of organization will result in district superintendents being more present, visible and involved in rural communities and congregations within their districts. By moving the superintendents to “virtual” offices, they may no longer expect pastors and lay leaders to come to them, but the superintendents must go to where the people are. Nor is it anticipated that the Assistants to the District Superintendent will be tied to a physical office, but they will be present with the superintendent in the district which they serve. The location of a few employees forming the “centralized support team” in the Annual Conference’s headquarters in Garner does not change this fact. The superintendents’ visits and meetings will no longer take place in a centralized district office because there will be no such offices. Those visits and meetings will now necessarily take place out among the clergy and laity in all congregations, rural and urban. As a result, the Annual Conference envisions that congregations and communities will see the superintendent not just once a year in a charge conference setting, but assisting clergy in making disciples for Jesus Christ by modeling leadership in a myriad of ways, such as helping with mission projects, teaching Bible studies, assisting in Vacation Bible School, and helping with community projects. The possibilities are endless and exciting. This thread is woven throughout the Transition Team Report, which is attached hereto and labeled as “Exhibit 2.”

By:



Alfred Wesley Gwinn, Jr.
Resident Bishop of the Raleigh Area
The United Methodist Church

Date mailed to the Secretary of the Judicial Council:



Required copies to:
Secretary of the Judicial Council (13 Copies)
Bishop (1 Copy)

Bishop Alfred Wesley Gwinn
North Carolina Annual Conference
Raleigh, N.C.

Dear Bishop Gwinn:

In accordance with the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, contained in the Book of Discipline, Article VII, ¶ 51, I hereby request an episcopal ruling on the following questions of law:

Question 1. Did the Transition Team established by the 2012 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference and other officials of annual conference have authority under the 2008 Book of Discipline to take actions resulting in changing the structure of the Annual Conference, namely in the closing of all district offices, terminating administrative employees in the districts, and moving all administrative functions to a centralized conference office without disclosure, discussion, debate or approval by the Annual Conference?

Question 2 Does the North Carolina Annual Conference have authority under the 2008 Book of Discipline to take actions changing the role and function of district superintendents? Namely, do the Transition Team and the Bishop of the North Carolina Annual Conference have authority to determine primary tasks of the superintendent as other than those defined in ¶¶ 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, and 424, by affirming,

that the primary tasks of the district superintendents are coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision casting and that the superintendents must be freed for relationship building among congregations and pastors for those tasks.

Question 3 Do the Transition Team and other officials of the Annual Conference have authority to change the structure of the conference in creating a new office (separate and distinct from administrative assistants) termed *assistant district superintendents* (who may be lay or clergy), the new assistants being named by the Bishop, giving them responsibilities formerly reserved to district superintendents (under ¶¶ 419-424 of the 2008 Book of Discipline)?

Question 4 Do the actions being taken with regard to changing structure, closing of districts, changing of the role and function of the district superintendent and provision for new district officials, viz. assistant district superintendents, usurp the powers reserved to the General Conference in Article IV of the Constitution, ¶16.15? This paragraph states,

The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional, and in the exercise of this power shall have authority as follows: ...To allow the annual conferences to utilize structures unique to their mission, other mandated structures notwithstanding. [Book of Discipline, ¶16 & ¶16.15]

Question 5 Does the action taken by the Transition Team discriminate against rural church, clergy and laity in sparsely populated areas by distancing them from district superintendents and the supervisory connection thus giving unfair advantage to the churches located in the urban areas?

Thank you so much,



William C. Simpson, Jr.

Appendices

Appendix A

Task Force on District Superintendency

In the State of the Church address to the 2009 Annual Conference, Bishop Gwinn announced the formation of a Task Force to Study the Superintendency in the North Carolina Annual Conference. The purpose of the task force was to consider more efficient and effective ways for District Superintendents to fulfill their ministries in the 21st century. Specific attention was to be devoted to enabling ministries of teaching, mentoring, coaching, vision-casting, and team building among the churches and pastors of the districts.

The task force was named in late summer of 2009 and began its work in the fall. Over the past eighteen months, the task force has met on numerous occasions. The process engaged by the task force included:

- Surveying the current Cabinet to determine what hinders or facilitates their work of coaching, mentoring, team-building, vision casting, and teaching
- Theological reflection on the nature of ministry in the Wesleyan tradition, particularly the ministry of
- superintendency, its evolution over the history of the denomination, and an emphasis on leadership of a movement rather than institutional management
- Conversation with other Annual Conferences who have recently redesigned their work of superintendency and an examination of the different "models" of superintendency currently being
- implemented across the connection
- Reading and discussing together a report to the Lilly Endowment on "The District Superintendency in
- The United Methodist Church" authored by Dr. William Lawrence, dean of Perkins School of Theology
- A review of the responsibilities of the district superintendent as outlined in The Book of Discipline, 2008 para. 420-424
- A comparative study of the composition of districts in the other annual conferences of the Southeastern Jurisdiction
- A review of the North Carolina Conference's history of adding districts over the past forty five years

After a season of study and discussion, the task force agreed that the guiding principle of its recommendations would be the missional needs of the local churches of the Annual Conference and not financial implications. There will be cost savings to the Annual Conference of

approximately \$380,000.00 annually in the recommendations; however the task force considers these to be a secondary, not a primary, benefit. The task force considered a number of proposals, ranging from slight and incremental change to a more radical and deep change. We acknowledge that there are significant details yet to be resolved should our recommendations be adopted. We believed our task to be the creation of a vision which others would implement.

The Task Force unanimously offers the following recommendations to the 2011 Annual Conference:

1. That the North Carolina Annual Conference affirms that the primary tasks of the district superintendents are coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision casting and that the superintendents must be freed for relationship building among congregations and pastors for those tasks.
2. That the number of districts be reduced from twelve to eight (The Book of Discipline reserves to the Bishop, in consultation with the Cabinet, the setting of the district lines subsequent to the Annual Conference setting the number – see para. 415.4).
3. That each district have a full-time administrative assistant to handle all non-appointive and nonjudicial administrative matters related to the work of the district, thus freeing the superintendent for more time in the charges and with the pastors.
4. That the Bishop name a transition team to assist the various districts in matters of transfer of property and assets, and creating new district boards and agencies.
5. That it is the stated expectation of the conference that the district superintendent will be in each charge at least annually, but that it is no longer necessary for the superintendent personally to conduct each Charge Conference in the district.
6. That it is not the expectation of this Annual Conference that all superintendents must be present at all conference events and gatherings.
7. That each superintendent serve on no more than one conference board or agency and that no conference board or agency have more than one superintendent as a member.
8. That district offices be relocated out of the district parsonages where this is still the practice.

Respectfully submitted by the Bishop's Task Force on Superintendency: Carl Frazier, chair;
Brenda Brown; Christine
Dodson; Cashar Evans; Leonard Fairley; Ray Gooch; Randy Innes; Herbert Lowry; Linda Taylor

Appendix B

Memorandum Describing Changes by Transition Team and Report Mid-Year

Dear UMB staff,

We have sent notice of the following announcement to the district superintendents, administrative staff and district trustee chairpersons. This will be posted to the conference website in the morning to be possibly included in newsbriefs tomorrow. We do expect there to be commentary on this since it is a drastic change in the structure and operation of our district offices. Please refer questions you may receive on this announcement to me, Tim Russell or Becky Blegger so that the questions or concerns can be passed to the transition team. If you have any questions or concerns about any of this, please let us know.

Thanks,
Christine [Dodson]

A Note From Your Conference Transition Team:

The Transition Team has faithfully been working to complete the task given by the 2011 Annual Conference to bring change to the structure and model for ministry. As a result of the efforts of the team and with consultation with the Cabinet, we are pleased to share that the following pieces of the transition plan are now in place:

- The role of the district superintendent will change to one of coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision-casting. In each district there will be one district superintendent and one Assistant to the Superintendent, whose primary role will be to handle, under the direction of the superintendent, all administrative, disciplinary functions of the superintendent. A job description for the Assistant to the DS will be posted in mid-March listing these duties with more specificity.
- The administrative work of the district will be centralized and supported through a district administration support team that will be housed in the United Methodist Building in Garner. This team will consist of a receptionist, an administrative coordinator and a district systems administrator. All accounting functions of the districts will be performed by the current Treasurer's Office staff, as is currently done for two districts. Job descriptions for the district support team will be posted in mid-March to begin receiving resumes.
- With the centralization of district administration, district physical offices will be closed. The goal is for district superintendents to be more in and with churches rather than in an office communicating to churches. Superintendents will work remotely through technology already available such as internet conference and video calling. An internet-based phone system will be used to allow for seamless interface between a centralized receptionist and all district personnel.
- Housing will be provided to district superintendents in the form of a housing allowance instead of through a district parsonage. Current district parsonages will be sold and sale proceeds will be invested. Earnings from the proceeds of those sales will be used to fund the housing allowances as much as possible to reduce the amount of funding apportioned through district administration for the housing costs.
- Funding for the work of the district offices will be provided through the conference budget that will be proposed to annual conference each year. All district offices will receive equal funding for programming in the district. Funding will be apportioned based on the same formula currently used for conference apportionments. There will no longer be a separate district work fund from the district office after 2012. Any savings from this approach will be reflected in the combined totals from the district work fund and lines already in the conference budget for district items such as salary/benefits and travel.
- With the reduction in work load for the District Board of Trustees due to reduced property matters, the work of the District Board of Trustees and the Committee on Superintendency will be assigned to the same persons. This means that the same people will serve as Trustees as well as the Committee on Superintendency (with the addition of two at-large persons on the Committee on Superintendency as required by the Book of Discipline). In the nominations process for these committees, all disciplinary requirements will be followed as the nominations are made for these board and committee rolls.

The Transition Team has a timeline for the completion of the work and will use this timeline as a guide to complete the remaining work by the 2012 Annual Conference. We are looking forward to sharing the final plans and celebrating a new and exciting way to live into our mission as the Church of Jesus Christ... "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World."

—Rev. Linda Taylor, Chairperson, Conference Transition Team

Appendix C

Assistant to the District Superintendent Job Responsibilities

The Assistant to the District Superintendent will work under the direct supervision of the DS and will oversee Charge Conferences, disciplinary questions, conflict management, property issues including closed churches, and would resource the District Committees. This person will work with the DS (on topics or specific persons) to arrange for group training or learning sessions.

Superintendent Support

As outlined in the Book of Discipline, the ADS will have the responsibility for coordinating the following activities under the direct supervision of the DS:

- To administer the district office, including supervision of any other support staff.
- To assist in tracking and reporting compensation for all clergy, including provision for housing, utilities, travel, and continuing education
- To keep and maintain supervisory records on all ministerial personnel appointed or related to the charges within the district.
- To cooperate with the district board of church location and building and local church boards of trustees or building committees in arranging acquisitions, sales, transfers, and mortgages of property; and to ensure that all charters, deeds, and other legal documents conform to the Discipline and to the laws, usages, and forms of the county, state, territory, or country within which such property is situated and to keep copies thereof.
- Assist the DS in an investigation and plan of action for the future missional needs of The United Methodist Church or the community prior to consenting to the proposed action to sell or transfer any United Methodist local church property.
- To keep accurate and complete records for one's successor, including:
 - All abandoned church properties and cemeteries within the bounds of the district and to ensure that all records of such churches are placed with the Conference Commission on Archives and History;
 - All church properties being permissively used by other religious organizations, with the names of the local trustees thereof; All known endowments annuities, trust funds, investments, and unpaid legacies belonging to any pastoral charge or organization connected therewith in the district and an accounting of their management;
- Membership of persons from churches that have been closed.
- Receive plans for the cultivation of giving from each congregation that includes for current and deferred financial support in local churches for district, conference, and denominational causes.

- To develop with appropriate district committees strategies that give careful attention to the needs of churches of small membership and to the formation of cooperative ministries.
- To transfer members of a discontinued church to another United Methodist church of their choice or to such other churches as members may elect
- and to insure that all records of such discontinued churches are placed with the Conference Commission on Archives and History. At the direction of the DS, prepare a report for recommendation to the bishop for approval, after consultation with the churches involved, any realignment of pastoral charge lines and report them to the annual conference.
- To serve within the district as acting administrator of any pastoral charge in which a pastoral vacancy may develop or where no pastor has been appointed.
- To see that the provisions of the Discipline are observed and to interpret and decide all questions of Church law and discipline raised by the churches in the district, subject to affirmation, modification, or reversal by the president of the annual conference.

Professional Requirements

The ADS should have the following professional qualifications:

- Thorough knowledge of Microsoft Office products including Word, Excel, Powerpoint and Access.
- Proficient use of web-based programs to be used in Internet research or communications. These programs include online e-mail, calendar and document management via Google Apps as well as website updates via WordPress.
- Professional manner both written and verbal. Excellent communication skills.
- Initiative and problem-solving abilities.
- At least two years of experience in a professional environment.
- Knowledge of United Methodist polity is preferred.

Appendix D

Briefing Report of the Leadership Team Concerning Costs in Annual Conference

Leadership Team

Beginning in line 32 and continuing through line 56 is the funding for the Leadership Team. This team recommends an increase of \$604,045 or 18.61% over the amount previously included in the conference budget. The changes come mostly from changes in lines 43 for the costs of the district superintendent and district administration. As Linda

Taylor reported, part of the district transition is a change to include all district costs in the conference budget instead of having a separate apportionment for district operations, previously raised through the district Work Fund apportionment. Since the district work fund was raised outside of this conference budget, the amount spent on that for 2012 and before is not shown in this budget report. The amount apportioned for district administration in addition to the conference budget in 2012 is just over \$1.3 million dollars. Since there will no longer be a separate district apportionment, the result is that the savings from this transition comes from comparing the conference budget for districts in addition to what was apportioned outside of the conference budget. The total being budgeted for district operations is shown in line 43 of this report. Included is \$1.13 million for salaries and benefits of the district superintendents. This budget line did not include health insurance previously since that was paid by the district. There will also be district administration salary and benefit costs to be used to fund the assistant to the DS positions as well as three persons who will provide centralized administrative help to the districts through a receptionist, administrative coordinator and systems administrator. The total budgeted costs for these positions for salary and benefits is \$788,000 and for office expenses for the district operations and administrative support is \$239,000. The total district costs budgeted under this transition plan is \$2,157,000. The total costs for district operations prior to this transition paid either through the conference budget or the district work fund was just under \$2.9 million dollars. This transition as planned represents a reduction of just under \$730,000 for 2014 in total. Because all of these expenses were not previously shown in the conference budget, there is an increase shown for the leadership team in this report. This increase is due to moving these expenses into the conference budget instead of funding them through a separate apportionment outside of the conference budget.

A Brief Related to the Questions Stated Above

Related to Questions 1, 2 and 3, I point out that in 2011, the only action by the North Carolina Annual Conference was in the receiving and approving the report of the Task Force on District Superintendency (see attached copy under Appendix A). This was the only action on the matter taken by the Conference in its 2011 session. This document, not included in the Conference Minutes or published in the 2011 *Journal* but was published in the *Christian Advocate*, provided for the reduction of the number of district from twelve to eight. The report also called for the creation of a Transition Team whose purpose was "to assist the various districts in matters of transfer of property and assets, and creating new district boards and agencies." [See Appendix A]

Subsequent to this and after the adjournment of the 2011 Session of the Annual Conference, through various means, including the Conference website, the North Carolina Christian Advocate, and verbal communication, the clergy and members of the churches were told that the following actions would be taken:

- (1) The number of districts would be reduced from twelve to eight as determined by the Conference in its 2011 session; and
- (2) District Board of Trustees were being informed that all parsonages would all be sold and the district superintendents would henceforth receive housing allowance according to a formula determined by the Transition Team and the Treasurer's Office; and
- (3) All district offices would be closed, employees terminated and all administrative functions for the districts would be moved to the Garner location of the Conference Headquarters, and new employees would be hired. The explanation provided on the Conference website was that "The superintendent and assistant positions will work remotely through a virtual office interface in order to provide more opportunity to be in local churches instead of a physical office location."; and
- (4) All district records would be collected and stored in the Raleigh area with a plan for digitizing these records; and
- (5) The role and function of the district superintendent would be changed reflecting the wording of the Task Force Report in 2011 and the refinement by the Transition Team: "The role of the district superintendent will change to one of coaching, mentoring, teaching, team-building, and vision-casting." See Appendix A, B]
- (6) A new office would be created not identified in the Task Force Report to be known as Assistant to the District Superintendent. This could be

filled by either a lay or clergy person. A job description was prepared for this position embodying many of the functions formerly ascribed to the district superintendent.

I cite in particular The Book of Discipline ¶ 601 Purpose which states,

The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples for Jesus Christ by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.

Also ¶ 610, which states,

The annual conference is responsible for structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to accomplish its purpose (¶ 601), with the exception of the mandated provisions of ¶¶ 635, 638, 639, 640, 647, 648. In so doing it shall provide for the connectional relationship of the local church, district, and conference with the general agencies.

I also note that the only substantive action taken by the North Carolina Annual Conference was the approval of the Report of the Task Force on District Superintendency (a copy of which was not included in the official minutes or the Conference Journal but only appeared in the North Carolina Christian Advocate) which under point 2. mandated,

That the number of districts be reduced from twelve to eight

(The Book of Discipline reserves to the Bishop, in consultation with the Cabinet, the authority for setting of the district lines subsequent to the Annual Conference setting the number.)

I furthermore note that the only reference to offices was the provision in point 8. of the report which said,

That district offices be relocated out of the district parsonages where this is still the practice.

With regard to Question 4, I cite Judicial Council Decisions 1147 in which the bishop's decision was reversed and the Digest of the Case stated,

The first sentence of ¶ 610 of the 2008 Discipline was incorrectly interpreted; the mandatory language of ¶ 641 is in effect; ¶ 610 does not constitute enabling legislation of ¶ 16.15; and ¶ 16.15 authorizes, but does not mandate, the General Conference to enact legislation to permit annual conferences to utilize structures unique to their mission. The annual conference must abide by all disciplinary mandates and Judicial Council Decisions in the creation of its new structure. [Judicial Council Decision 1147]

I also cite Judicial Decision 1204 which held that the structure plan adopted by the South Carolina Annual Conference was held to be unconstitutional in its meaning, application, and effect in light of ¶ 610, ¶ 614.3, and Decision 1147.

It would appear that the action taken by North Carolina Annual Conference officials was not disciplinary both (1) because it was never adopted by the North Carolina Conference and (2) it violates the mandate and spirit of the Discipline, especially by conflicting with the cited portions of the Book of Discipline *and by* not giving equal protection to all churches of the Annual Conference. The only part of the action by the Transition Team and others approved by the Annual Conference was in reducing the number of districts, moving offices out of the parsonages in the few remaining districts where this was the case, and working to provide new committees within the new districts. The drawing of district lines was, of course, in conformity in that it is the responsibility of the presiding bishop and cabinet to perform this task after receiving recommendations from the Task Force and Transition Team. This part of the Conference adopted plan was followed.

Most of what was done was not what the North Carolina Annual Conference voted upon nor what the members thought they were voting through. ~~At the time the members of the Conference were told that that the plan would~~ save \$380,000, i.e., reducing the number of district. It is not clear how this was calculated, but the placing of twelve district parsonages on the market in today's economy and the disposing of the furnishings of twelve parsonages has cost an incalculable amount in lost resources. The loss to the Conference, all done without approval by the Conference, could exceed three or four times that amount. If you calculate the cost of eight district superintendents salaries, eight housing allowances (at about \$25,000 per superintendent), administrative assistants moved from part-time to full-time with benefits in the form of health and life insurance, as well as retirement benefits (none of which were required under the old system), the cost of eight assistant district superintendents, the additional travel as well as technological equipment, and the losses sustained by selling twelve parsonages at this time in the economy, I hardly see how there could be great savings.

Another issue that few have noted is what happens to the assets of the districts beyond the value of the parsonages? I refer to monetary holdings, mission funds, scholarship accounts and other holdings? In one district with which I am familiar this amounted to more than one-half million dollars. Are these funds simply being appropriated by the Annual Conference?

Nothing was said or indicated in the 2011 session regarding closing of district offices, movement toward "virtual offices," consolidating all administration in Garner, creation of new offices not specified in the Discipline, and re-organizing the conference without district offices or parsonages.

Regarding Question 5, among other effects of this action is discrimination against churches, clergy and laity in rural areas of the North Carolina Conference, by limiting the connection to large portions of our Conference. The Book of

Discipline mandates providing "a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God." [¶ 610] I have difficulty seeing eighty-year-old PPR chairs gathering their committees and sitting in front of their computers talking to the district superintendent who knows where by way of Skype. The whole scheme is unrealistic and not in keeping with personal ministry that is the lifeblood of the Church.

Only six counties in the North Carolina Annual Conference are designated urban by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce and the North Carolina Rural Development Center. This leaves means there are fifty counties in the Conference designated as rural. Removing district offices and placing superintendents far away from them damages their access to the connection with the United Methodist Church. In many of these counties cell phone and internet service is still problematical at best. The concept of "virtual offices" may be familiar to those in the urban environment, but it is foreign to the work of a large portion of our churches and members in the Conference.

~~While the proponents of this change will maintain that superintendents~~ now have more opportunity to devote to these churches, reality and history do not support this notion, especially when you increase the number of churches in each district and expand the geographical are. For example, has anyone asked the question as to where the new superintendents will be living? There is not provision for them to be located in the districts they serve. With the new housing allowance system and the absence of district parsonages it is hard to make the argument that the outlying rural churches will feel more connected to their conference or the general church. With no district offices, a face-to-face meeting with superintendents and administrators may require considerable travel and expense.

The counties outside the major Raleigh urban area have small populations. Three of our counties have a population of less that 10,000 persons. Five of the seven counties that lost population in the previous decade are within the bounds of the Conference. These counties have been ignored in the new plan for virtual offices and consolidation of all administration in the Raleigh area. We must remember that technology provides new tools to assist in our ministry, but technology is not ministry and certainly not an end within itself.

We must remember that these are the counties where the largest portion of the ethnic population is to be found. They are also the counties with the largest percentage and number of persons living in poverty.

Of particular note is the fact that these rural area have been the very region from which the largest portion of church and conference leadership has come in the past. When you go to urban churches, often you find that leadership has originated in the small church.

It was for this very reason that James B. Duke valued the rural areas and Methodist churches in those areas, setting aside a goodly portion of his Endowment "to maintain and operate the Methodist churches of such a Conference which are located within the sparsely settled rural districts of the State of North Carolina." He recognized that it was from the rural areas that the moral fiber and sinew of North Carolina society came.

The plan undertaken by the North Carolina Conference in many ways abandons the needs of rural areas and churches of the eastern part of the state. If these radical changes were to be undertaken there should have been opportunity for discussion and input of all of our people and not just a select few.

North Carolina Annual Conference District Transition Team Report

At the 2011 Annual Conference, the lay and clergy members made the decision to reduce the number of districts from twelve to eight, beginning in July 2012. This decision was the culmination of years of study, reflection, conversation, and prayer. Beginning with a Task Force to study the role of the District Superintendent, the Annual Conference determined that change, deep change, was needed. We believe that the Spirit of God has been leading us toward a convergence of many sources in order to catch a vision of a new, more vital church - a church that builds cultures of discipleship that grows discipleship in our leaders, who then lead others by example into discipleship.

The Council of Bishops has led us over the past quadrennium to a challenge for change in The United Methodist Church. The Council has issued a Call To Action that shared this broad vision with the denomination. This vision of the Council stated "for the sake of a new world, we see a new church - a church that is clear about its mission and confident about its future; a church that is always reaching out, inviting, alive, agile, and resilient. We see a church that is hope-filled, passionate, nimble, called by God, and courageous. It is a church that is passionately committed to the mission and vision of the Wesleyan movement. This church takes risks to serve the poor, reach new people, and search continuously for creative ways to help each person grow in grace, love and holiness."

Part of the report of the Task Force on Superintendency at the 2011 Annual Conference was a request that the bishop name a task force to bring the district transition into being. Bishop Gwinn named this task force in July 2011 and it included the following members:

Lay Persons: Christine Dodson, Cashar Evans, Emily Innes, David Peele

Clergy: Bishop Gwinn, Leonard Fairley, Milton Gilbert, Cleve May, Linda Taylor

Ex-Officio Members: Tim Russell, Becky Biegger

The task force, referred to as the Transition Team, began its work in July 2011. The team reviewed the work of the previous task force and began to develop ideas for how to implement those recommendations from the annual conference. In order to facilitate the work, the Transition Team created subcommittees to pray, study, and recommend actions for the implementation of the transition. The teams were focused in four areas including Visioning, District Lines and Names, Property, and Leadership. Each subcommittee was augmented by persons outside the Transition Team for assistance. A brief summary of the work of each team follows.

VISIONING

The visioning subcommittee was tasked with the responsibility for redefining the role of the district superintendent as directed in the recommendations of the 2011 Task Force on Superintendency. The 2011 Task Force recommended a change in this position to focus on the roles of mentoring, coaching, vision-casting, teaching and team-building. The visioning team spent much time researching the history of the role and dreaming of how this new role could be fulfilled.

The visioning team worked to create a base understanding of the role of the superintendent. The district superintendent is appointed by the bishop to provide oversight to the churches and clergy of a specified geographic area. The district superintendent is to be the district mission

strategist and storyteller. S/he leads clergy and local churches in becoming mission outposts fully engaged in making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The district superintendent serves as "an extension of the general superintendency" (para. 417 of The Book of Discipline, 2008) and is a representative of the bishop.

In the new role, the district superintendent must model leadership for all pastors; operate proactively rather than reactively; move from following old rules to finding new paths; move from focusing on regulation to focusing on purpose and identity; move from institutional focus to missional focus; must not just check up on pastors, but rather invest in and actively help to disciple pastors; move from being at a distance to encouraging alongside and inviting conversations; and move our congregations and leadership out of territory and turf protection (where it exists) and into teams.

The visioning team imagined what it will look like to have the district superintendent connecting personally with every pastor every week, investing in every pastor in a discipling relationship, being the example for every pastor on how to disciple others, and inviting every pastor to learn with and from each other in weekly discipleship huddles. The impact will be seen not only in the life of the district superintendent, but in pastors as they grow in their own discipleship, both increasing in boldness and empowerment, growing by knowing every pastor personally and substantively. Everything will change when all people become disciples in our communities and agents of transformation in our world.

District superintendents will move from being primarily supervisors and administrators to being coaches, mentors, teachers, team builders, and vision-casting agents. To assist in making this all become reality, district superintendents will serve on fewer conference committees and boards in order to have time, space, and energy for work within the district. The district superintendent will be more visible in communities. It is expected that four out of five days will be spent traveling around the district meeting with churches and pastors listening to their stories, their hopes, and their vision and assisting in strategic missional planning.

The district superintendent will make use of all the technology available by working from a "virtual" office. The support team to the superintendents will include:

- **Assistant to the District Superintendent:** Works under the direct supervision of the superintendent and will, among other things, oversee scheduling charge conferences and secure an elder to preside, answer disciplinary questions, conflict management, property issues including closed churches, and resource district committees. This person will work with the superintendent (on topics or specific persons) to arrange for group training or learning sessions.
- **District Receptionist:** Works under the direct day to day supervision of the Office of the Bishop. The primary role of the district receptionist is receiving phone calls and serving as the first contact for all eight districts. The receptionist will work as part of a centralized support team that will be housed in the United Methodist Building in Garner.
- **District Administrative Coordinator:** Works under the direct day to day supervision of the Office of the Bishop. The primary role of the administrative coordinator is to provide administrative support to the district as well as assisting the assistant to the district superintendents in district programming. Other duties will include opening and routing the mail, scheduling appointments for the district superintendent and assistant to the

district superintendent, scheduling district-wide events and logistics for all eight districts, coordinating updates of the district calendars to keep events and ministry information current and accurate, sending newsletters and updating group email lists, back up district receptionist. The coordinator will work as part of a centralized support team that will be housed in the United Methodist Building in Garner.

- **District Systems Administrator:** Works under the direct supervision of Conference Director of Information Technology. The systems administrator will be responsible for the general maintenance of email and web services for districts, mobile computing support and end user desktop support. The systems administrator will work as part of a centralized support team that will be housed in the United Methodist Building in Garner.

DISTRICT LINES AND NAMES

The first of the transition team subcommittees worked diligently on the district boundaries and names of the eight new districts. Determination of where lines would be drawn was based on population and the potential for population growth in the next five years. The team attempted, as much as was possible, to equally balance the population in each district. Due to the large expanse of land mass in the northeast portion of the conference, the stated goal of population equalization in determining the boundary was not feasible. The subcommittee submitted recommendations for the district boundaries to the Cabinet for approval and affirmation. Through working with the cabinet, churches were named in each district. This information was shared with congregations on the Conference website and local congregations were given opportunity to request a change in their placement. Efforts were made to listen and respond to each request.

The names of the districts, with the exception of the "Corridor," came from the on-line survey offered to the conference for input and sharing. The Transition Team worked to give attention to feedback offered from many sources. Revisions were made based on this feedback, all of which was most helpful and appreciated. The final version of the district lines, names and churches as approved by the Transition Team and Cabinet are listed on the conference website.

PROPERTY

The focus of the work of the property subcommittee was around all issues and concerns associated with district and conference property, legal, title, and other related matters. The property subcommittee worked with each of the current twelve districts concerning district parsonages and offices. Following much prayer, discussion and discernment, it was decided that all district parsonages and offices would be sold. The district superintendents worked with District Trustees to set-up district conferences to approve the sale of parsonages. All district parsonages and districts with offices have been placed on the market for sale. As of the date of this report, two parsonages and one office have been sold, two parsonages are under contract, offers have been received on two other parsonages and the others remain listed on the market for sale. The Transition Team recommends that the funds from the sale of the parsonages be placed in an account to be used for paying housing allowances for the eight district superintendents.

It was recommended and approved that all district superintendents would work from "virtual" offices and make use of currently available technology. This approach is intended to allow for more efficient and productive use of resources to help the superintendent be more present in churches instead of church leaders needing to come to an office to see the superintendent.

With the changes in the staffing and budget for the district operations, the allocation and receipt of funding for district operations will also change. In the past the districts have apportioned a District Work Fund amount to each church in the district separate from the conference budget. Beginning in 2013, the funding for district operations will come from the conference budget in the Leadership Team section. This change will be explained in the presentation of the budget by the Council on Finance and Administration. There will be no separate District Work Fund apportionment in 2013. The funding that is received during 2012 for District Work Fund will be used for 2012 operations and to provide what funding is needed in 2013 in addition to what will be available in the conference budget.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership subcommittee worked with current district superintendents and district lay leadership in creating a pool of names to place into nomination, for election at Annual Conference, for various district committees. The team worked with district United Methodist Women, Men and Youth concerning district leadership. The leadership subcommittee worked intentionally to ensure that nominations for the new districts would be inclusive and that all former districts would be represented equally.

With the changes made to district property such that there will no longer be district parsonages and physical offices, the work of two of the district committees have been assigned to the same group of district leadership. There are different requirements for the District Board of Trustees and Committee on Superintendency in the Book of Discipline. These requirements were met by assigning the same persons to both committees with the addition of two other persons for the work of the Committee on Superintendency. The nominations for district committees will be made available at annual conference and on the NC Conference website.

In order to facilitate the changes in the structure for the district work, the leadership subcommittee created job descriptions for Assistant to District Superintendent, District Receptionist, District Administrative Coordinator, and District Systems Administrator positions. Job opportunities were listed on the Conference website and applications were received. Following interviews, recommendations were made for persons to fill each of these positions. Announcements on these positions are being made on the NC Conference website as decisions are made.

SUMMARY

The Transition Team will continue to work to help in the implementation of the changes described in this report. As changes are implemented and this vision of a new, more connected role of the district superintendent is put in place, the transition team asks for your partnership in prayer and encouragement for these leaders. All of these dreams can be realized with the true spirit of Christian community through earnest work to hear the guidance and prompting along this journey from our divine Leader. As we seek to follow the path that leads to transformation of the world, we are thankful to be on the path that finds us together in the North Carolina Conference. Please continue to pray for guidance for our district leaders and support them in this new phase of ministry together.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Linda Taylor, Transition Team Chairperson

Rev. H. Gray Southern, North Carolina Conference Episcopal Nominee - See Video & More at GraySouthern.com | Contact the [NC Conference Delegation](#)

Conference Journal

[Print Page](#)

Below is the link to the 2011 Conference Journal.

<http://journal.nccumc.org/>

The below report was mistakenly omitted from the 2011 Conference Journal.

[TASK FORCE ON DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENCY](#)

You will find links to the Conference Appointments, Pictorial Directory, and other useful information.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions you may have.