

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE CONFERENCE TASK FORCE ON COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRY

The Conference Task Force on Cooperative Parish Ministry was formed at the request of Bishop Whitaker to explore issues related to strengthening churches and connectional ministry within the Florida Conference. Subsequent conversations between David Herman, Sarasota District Superintendent, and Anne Burkholder, Director of Connectional Ministry for the Florida Conference, further refined the scope of the work of the task force. The work of the task force will be the subject of a future Conference Table gathering. The task force was charged with exploring a variety of issues and offering possible solutions. Topics included the following:

- The impact of fixed costs on the local church
- Strategies for reducing financial pressures on churches
- Pressures negatively impacting ministry in churches and the Conference
- The nature and definition of a "parish"
- A description of what constitutes a full-time appointment
- The number of Elders needed in the Conference
- Factors leading to the isolation of clergy
- Imaginative Resources for the development of vital ministry
- Clergy morale, competence and effectiveness
- Cooperative Parish Ministry

The task force met for twelve hours of dialogue and conversation on Thursday, September 25, 2003. The members of the task force present at the gathering included Bob Hobby, Jeffrey Ice, Frank McKown, Dave Herman, Don Nations, Charles Lever, St. Clair Moore, Cliff Patrick, Julie Bullerdick, Charles Weaver, Jacquie Leveron. Other members of the team include Geraldine McClelland and Jim Knight. The team specifically addressed the issues of (1) fixed costs and other pressures on churches, (2) the nature of a full-time appointment, (3) clergy morale, competence and effectiveness and (4) cooperative parish ministry.

#### Biblical Basis for Cooperative Ministry

The Bible speaks repeatedly of the importance and role of the community of faith. It is to be a place of learning and mentoring; a family of faith; the Body of Christ in operation; individuals drawn together by something and some one greater; a gifted community using their gifts in service of God and to the world. A biblical community is built on cooperation, not competition. Biblical imagery calls on God's people to be servants of each other, faithful in their stewardship, proclaimers of the Good News of Jesus, engaged in mission, open to the Spirit, embracing of all people, cooperative in nature and seeking only to please God. Living in community, freely sharing all things and bearing each other's burdens are to be hallmarks of those who follow Jesus.

#### Theological Basis for Cooperative Ministry

A Trinitarian understanding of God implies the participatory nature of the Godhead. As love is the common bond in that relationship, so it should be the common bond among churches that seek collectively to follow God. There is also contained within the biblical text a theology of stewardship and investment. The seed must be sown, watered and nurtured before there is a harvest. All resources belong to God and their use must reflect an understanding of the greater purposes of the Kingdom of God. That which is valued is invested in - as God invested greatly in humanity so must the Church invest greatly and appropriately in reaching the world with the life-changing message of Jesus.

#### Disciplinary Basis for Cooperative Ministry

The Book of Discipline requires annual conferences to be intentional in the development of cooperative parish ministry. It affirms the value of this form of ministry and describes the primary elements of it. It describes a significant number of variations in the possible arrangements of cooperative parishes. It also describes the role of the Director and provides for the Director a significant involvement in the appointment process. The paragraphs most related to cooperative parish ministry include 205.2, 205.3, 206.2 and 206.2.b.

#### The Mission and Vision of the Florida Conference

**VISION:** God's transforming grace in Jesus Christ calls us to become one dynamic church with diverse people in many settings, offering a new life of Christian discipleship to the world.

**MISSION:** The Vision of the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is to be a vital connection that is part of God's transformation of the world by:

- Equipping congregations for the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ;
- Transforming existing congregations from a life of institutional maintenance to a life of transformational mission in their diverse communities and the world;
- Reproduce vital congregations in new settings;
- Calling, training and supporting lay and clergy leaders for the church; and
- Engaging in shared ministries that fulfill the vision of the Kingdom of God.

#### A Word from the Bishop about Cooperative Ministry

"For too long there has not been enough connecting in our connection among congregations. We may be missing opportunities for churches to work together to advance the cause of Christ in our communities. There may be financial advantages to considering cooperative parish ministries in some situations. The cost of each church having its own ordained pastor has become a challenge for smaller congregations. The cooperative parish ministry is really not new, and it has always been part of our tradition as American Methodists. It may be one of those ideas whose time has come, again." – Bishop's Corner, UM Review

#### THE FOUNDATION OF OUR WORK

We live in a changing world. The reality in which we do ministry is fundamentally different than it was just 25 years ago. The Church must show new creativity and vitality or be ignored by an ever-increasing number of people. The life-changing message of Jesus must be shared effectively or it will be deemed irrelevant by those who desperately need to hear it.

The Church in North America is in deep trouble: membership is down, worship attendance is declining, congregations are aging and closure is more probable for more churches than at any time in history. More specifically, the majority of churches within the Florida Conference are in need of transformation. Fixed costs are rising and are a danger to local churches. The focus on mere survival stands solidly in the way of engaging communities with the message of Jesus.

Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires the discernment of the Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. The biblical texts make clear that all Christians are to serve in ministry on the basis of their spiritual gifting. The selection of leaders is based upon their character, their performance in ministry and the collective wisdom of those in ministry. Apostolic leaders were Spirit-led individuals engaged in vital ministry who perceived themselves as being part of God's work in the world.

Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires the societal engagement of the Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Followers of Jesus did not wait for the world to come to them. Instead, they went out into the streets and took the message of Jesus to all nations. The Church must walk in integrity, practice justice and become a community of all ethnicities and nationalities.

Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires the sense of community of the Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Ministry was done on behalf of, and usually with, the community of faith. There was a sense that the commonalities found in a shared relationship with Jesus were more significant than the particularities among people and cultures. The connectional ministry of which The United Methodist Church speaks must become the actuality of its experience.

#### THE GOALS OF OUR WORK

We want more people to meet, know and serve Jesus. We want the Florida Conference to be more effective in helping churches meet, know and serve Jesus. We want effective pastors serving vital churches. We want to see more growing churches, more transforming churches, more professions of faith, more relevant teaching, more diverse congregations, more theological grounding, more mission outreach, more intentionality in our actions and more holy expectation in the people called Methodists. We are committed to working within the system of the Florida Conference in order to achieve these goals. We recognize that changes in structure, policy, guidelines and practice may be needed in order to build on the strengths of the Conference. The expansion of ministry, the fulfillment of our mission and vision, requires our best effort and greatest openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## THE RESULTS OF OUR WORK

The questions, suggestions and talking points of our work at this time are presented in the material that follows. It is offered in a spirit of hope for the future. We seek both dialogue and implementation.

### Fixed Costs and Other Pressures on Local Churches

Conference and local church resources are limited. The majority of churches in the Florida Conference are in need of transformation. Issues of clergy supply, clergy morale and clergy effectiveness are frequent topics of conversation. There are hundreds (or thousands) of possible projects, ministries, opportunities and avenues to which the Conference could direct resources. Not all of these, however, are of equal value. A process is needed by which the many, and often conflicting, demands made on the system can be evaluated and funding decisions made. The provision of resources should be made in an intentional manner with a focus on the mission and vision of the organization.

Intentional Ministry Investment is a response to the conflicting demands and competing funding priorities. It is intentional in that decisions are made based on the mission and vision of the organization and established criteria. Its focus is ministry, that is, assisting churches and clergy to help people meet, know and serve Jesus. It is investment in that the provision of resources is done with a desired and expected result clearly stated.

Intentional ministry investment, a theology of investment, is taught by God and recorded in the scriptures. It is not held captive to previous decisions, political pressure, special interest groups or “the way we have always done it.” Instead, it pushes us to re-evaluate everything. The result will be that our best resources will be invested in those people, places and things that are most essential to the fulfillment of our mission and vision.

We discussed a variety of possible methods to address these fixed costs that Conference agencies may want to consider. These include property and liability insurance, health insurance and the formula for calculating apportionments for local church. We affirm that it is the responsibility of all churches to pay 100% of their apportionments. This represents an investment in ministry, a commitment to mission and the connected nature of the United Methodist Church

### Cooperative Parish Ministry

Cooperative Parish Ministry is an expression of the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church in which two or more churches work together in a formal arrangement to share at least one staff member and strengthen the ministry of all participating churches. No longer just a rural model of ministry, it is also suitable for suburban and urban settings as well as arrangements containing churches from two or more of these settings. Cooperative parish ministry

demonstrates good stewardship, features gift-based ministry and is an ideal training environment.

Cooperative parish ministry enhances the stewardship of participating churches. In most cases, the churches in a cooperative parish will receive more ministry per dollar of investment. Utilizing fewer Conference-credentialed clergy than when the churches were separate, expenses can be reduced and/or specialized ministry staff brought onto the team. A smaller investment in ministry staff (especially in the area of benefits) can lead to lower apportionments – both for the local church and for the Annual Conference. Investing in specialists instead of clergy generalists can lead to an expansion of ministry in the partner churches.

Cooperative parish ministry lives out the biblical teaching on spiritual gifts. The staffing is built around the gifting of the Director and involves people with complementary gifts. Since the staff functions like a team, the laity of the churches are also encouraged to discover their spiritual gifts and form teams for doing ministry.

Cooperative parishes make great training grounds for four kinds of people. Candidates for ministry can use their involvement in a cooperative parish as a way of testing their calling and discerning the true nature of that calling prior to undertaking the expensive investment in a seminary education. Seminary students can use their participation in a cooperative parish as a way of gaining practical experience while also receiving a theological education. Those who may direct a cooperative parish in the future can gain valuable insight and experience from being part of a cooperative parish team. Directors of cooperative parishes who are successful in that role will have demonstrated many of the skills needed to serve as Senior Pastors of multi-staff churches thus providing a training and proving ground for those who will serve some of our largest churches.

There are many kinds of cooperative parish ministry arrangements. Among these are the following.

#### Scenario One

Three churches each with an average attendance of under 100 are located within a few miles of each other in an urban area in south Florida. One church is more of a ministry than a traditional church in that the focus of its ministry is on feeding the hungry and caring for the poor and broken. It is unable to pay 100% of its apportionments. The pastor is an Elder. The other two churches are ethnic churches with appointed Elders which also struggle to pay apportionments. One of the churches receives equitable salary support. The future is questionable for all of the churches. They need a new way to engage in ministry and find new hope for the future.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating an Urban Mission Cooperative Parish. In this arrangement, the pastor of the mission-oriented church would become the Director of the cooperative parish. The Director needs to be the strongest member of the team and will be the highest paid staff person.

#### *Staffing Options*

Replace the other two elders with supply pastors, deacons and/or candidates for ministry. This would result in a decrease in pastoral costs for the churches in the parish. It should also allow them to be more able to pay apportionments at 100% and invest more funds in mission and ministry.

Other possible cost-reducing scenarios:

- If one or more of the churches gave up its charter, there would also be a reduction in total cost to the cooperative parish
- One of the church facilities might not be necessary after the cooperative parish was formed. If it was sold, total costs would be reduced and additional funds made available for investing in ministry.
- One of the churches might sell its facility and invest that money in a longer-term lease of a smaller, more suitable facility for doing the mission ministry of the cooperative parish

#### Scenario Two

A healthy growing church averaging over 400 in worship is located near two smaller churches which average 100 and 50 in worship, respectively. The two smaller churches have been declining in worship attendance for most of the last decade. The pastoral salaries are higher than might be expected at the two smaller churches since they have not been adjusted to reflect the decline of the congregations. Both of these churches have appointed elders. Both of these churches pay about 50% of their apportionments.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a Cooperative Parish designed to mentor the smaller churches and strengthen the ministry of all of the churches.

#### *Staffing Options*

Retain two elders and replace the other elder with a deacon or a lay person with skills in one or more areas of needed ministry (such as outreach, evangelism, conflict resolution, missions, etc.). One of the elders could preach at both of the smaller churches while the deacon or lay person (ministry specialist) could work throughout the cooperative parish. The staff and church leaders at the three churches would share their ministry expertise with the other churches in the parish.

Other possible cost-reducing scenarios:

- It may be possible to reduce the number of support staff in the parish by pooling resources (custodial, secretarial, etc.)
- A single ministry specialist (such as a youth worker) may be able to meet the needs of all of the churches in the parish. In this example, perhaps youth ministry would be based at one or two of the churches and all of the churches would participate in the youth ministry
- Some equipment (and the accompanying leases) may no longer be needed if the churches share items such as copiers and computers.

### Scenario Three

A church effectively served by an elder and located in a relatively rural area has five small-membership churches located within 20 miles of it. Most of these churches are served by supply pastors (full or part-time). The churches pay an average of 80% of their apportionments. There is a desire to increase the knowledge and skill of the supply pastors as well as provide some form of elder oversight and assistance for them.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish designed for the purpose of supporting the ministry of the supply pastors and strengthening the mentoring ministry of the elder.

#### *Possible strategies for implementation*

- The elder would be available for consultation if the supply pastors had any questions
- The pastors could meet periodically to discuss ministry, brainstorm creative solutions, coordinate calendars, investigate possible joint activities, etc.
- The pastors could agree to preach and/or make hospital visits when one was sick or out of town or when the hospital was significantly closer to one of the pastors than the one with a parishioner in the hospital
- The elder could hold periodic training sessions, workshops, book discussions, etc. in order to increase the knowledge base of the supply pastors. Training in practical ministry skills could also be provided.
- The elder could invite one or more of the other pastors to join him/her in performing weddings, funerals and other special services in order to provide practical experience in conducting such services prior to the supply pastor being called upon to conduct such a service on his/her own
- The mentoring opportunities for the elder can sharpen his/her skills in coaching and expand his/her ministry of teaching

### Scenario Four

A mid-size church has three smaller churches (average attendance of 120, 90 and 70) within ten miles. All of the churches fall in the “dying” or “maintaining” category on the Church Transformation Survey. Each of the churches struggles

to pay its apportionments and morale is relatively low. There is an openness to change within each congregation but resources and leadership seem to be lacking. Of the three smaller churches, one is served by a local pastor, one is served by a commissioned minister and one is served by an elder.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the purpose of intentional congregational transformation. The new pastor appointed to the largest church would serve as the Director of the cooperative parish. This person would be selected based on a track record of growing churches and effectively serving in turn-around situations. This person would also need skills in coaching and overcoming congregational resistance. This person would be the highest paid person in the parish and the key player in this ministry arrangement.

#### *Staffing Options*

One or more of the pastors would be replaced in consultation with the Director (as called for in the Book of Discipline). One or more of the new pastors may be retired, student or supply. Each church would make a contribution to the parish budget. Some of the funds could be invested in the salary of the Director to allow for the appointment of a highly-skilled pastor that previously was beyond the salary the largest church in the parish could offer.

#### Scenario Five

Two churches located 15 minutes apart are both facing serious difficulties. One church is about to run out of money while the other is probably just a couple of years from closing. Attendance at the first church is over 200 while attendance at the second church is about 100. The first church is burdened by a lot of debt and past-due bills. The second church has a congregation with an average age of 70. The first church has just experienced its third split within a year. The second church does not have any attendees who live within a mile of the church (and it is located in a full residential neighborhood). The second church does not have a parsonage. An Elder with a base salary of \$45,000-50,000 is appointed to each church. Neither church has significant financial assets in the bank. There is a desire to save both churches. Both of the current pastors will be moving. Neither church is paying more than 30% of its assigned apportionments.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the following purposes:

1. Short-term: keep the churches open and get them financially self-supporting
2. Long-term: bring transformation to both churches

The following is a description of what was done as the scenario above describes the churches that form the South Sarasota Teaching Parish.

#### *Staffing*

An elder was appointed to be the Director of the cooperative parish. His salary was set at a very low level (approximately \$35,000) in order to help the churches. The Sarasota District paid his salary for the first five months as the churches were unable to do so. His role was to be the administrative leader of the parish and work on transformation issues. He also served as the Senior Pastor of the larger church. He lived (and still resides) in Sarasota in a house owned by the Sarasota District and the district paid the mortgage. The parsonage is about 35 miles from each church.

A retired Elder was appointed to serve in the cooperative parish. His role was to serve as the Senior Pastor of the smaller church and provide pastoral care for both churches (hospital visitation, follow-up visits, etc.). His salary was set at \$30,000 and he lived in a home he owned about 20 minutes from the church.

A candidate for ministry was appointed to serve as the Assistant Pastor. He was appointed to the larger church and they were responsible for paying apportionments on his salary. He lived in the parsonage at the smaller church and his salary came mostly from the contributions of the smaller church. In addition to housing and utilities, he received a cash salary of \$20,000. His role was to split time between the two congregations and to learn as much as he could. He worked with the youth program and made some pastoral visits for the larger congregation and worked on transformation issues, made pastoral visits and preached once a month at the smaller congregation.

#### *Compensation costs*

	Previous	Cooperative Parish
- pastoral salaries and fringe benefits	\$90,000	\$85,000
- health insurance	\$17,520	\$8760
- pension	\$12,000	\$6000
- housing allowance (larger church)	\$15,000	\$0
Total	\$134,520	\$99,760

#### *How the funds were handled*

Both churches sent a check to the Sarasota District office every month for expenses related to the teaching parish. The district acted as the source of the checks but did not add money to the teaching parish account. The smaller congregation directly paid utility expenses related to the parsonage. Both churches continued to directly pay other church-related expenses (power, water, office expenses, church secretary, etc.). The district sent salary checks to the pastors drawn from the teaching parish account.

#### *Other ways expenses were reduced*

A significant number of cost-cutting measures were introduced at the churches in order to balance the budget. Among these were the following.

- the parish nurse at the smaller church was eventually released

- the number of phone lines was reduced at the larger church
- some ministries were funded through the use of designated funds
- the interest rate on the mortgage at the larger church was lowered
- youth and children's ministry budgets were reduced but activities were increased and staffed with volunteers
- yellow page advertising was reduced in size with a resulting decrease in cost
- a small loan (\$50,000) was obtained from the Florida UM Foundation; this was only secured when 11 families within the church co-signed on the loan

### *The results*

The teaching parish has been in existence since June, 2002. The Director began working part-time with the larger church December 31, 2001. Both churches receive more pastoral services than prior to the formation of the teaching parish at a reduced cost. The budgets have been brought into line with income. Attendance and giving have increased for both churches. The larger church is now a "transforming" church on the Church Transformation Survey while the smaller church has moved from "dying" to "maintaining." The mortgage of the larger church was just refinanced with the Florida UM Foundation at a considerable savings to the church. The teaching parish anticipates hiring a full-time staff person in Youth and Family Ministry early in 2004. The youth group at the larger church has grown to 75. Both churches are reaching out to the communities in which they reside and anticipate taking part in a Celebrate Jesus Mission in July 2004.

### Scenario Six

Two historic churches are located less than one mile apart. One is an historically ethnic church and the other is an historically Anglo church. The ethnic church is growing in spirit, numbers and ministry but lacks adequate facilities for expanding its outreach to the community. The Anglo church is declining in spirit, numbers and ministry but has nice facilities that are woefully underutilized. Both churches have an appointed Elder. The Anglo church has paid very little towards its apportionments while the ethnic church has paid all of its apportionments. Together, the two churches could have a wonderful ministry but apart they are both unable to be all they were created to be.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cross-racial cooperative parish for the purpose of strengthening both churches.

### *Staffing Options*

The ethnic pastor becomes the Director of the cooperative parish and the Anglo pastor is replaced with one or more retired/student/supply pastors. A significant savings results from not having the fixed costs related to a second appointed pastor. The cost savings is used to pay apportionments and invest in additional ministry to the community.

### Scenario Seven

An established church recognizes the need for a new faith community in neighborhood beyond its reasonable service area. The need for a new church is great and the established church wants to be a ministry partner with the new congregation. There is a willingness to invest in this situation but not enough resources to completely underwrite the cost of the church planting project. The Conference agrees with the assessment of the church that a new community of faith is needed in that location.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cooperative parish for the purpose of starting a new church.

#### *Option One*

The current Associate Pastor of the church has the gifts and skills needed to plant the new church. The Conference agrees to invest in the situation and provides roughly 50% of the cost of the Associate Pastor's compensation. The established church invests the other 50% and releases the Associate to work on the planting project. The support services needed for the new church (secretarial, copies, etc.) are provided by the established church.

#### *Option Two*

A second established church in the area is contacted and expresses a willingness to invest in starting a new church. The churches pool their funds to provide for the compensation and support of the new church. The Conference might invest funds in this situation or find yet another church to join in the project.

### Scenario Eight

Three struggling ethnic churches are located within two miles of each other. Two of the churches are served by local pastors and one has an appointed elder. All three churches are housed in a facility given to them after an Anglo church was closed. The costs of insuring and maintaining the buildings are like a millstone around the necks of these hard-working people.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a cross-cultural (multi-ethnic) cooperative parish for the purpose of strengthening each church. The primary savings in this scenario would not come from a change in staff or compensation. It would, rather, come from the three congregations sharing one facility and thereby eliminating a lot of fixed costs. All three churches would have more funds to invest in ministry and would be more likely to grow and provide dynamic ministry to their respective communities.

### Scenario Nine

A larger, growing church desires to increase its participation in mission and ministry. It is seeking an alternative strategy to spending a large amount of money to purchase additional property adjacent to the church. Within the district is an urban church that is engaged in mission but which is struggling to meet its budget and is unable to fulfill its apportionment obligation.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a mission participation cooperative parish for the purpose of expanding the mission presence of the churches and lowering the fixed costs of ministry for the urban church.

#### *Staffing Options*

The staffing could remain the same with the larger church investing people and financial resources into the urban church. The pastor of the urban church could be listed as the Associate of the larger church with the larger church assigned the apportionments based on his/her compensation. A deacon could be brought in to direct the mission element of the parish and a retired/student/supply pastor brought in to conduct worship services.

#### Scenario Ten

Two or three small to mid-size churches are struggling to meet their budgets and grow. Each has invested in a staff person in a specialized area of ministry (youth, children, family life, etc.). None of the churches has more than about 20 participants in the ministry program. Apportionment giving is suffering due to the investment in these staff positions.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a staff sharing cooperative parish for the purpose of lowering expenses, increasing the effectiveness of ministry and reinvesting funds in apportionments.

#### *Staffing Options*

The three churches would pool their resources to hire one staff person with a higher level of competence or bring the most effective staff member up to full-time employment. This would result in a lower total staff cost and improved stewardship.

#### Scenario Eleven

A church located near a college/university wants to extend ministry to the students, staff and faculty of the college/university. A United Methodist Campus Minister has been appointed to serve at that college/university and has about 30 students regularly involved in student ministry. The church does not want to duplicate efforts or compete with the campus minister but recognizes the large number of people who could become involved in such an outreach. Campus

Ministry funds are tight and it is becoming more difficult to invest in campus settings.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a campus ministry cooperative parish for the purpose of effectively and efficiently ministering to the students, staff and faculty of the college/university. Fewer Conference resources would need to be invested in this setting if church facilities were utilized instead of leasing/owning space on campus. The same would be true if the campus minister also served as the Associate at the church and split his or her time since a group of 30 or 40 or even 50 people would rarely constitute or call for a full-time appointment.

#### Scenario Twelve

A church with abundant facilities is located near to one or more churches struggling with one of a variety of issues. These could include situations such as struggling ethnic churches, churches saddled with terrible facilities, a new church start that will not be financially viable by the end of its three year funding, a dying (very small membership) congregation or a church that loses its facility in a disaster and may need to share space for 1-2 years. The surrounding church(es) have needs and the other church has the resources to meet those needs.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a shared space cooperative parish in which the church with abundant facilities invites one or more other churches to share space with it – either for a short time or as long as forever. The cost savings comes from sharing the use of one facility, the reduction in associated costs and, perhaps, sharing staff.

#### Scenario Thirteen

A group of churches share a common interest in a particular ministry expression. Each is working to create a plan to address the ministry and identify resources to invest in it. The ministry need is greater than any of the churches can adequately address.

A cooperative parish ministry strategy for this setting could involve creating a specialized ministry cooperative parish for the purpose of working together to address a specific ministry concern. Examples could include: homelessness, affordable housing, foreign missions, education of children and mentoring. The cost savings is the result of pooling finances and integrating ministry plans.

#### **SOURCES OF SAVINGS THROUGH COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRY**

Cooperative Parish Ministry offers the possibility of significantly reducing the fixed costs of ministry. The purpose of cooperative parish ministry, however, is not the mere reduction in cost to a local congregation or even the Florida Conference. The intent is to provide a vehicle through which to invest more

strategically and by which to demonstrate improved stewardship. After fulfilling its apportionment responsibility, resources would be freed up to invest in other mission and ministry areas.

Among the many areas in which costs would be reduced are the following.

1. Salary – It is common for the salary costs in a cooperative parish to be lower than when the churches were functioning in an independent manner.
2. Non-salary compensation – The reduction in the number of appointed Elders also reduces salary and health insurance costs for the churches in the cooperative parish.
3. Apportionments in the local church – The reduced costs of cooperative ministry can lead to a reduction in the amount of apportionments paid by the local church.
4. Apportionments in the Florida Conference – Lowering the cost for churches to engage in ministry can lead to a reduction in the amount of apportionments assessed to the Florida Conference by the General Conference. Randy Casey-Rutland indicates that this line item is approximately 1/3 of the budget of the Florida Conference.
5. Property Insurance – Sharing facilities and the more effective use of facilities can lead to the selling of some facilities and a lowering of the total property insurance bill.
6. Utilities – Sharing facilities can lead to a reduction in the amount paid by each of the participating churches for the cost of utilities.
7. Disability Insurance – Fewer elders serving in the Florida Conference will lead to a decrease in the amount paid for disability insurance.
8. Life Insurance – Fewer elders serving in the Florida Conference will lead to a decrease in the amount paid for life insurance. This item, when added to disability insurance, will cost the Conference \$1,450,000 in 2004.
9. Payments for Retirees – Fewer elders serving in the Florida Conference will lead to a reduction in the long-term costs of providing benefits for clergy.
10. Equitable Salary – Cooperative ministry can allow churches to have the resources needed to move off of equitable salary support.
11. Unpaid insurance and pension – Currently between \$50,000 and \$100,000 of required costs are not paid each year by churches and must be paid by the Florida Conference. Working in cooperation, fixed costs are reduced and these costs are more likely to be paid.

## COOPERATIVE RESOURCE TEAMS – CHURCHES HELPING CHURCHES

### Overview

Cooperative Resource Teams (CRTs) represent a new expression of the connectional nature of the United Methodist Church in which churches share their strengths with other churches and learn from other churches. CRTs can be composed of both lay persons and clergy persons. When a church identifies an area of ministry in which it would like to be stronger, it requests a CRT. The team leader contacts the church to clarify the specific need and assembles a

team of people with skill in that area to assist the church. There is rarely a cost involved in having a Cooperative Resource Team come into a church.

### Team Members

Team members are primarily lay persons. They are people who have gifts and skills in specific areas of ministry such as hospitality, guest follow-up, finances, fund raising, children's ministry, youth ministry, setting up a preschool, leading effective meetings, working with spiritual gift inventories, using Power Point, designing worship services, hiring staff members, advertising, Servant Evangelism, etc. These individuals are identified through the pastors of the churches in the district and other lay persons. They agree to serve on an as-needed basis. They have the right to be involved when it is convenient for them to do so. There is no compensation involved in serving on a CRT. Doing so is an expression of Christian care and a living out of the body life of the church. Team leaders can be either clergy or lay.

### Formation of the teams

A team leader is assigned after a church makes a request to the District Office or the District Congregational Transformation Committee. The team leader clarifies the identified need of the church by communicating with one or more of its leaders. The team leader then reviews the list of potential CRT members and assembles a team.

### The Work of the CRT

The work of the CRT could consist of as little as one meeting or as much as a year of informal coaching. The CRT could invite members of the requesting church to a workshop, training session or worship service at the home church of one of the CRT members. It is common for the CRT to visit the requesting church to work with members of that church. When the work of the CRT with a particular church is completed, the team is dissolved.

### Motivation for Serving on a CRT

CRTs provide an opportunity for people to share their spiritual gifts with others. They allow Christians to help Christians and churches to help churches. There is great satisfaction when one uses his or her spiritual gifts in a God-honoring way.

## RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO COOPERATIVE PARISH MINISTRY

1. Intentional investigation of cooperative parish ministry that leads to the establishment of new cooperative parishes. A challenge goal of starting two cooperative parishes per district for each of the next two years could substantially enhance ministry in the Florida Conference.
2. The savings gleaned from the formation of cooperative parishes would first be invested in fulfilling the mission apportionments of the church with the remainder invested in new mission and ministry.
3. The intentional use of cooperative parish ministry to increase diversity.

4. As rising fixed cost issues are negatively impacting churches, further investigation of pathways to reduce these costs (such as changes in the property insurance and health insurance plans) need to be pursued and enacted.
5. The Board of Ministry will want to consider the impact of cooperative parish ministry on the criteria for selection of clergy and the number that will be needed.
6. Promote the formation and use of CRT's within each district.

#### Talking Points for Making a Full-Time Pastoral Appointment

The appointment of a full time pastor to a church represents a significant investment of resources and trust by the Florida Conference. This decision must be made in accordance with the adopted mission and vision of the Annual Conference if those statements are to have meaning. This section provides talking points for making the determination of whether or not to appoint a full-time pastor to a church or charge.

A full-time pastoral appointment refers to an appointment made by the Cabinet of a Local Pastor, Commissioned Minister or Elder to a church or charge within the bounds of the Florida Conference. The pastoral and missional needs of the 14 districts within the Florida Conference and the leadership of the District Superintendent of each district will be the primary determining factors in the appointment of individuals without Conference standing.

Every church has the right to receive an appointment of a clergy person with the gifts and graces appropriate for the style of ministry of the congregation and the category of the congregation (beginning, dying, maintaining, transforming, re-producing). Every pastor has the right to receive an appointment to a congregation which is consistent with their strengths and track record in ministry.

Some churches, by their very nature, may not be best served by these talking points. These churches could include new church starts and situations of intentional, planned transformation efforts. The vast majority of churches, however, will be covered by these talking points. They should be taken in their entirety and viewed as expressions of stewardship and our common accountability.

#### *Talking Points for Making Full-Time Appointments*

Full-time appointments should be made for missional reasons. Clergy are one of the primary resources the Conference has to invest in a local church. This investment needs to be based upon the mission of the Church, the mission and vision of the Conference, the gifting of the pastor and the needs of the local church.

1. The financial ability to support a full-time pastor while not compromising the on-going mission and ministry of the church.

The financial obligation inherent in a full-time pastoral appointment is significant. It is essential that the mission of the church is not reduced to

- the support of its pastor. The ability to financially support a full-time pastor is, in and of itself, not sufficient for such an appointment to be made. [Note: Churches or charges with fewer than 100 in worship often experience the inability to meet the minimum budgetary necessities (programming, salary, loan payments, utilities, apportionments, office expenses, etc.). Churches with an attendance of fewer than 50 rarely have the ability to completely underwrite a full-time appointment and invest adequate resources in outreach, mission and engagement of the communities they serve. There was an understanding on the task force that the needs of ethnic/minority churches may make the worship attendance figure of 50 more appropriate in some situations.]
2. A history of full support of fair share connectional giving.  
Apportionments are not an optional part of being a United Methodist Church. The appointing of a pastor is an expensive proposition for the Conference and United Methodist churches must support that system.
  3. The category of the church is not “Dying.”  
Dying churches rarely warrant a full-time appointment. “Dying” churches which have embraced a realistic, intentional plan of transformation could be an exception to this criterion.
  4. The church is engaged in outreach and evangelistic witness in its community.  
Vital congregations are more than social clubs engaged in good works; they are outposts of the Kingdom of God, saving stations in which people can enter into a personal relationship with Jesus.

#### Clergy Morale, Competence and Effectiveness

The strength of an Annual Conference will never be greater than the strength of its leadership. The leaders most directly impacted by the actions of the Annual Conference are those who serve as pastors and those who oversee pastors. Increase the strength of these leaders and the strength of the Conference will increase. Increase the competency of these leaders in skills directly related to the mission and vision of the Conference and their ministries will be more effective. Increase their effectiveness and more churches will become transformed and more people will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus.

Clergy morale is, as we understand it, the feelings and perceptions towards ministry within the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church held by those who are currently serving as clergy leaders within it. Morale is improved when people believe that they are measured by their performance and fruit in ministry more than by whom they know or their race or ethnicity. Morale is improved when the actions of the Annual Conference demonstrate that strengthening ministry within the local church is its top priority. Morale rises when accountability is coupled with incentive and decreases when poor performance is met with indifference.

Competence is the combination of knowledge, action, leadership and results. Clergy must have the knowledge necessary to engage in vital ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup>

Century; knowledge that differs substantially to the training received by many clergy in their seminary experience. They must be able to translate this knowledge into action; the day of ivory tower theory that fails to engage context in a meaningful and intelligible way is over. Clergy must be capable leaders with specific skill sets in order to build strong teams of laity to serve as colleagues in ministry and motivate, inspire and encourage them on the journey towards transformation.

Effectiveness means more than just presence or effort. It means that there are measurable positive results – fruit – of the ministry of a clergy leader; that their personal idiosyncrasies do not overshadow their performance; that they are life-long learners actively engaged in personal and professional growth. The Annual Conference can no longer afford to support and take care of marginal leaders nor would it represent good stewardship to do so. Effectiveness needs to be the goal of, and the expectation of the Conference for, every clergy leader.

Many steps could be taken to improve the morale, competence and effectiveness of pastoral leaders within the Florida Conference. Some initial steps include the following.

1. Define Desired Characteristics of Clergy and Base Selection on Them  
The book Transforming Regional Bodies, which has been required reading for the Cabinet, recommends that 4 out of 5 entering clergy be “apostolic” in their approach to ministry. We affirm this position and endorse it. As we understand this, apostolic leaders can be defined as entrepreneurial, willing to invest in a situation, emotionally healthy, internally motivated, willing to work through the pain and difficulties that will come, takes initiative, willing to be connected to the district and conference instead of being a lone ranger, having a clear sense of call, teachable, views the ministry in which they serve as part of God’s mission to save the world, embraces change when needed to further the mission, committed to spreading the good news of Jesus, growing in spirit and developing in skills. If 4 out of 5 new clergy were selected by the Board of Ministry based on having these characteristics, the nature and work of the Conference would be both changed and improved. If current clergy were evaluated based on these characteristics and either helped to develop them or assisted in transitioning to a vocation outside of pastoral leadership, the nature and work of the Conference would be both changed and improved.

2. Length of Pastoral Appointment

Several studies have demonstrated the association between long pastoral tenure and effectiveness in ministry. It is understood that in an itinerant system, the needs of churches and the Annual Conference may necessitate a change in an appointment prior to reaching the five year mark. In addition, a commitment by the Conference to quickly address ineffective appointments (through coaching, training, Elder Effectiveness, etc.) would be a crucial component of this process.

### 3. Improve Training of Pastoral Leaders

An “internship” process is needed to provide real-world experience for seminary students in a parish-based learning environment. Theological training separated from practical hands-on ministry leads to a bifurcation of ministerial education. The presence of Asbury Seminary (Orlando) provides new opportunities to do just this. Non-seminary trained pastoral leaders (such as supply pastors) are also in need of additional training and interaction with a teaching Elder. An intentional development process could be created and held at teaching churches in every district on a regular basis to raise competence in theology, pastoral care, administration, sermon construction and more.