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STRUCTURED FOR MISSION: A NEW DISTRICT LEADERSHIP MODEL

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Abstract

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The purpose of this research is to develop a new district leadership structure for use within the UMC (parts can be used in other denominations) that enables effective leadership to share non-confidential responsibilities of the District Superintendent so that the needs, skills, and training for both pastors and churches are better understood and missional strategies to resource those needs are implemented more effectively. The District Superintendent is the chief missional strategist of the district. “Chief” presumes that there are other missional strategists. This new structure draws upon that assumption by intentionally creating a team of missional strategists and others who assist in some form of supervision and pastoral care to the pastors. All of this creates an environment of effective communication and resourcing while affording the DS to be more relational and visible within the district.

Structured For Mission: A New District Leadership Model

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Introduction

Problem

The room was full of pastors being trained for their new appointment. Some were excited. Some were there because no one says no to their Bishop. Some were willing but hesitant about what they were being asked to undertake. The topic for this particular workshop was supervision. The screen in the front of the room read, “In the year of 1784, when the presiding eldership did in fact . . . commence, there were about 14,000 in society . . . and now . . . upwards of 56,000 . . . [W]e have no doubt that. . . the presiding eldership . . . has been a *chief instrument*, under the grace of God, of this great revival.”¹

The quotation underscored an awakening and multiplication of the church, and identified the Presiding Eldership, now known as the District Superintendent (DS), as the pivotal role that made this kind of growth possible. Much has changed since 1798 regarding that role, but much has also remained the same. Like today, Presiding Elders back then were responsible for supervising all clergy and lay ministers in the absence of the Bishop. They too were responsible for changing pastors between appointment seasons due to issues and/or suspension of lay or licensed clergy in their district due to dereliction of duty, though now technology makes cabinet consultation possible too, if needed. The cabinet consists of all of the DSs and anyone else the Bishop selects to help with appointing. Just as in 1798, today DSs are responsible for interpreting the *Book of Discipline* within the district, only then such public interpretation occurred mostly at quarterly conferences and now it’s almost a daily occurrence. District Superintendents are also

¹ Bergquist and Steiner-Ball, “Supervision.”

still responsible for helping candidates to enter into ministry, though a District Committee on Ordained Ministry shares this responsibility.

The greatest change is that in 1798 the Presiding Eldership was mostly a sacramental and pastoral office, as those who held that position were often the only ordained clergy in their districts. Much of their time was spent preaching and administering the sacraments. Today, DSs are no longer the only ordained clergy in their district. Now, instead of holding quarterly conferences at each church to administer sacraments, most districts only hold what were then considered fourth quarter conferences, now known as charge conferences, which deal with the oversight and approval of church business such as leadership, property management, and budget.

However, many pastors and churches still desire to see the DS as the “pastor” and spiritual leader of the district.² It was made evident that this desire still existed in South Georgia Annual Conference (SGA) during a discussion with young clergy about innovative ministry. These clergy wanted the DS to be more relational, visible to clergy and churches, to know and support the clergy’s gifts and developmental needs, the needs of the churches, and to know how to help resource both clergy and congregations in their ministry settings.

The tension between what is needed and desired and what can be accomplished with existing district staff is a source of strain in The UMC and causes clergy and churches to lose faith in the connectional system and specifically in the office of the District Superintendent. Some support exists for the district office. However, the prevalence of negative opinions about the work of the DS that has persisted church-wide in recent decades strongly suggests that the system is no longer functioning effectively.³

² The Futuring Committee, “The Futuring Document,” 586–639.

³ Leiffer, “The Role of the District Superintendent,” 36-37

For example, in SGA a District Leadership Team (DLT) is a team that consists of persons assigned to represent each district's ministry focus, i.e., youth, children, evangelism, mission, laity training, etc. Pictured in Appendix A is the previous district structure in the SGAUMC after redistricting occurred in 2014. This structure was problematic because it required 704 to 880 people to serve within a district, with 88 of them serving in two different district leadership groups and eleven serving in three different district leadership groups. These 99 people would serve on two to three committees at the district level, in addition to their positions in the local church (as well as positions at the conference level for some). This does not take into account their family and community commitments. For these reasons, the cluster committees representing each church failed to form properly in most districts. This in turn caused the next level of leadership, the District Ministry Focus Groups, to fail too. The chair of each of these groups formed the DLT. However, since for the most part the groups from which they came did not form and/or function, there were major gaps in understanding the needs of the clergy and laity in the local church. This then resulted in ineffective DLTs and major gaps in resourcing, exacerbating the existing sense of disconnection in a connectional system.

This disconnected feeling was expressed to me, a DS, in 2020 when several of my churches chose to disaffiliate in light of the division on human sexuality in the Church. The question I kept hearing from these churches was, "If we hold on and believe this will turn out the way we want, what is the benefit of staying connectional besides receiving a pastor? We have never received any help from the district or conference." The Reverend Dr. Paul Dietterich, the Executive Director Emeritus of The Center for Parrish Development and a UMC Elder, and Rev. Donald Arthur, a former UMC DS, write that the principle of supportive relationships underscores the need for people to feel valued, of worth, and heard in order that trust and

motivation be invested in the organization and its mission.⁴ When needs are left unmet, a lack of understanding, awareness, and trust of the connectional system occurs resulting in a degradation of the system that has held us together and served us well when it functioned at a more manageable scale.

The District Superintendent's role in maintaining the connectional system is important to The United Methodist Church's proper functioning. Murray Leiffer, former professor of sociology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, writes, "It is often remarked that no other office within the Methodist Church is more important to the functioning of the total organization. . . It is the district superintendent who is the vital link in what Methodists call their 'connectional system.'"⁵ In earlier years, it was manageable because districts were much smaller, therefore, the demands on the time and energy of a DS were not as great as today. However, as time has passed, the DS's responsibilities have grown as the institution that is the UMC has grown. Along with this growth, the size of a district a DS serves (geographically and numerically in churches and clergy) has also grown tremendously, causing gaps in resourcing due to overextending the DS. It is a systemic problem that must be fixed in part by structure. The other part of the solution lies in relationship building and trust between the DS and their laity and clergy.

Why This Is Problematic

Though the role of the District Superintendent as the Presiding Eldership did not begin this way, today much of the DS's time is taken up with bureaucratic paperwork, Charge Conferences, and helping to appoint clergy—in short, the more administrative tasks. The only

⁴ Dietterich and Arthur, "District Superintendent, Key To District Revitalization," 27.

⁵ Leiffer, "The Role of the District Superintendent," iii;9-10.

one of those three that is even remotely appreciated (unless everything is going up in flames) is the task of assisting the Bishop in making appointments. For clergy, however, even this is shrouded in doubt and suspicion. They wonder: is there an agenda that supersedes what is best for the local church, greater conference, and clergy? Such suspicion often arises as a result of too much emphasis being placed on the DS as a manager and administrator. The tasks of managing and administration are undoubtedly important aspects of the DS office. However, this is only one half of the role of the DS.⁶ Furthermore, the supervision aspect of recruiting and developing stronger leaders often ends getting little priority because of how other duties consume the DS's time.

The graph in Appendix B, which represents two of the roles of a District Superintendent that are contained within the black box—Personnel Leadership/Supervision and Administrative Leadership—take up an estimated three-quarters of a DS's time. Charge conferences take up three months and appointment making takes up five months. This alone is two-thirds of the year. That does not take into account laity or clergy misconduct issues, clergy recruitment and development, property issues, etc. that occur constantly throughout the year. This is why it is imperative to have an effective and supportive district leadership structure that assists in the work of the district. This is also why there is so much mistrust of the Episcopal Office and the extension of that office, the DS, as well as the loss of a sense of connectionalism. No one, the DS included, gets excited over ministry that only involves the middle section of that graph. However, when the DS's roles of pastoral leader to both pastors and church (when needed) and Chief Missional Strategist are given adequate attention, then the relationship between the district, clergy, and local church begins to change significantly for the better. In addition, the missional

⁶ See Appendix B.

effectiveness of the churches in the district begins to increase because the district is doing what is needed to resource the ministry of the churches strategically.

In researching and living into the role of a District Superintendent, it quickly became clear that the reality is that there is not enough time to fulfill all the previously mentioned relational components and attend to the other responsibilities of a DS. *At least this is not possible without a leadership structure that not only supports the relational practice of the DS but creates a funnel of information to the DS about the needs of the churches and clergy from additional avenues.* By the time a DS finishes Charge Conferences with one hundred churches, it is advent. Consultations with pastors and the church regarding appointments start in December and run through January. Appointment season starts in February and runs through April. The next months are spent getting ready for District and Annual Conference. Visits to new pastors occur in June. July is usually filled with setup meetings (clergy annual orientation to the district) and continuing education workshops that the pastors attend. By September, preparations begin again for Charge Conferences. This signals the beginning of another annual cycle! All of this does not take into account personnel issues and Conference committees that likewise take an exorbitant amount of time.

The South Georgia Annual Conference downsized from nine districts to six in 2014. In preparation for an increase in the size of districts by about forty new churches (to about one hundred), the Transition Team proposed the previously mentioned leadership structure.⁷ The intention of this structure was for ministry initiatives to happen from the ground up rather from the top down. However, the recommended structure was too cumbersome to implement fully. Therefore, a new structure of shared leadership needs to be envisioned to enable others to work

⁷ See Appendix A.

as district strategists so that the ministry of the DS and the district can occur more effectively and innovatively.

Dana A. Everhart's project for his Doctor of Ministry in 2017 discussed the progression from a structure of a Presiding Eldership to a District Superintendent (DS) to a DS as the Chief Missional Strategist (CMS), and what that meant for the future of the Church. His conclusion was similar to mine: that if the DS is also the CMS then the DS needs additional administrative support. Everhart's work is thorough and thought-provoking. However, I disagree with his recommendation that adding an additional ordained clergyperson to the district office to assist the DS is sufficient.⁸ To be effective, the work cannot be accomplished merely by the addition of one person to the team. In addition, as we move into an uncertain future in The UMC, we need to find alternative avenues to accomplish ministry innovatively with assets we already have, rather than burdening district churches with the financial load of another full-time staff person. However, I do agree that we need to emphasize and bring more clarity to the role of CMS as the DS.

The descriptive label of Chief Missional Strategist, itself, presupposes that there will be other missional strategists within the district to help with this work. The 1989 General Church report, *Exercising the Gift: Called to the Ministry of Superintending*, included DSs's responses to a variety of questions related to their perceptions of their work. This report was already suggesting a need to support the DS through shared leadership among district leaders. In

⁸ Everhart, "Presiding Elder to Superintendent to Strategist" Appendix 1.

His recommendation was to change the *Book of Discipline* as follows: "The superintendent/chief missional strategist will be assisted by ordained clergy who will be appointed to assist in the administrative needs of the area. The *one* [emphasis added] assisting will serve as acting administrator of any pastoral charge in which a pastoral vacancy may develop, or where no pastor is appointed."

reference to developing and programing, the report found “that we need to become better skilled at delegating responsibility to district leaders as team members . . . as well as being resource providers and brokers to the local churches.”⁹ Yet the church largely ignored this report. In addition, an in-conference study was done in SGA between 1994 and 1997 called The Futuring Document.¹⁰ It came to the same conclusion as the General Church study and like the GC study, prompted very little change. What is needed in today’s UMC is to recapture the role of DS as one of ministry that encourages, grows, and supports clergy and churches by that person’s presence and by strategically resourcing the needs in the district for mission and ministry. That would enable the district’s witness and impact in the world to increase for the sake of Christ. That, I suggest, is the role of the DS as the CMS.

Why introduce a new model of district leadership? Consider the district as a parallel to the local church. A pastor in the local church does not do all the work of ministry on their own. Rather they cast a vision, guide, train, resource, and serve alongside key laity and other clergy and staff to fulfill the mission of the local church. The DS/CMS must likewise have strategic leaders, both from within the district and without, to serve alongside and share leadership in order for the district to support the efforts of the clergy and local churches and make them more effective. While every conference, and even district, tends to set up leadership in its own way, what this paper offers is a common model that can provide consistency across the greater Church yet can be adaptable in terms of ministry and program emphasis and leadership positions within this structure.

⁹ Yeager, “Exercising The Gift,” 2

¹⁰ The Futuring Committee, “The Futuring Document.” 586–639.

Everhart describes the District Superintendent's role of Chief Missional Strategist as one that "empowers the congregations in the district to offer viable and cutting edge ways to proclaim the gospel to the community, their world."¹¹ This is a good explanation of the aim of the CMS. But how does it actually happen? And what does the descriptive label of CMS suggest about the role of the DS? Breaking down the words in the label CMS will help to understand this better. The first word is chief. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the adjectival form "chief" as the most important or main as well as the highest rank.¹² Therefore, the word *chief* suggests that this person is the lead strategist—among other strategists. The CMS could be an additional clergy person appointed together with the DS, as Everhart suggested in his work. However, that solution still falls short of the need for multiple strategists in the district. If one considers the size of a district and the number of its members and compared it to a large church, it becomes clear that two clergy are insufficient for such a large number of members. Even if we imagine only about eighty or so pastors and nine hundred SPR members, and one hundred lay leaders, that makes a total of about 1100 active members who all want equal attention.

The second word in the CMS title is mission (and by extension missional). This is a very ambiguous word because each user interprets it a bit differently. The Reverend Dr. Gil Rendle, respected Congregational Consultant and UMC Elder, for example, says that missional questions are ones that typically begin with "Why do we . . .?" They are questions about purpose, outcomes, and leadership. Missional questions ask, "Are we doing the right things?," whereas institutional questions ask, "Are we doing things right?" The difference is between discerning if

¹¹ Everhart, "The Road from Presiding Elder." 7.

¹² "Chief," in Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/chief>.

we are doing things in the proper way and procedure as opposed to asking if the things we are doing are the things that we should be doing or that our priorities are misplaced.¹³ In an article in Christianity Today entitled “What Does “Missional” Mean?,” The Reverend Dr. Ed Stetzer, a professor at Wheaton College, suggests we need a better understanding of the word “missional.” He points to a study by Dr. H. H. Rosin, a missiology researcher and professor, in which he refers to the Latin term, *Missio Dei*, and notes that the original (but now rarely intended) meaning of this phrase refers to the sending of God. In Rosin’s understanding it was originally used to refer not to the activity of the church but rather to a key attribute of God. God goes out and God sends us out to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything.” “There is church because there is mission, not vice versa.”¹⁴ Stetzer says that it is “about our participation in the sending of God.”¹⁵ The Latin term *Missio Dei* was about participating in God’s sending of the church into the world in order to move in the world through the people of the church, who teach, care, heal, and touch the world through the Spirit that lives within them.

Being missional is about participating in God’s sending of the church to the world by loving the world any way that we can in order to share God’s love, care for the soul, and for the whole person as well. Being missional is about asking “What is happening in your community

¹³ Rendle, “How Do We Understand the World We Now Live?,” SEJ Extended Cabinet Consultation.

¹⁴ Stetzer, “What Does ‘Missional’ Mean?,”
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/june/what-does-missional-mean.html>.

¹⁵ Stetzer, "What Does 'Missional' Mean?"

that breaks God's heart?"¹⁶ And, in what ways do we need to love our fellow believers around us? That is what we are sent to do.

The final word in Chief Missional Strategist is strategist. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a strategist as a person who has the skill or experience in a planning, particularly in government, business, military, or politics.¹⁷ A strategist plans how to accomplish the institutions vision or goals. They need to be able to think outside the box and be creative. According to Harvard Business Review, three things are key to any good strategist. First, at each new turn in their career they have a vision of what they are trying to achieve that guides them. Second, they modify that vision as circumstances change. Third and finally, they act on the ideas they have to implement their vision.¹⁸ Such a strategist needs to know what resources are available and how to assemble the people who can create the resources if they are not available. The Church has an overarching vision and mission, but each local church has its own set of obstacles to living out that purpose out as well as their own unique way of living out the mission of the Church. This requires a strategist to be a good listener for the churches. A good strategist helps guide the vision and mission not only in the present, but continues to evaluate whether the original vision and mission can continue to have significant impact into future, and if not, to change it, in small or thoroughgoing ways.

The journey from Presiding Eldership in the 1700s to the District Superintendent as Chief Missional Strategist in 2021 has been a long, winding journey full of highs and lows. What once

¹⁶ Goodpaster, Consultant Feedback, 2021.

¹⁷ "Strategist," in Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english>.

¹⁸ Hinterhuber and Popp, "Are You a Strategist or Just a Manager," <https://hbr.org/1992/01/are-you-a-strategist-or-just-a-manager>.

was primarily a pastoral and sacramental role has become primarily a managerial role. The role that in 1784 was considered to be the “*chief instrument*, under the grace of God, of [the] great revival”¹⁹ has in the last half a century come to be viewed as one primarily of administration. Pastors and churches today are increasingly expressing their dissatisfaction in how this role falls short. But it falls short because the work of resourcing pastors and churches, the work of caring for the spiritual and temporal matters of pastors and churches, cannot be done alone. Of course neither can supervision be done alone. There must be a district leadership structure that allows for shared ministry within the district so that the ministry of the churches and the work of the district can be carried out efficiently for the glory God and the edification of the kingdom of God.

Theoretical and Theological Grounding

Well-Differentiated Leadership

Being a District Superintendent is not for the faint of heart. It is often a lonely position within The UMC, and can be shrouded in doubt and suspicion. Therefore, for a DS to lead well, and especially to bring change within the district, the leader must be someone who can remain differentiated from the emotions and various opinions that will arise from the eighty or more pastors and thousands of laity under their care and leadership. In *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, Edwin H. Friedman, a Rabbi, family therapist and leadership consultant, describes what he calls a well-differentiated leader as the kind of leader who helps an organization to thrive. He believes that the real problem facing leaders today has nothing to do with having enough knowledge, skill, or the right techniques for the situation but rather the lack of nerve to take a stand in the midst of chaos and resistance from the people they lead. For

¹⁹ Bergquist and Steiner-Ball, “Supervision.”

people willing to do the hard work of self-reflection and regulation, Friedman's principles for being a well-differentiated leader and keeping clear boundaries amidst the emotional processes of relational structures can do much to help a leader develop and mature others' emotionally regressed relationships.

In order to lead an organization out of what Friedman calls imaginative gridlock, the leader must understand that their presence has more of an impact than does information and the right techniques. For example, one could have all the right answers but if one is anxious in demeanor, the people will not follow because they won't trust the answers given by an anxiousness leader. Additionally, one can have all the right answers but if one is highly reactive to others, this will also produce distrust and negative reactivity. Having the right demeanor or presence requires a lot of self-reflective work of the leader. If a leader is going "to gain more regulation over one's own reactive mechanisms [it] requires commitment to the lifetime project of being willing to be continually transformed by one's experience."²⁰ For a leader to lead well, they must be able to understand and regulate their own emotions so as not to add more chaos or get entangled in the organization's emotional processes. Friedman states that a leader's response to any situation, especially a crisis, is based on whether or not they are a well-differentiated individual in the relationship structure they lead.²¹ Moreover, Friedman's insistence that the sheer presence of a leader is often the most impactful element of leadership supports the need for the DS's ministry to be relational.

²⁰ Friedman, "A Failure of Nerve," 20.

²¹ Friedman, "A Failure of Nerve," 17.

Denominational Framing

Almost all denominations operate as dual structures. Only a handful of denominations have unitary organizational structures. Mark Chaves, professor at Duke University, argues in *Denominations as Dual Structures: An Organizational Analysis*, that understanding the reality that denominations are made up of parallel dual structures is imperative before doing any real analysis of denominational structure.²² The two structures that exist within denominational organizations are religious authority structures and agency structures. Chaves takes the lead of Max Weber in noting that religious organizations are like political organization in that they are not defined by their purpose but by the means they use to achieve that purpose.²³ Both types of organizations develop a system that governs people by controlling their values and beliefs.

Organizations have a *what* that people desire and a *how* path to get to that desired *what*. The primary structure in the religious organization (the religious authority structure) controls access to the *what* by means of controlling *how* one has access to it. Chaves says religious authority structures “attempt to maintain themselves by using the supernatural to control access to something individuals want.”²⁴ This is not to disparage any particular religious organization, for all religious organizations work in this way.

The second structure in religious organizations is the agency structure. Agencies are various structures that resource the larger organization administratively and missionally. Chaves argues that agencies find the congregations to be their resources. However, I would argue that they are mutual resource bases for one another. Agencies have their beginnings in the volunteer

²² Chaves, “Denominations as Dual Structures,” 148.

²³ Chaves, “Denominations as Dual Structures,” 149.

²⁴ Chaves, “Denominations as Dual Structures,” 149.

societies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Over time they merged with, or were copied by, denominational organizations.²⁵ Those that merged did so because they saw the congregants as being resources for them, such as financial resources. As agency structures began to grow, they further differentiated themselves into more specialized agents. As this happened, publishing houses, pension agents, education agents, and more developed.

Religious authority structures are internally focused while agency structures are externally focused. Leaders of religious authority structures are clergy or Bishops whose scope of authority extends only to its members. Leaders of agency structures are administrators whose authority rarely extends into the church at all but rather to its employees. Agency structures serve religious authority structures as *agents* in the world that help to resource the purpose of the religious authority structure's in some way.²⁶

In this new district leadership structure, I propose that the dual structures of denominations were upheld and supported by the creation of the district leadership structure. The district office represents both a religious authority structure and an agency structure. The religious authority structure in this model would be the DS, the Clergy Coordinators, and District Committee on Ordained Ministry at the hierarchical level of the district and pastors across the district at the local level. The agency structures of the district would include the District Leadership Team and the Coaches. These structures belong to the agency because they gather, develop, and deliver resources to meet ministry needs within the churches. These two structures work in parallel within the district and rely on each other. The religious authority structure

²⁵ Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures," 152.

²⁶ Chaves, "Denominations as Dual Structures," 155.

focuses on clergy and on the spiritual growth of its members. The agency structure focuses on resourcing the district for effective ministry to world.

Koinonia and The Body of Christ

District Superintendents have four main areas of leadership.²⁷ Paragraph 419 of the *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes the role of the DS as follows: “The DS shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy (including clergy in [any] extension ministry and ministry beyond the local church) and of the churches in the communities of the district in their missions of witness and service in the world. This oversight requires the superintendent to use his or her gifts and skills related to spiritual and pastoral leadership, personnel leadership, administration, and program.”²⁸ Such work is all for the betterment of the body of Christ collectively in a district and the conference.

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28, Jesus said that our mission is to make disciples, baptize, and teach them to obey what He commanded. A few other scriptures elaborate those generalities. In Matthew 25, we find one description of what we are to teach disciples to obey. Those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited those in prison Jesus considered to be righteous. Jesus commands that we care for others by caring for their physical and emotional needs as well as their spiritual ones.

In Luke 10:25–37, Jesus tells a story about the Good Samaritan helping an injured Jew when fellow Jews would not stop to care for his wounds. The Samaritans and Jews traditionally despised each other. Jesus finishes this teaching by indicating that everything the Old Testament

²⁷ See Appendix B.

²⁸ Reist, “The Book of Discipline,” 343.

teaches hinges on two commands (and I would add post-Christ all of the New Testament as well). First, to love God with all of our being. Second, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our neighbor is not our brother or sister in Christ. Rather our neighbors are those outside the body of Christ, those who are different, those who might even be our “enemy,” those we despise,

In John 15:12, Jesus is preparing the disciples for His death. He begins by telling them that they must abide in Him and He will abide in them. He teaches that to abide in His love is to keep His commandments. Then Jesus gives a new, third commandment. He had previously told them to love God and their neighbor, but now he tells them how to be in relation with fellow disciples. Jesus commands believers to love one another as He loved and laid down His life for them. He gave three commandments that encompass all of His commands. First, disciples are to love God with all of their being. Second, they are to love their neighbors as they love themselves. Finally, they are to love fellow disciples as Jesus himself loves them and was willing to lay down his life for them. That is what mission means to the Christian. God’s love is what we are commanded to share, teach, and obey. It is a love that involves three parties: God, the world (those with whom we interact), and fellow disciples. In any relationship, God and we ourselves are the constants. The variable is the third person in the relationship occupied at any given time by a neighbor or a fellow disciple. And Jesus declares that in all relationships involving God, love cares not just for the souls of people but also for the whole person.

A full understanding of the work of a District Superintendent, as well as the district leaders in this new structure that will help carry out this work, connects that work with the theological idea that the church is both a communion/koinonia and the body of Christ. On the surface, this may not seem obvious. However, upon a closer examination one can see that “our

connectionalism . . . is an expression of our understanding of the church as the body of Christ, with each part of the body having distinctive functions.”²⁹

The first area of the work of the DS is pastoral leadership and care, which in this structure is shared between the DS and the Clergy Coordinators (more on Clergy Coordinators later). This involves two areas of work: building healthy relationships with both clergy and churches as well as exercising spiritual leadership for both the clergy and the laity that encourages a more robust relationship with God through Jesus and moves them into the mission of the church. The building of healthy relationships goes to the heart of the church as communion. However, it also facilitates the actions or behaviors of the koinonia. As the church becomes more and more a koinonia, the church through the Holy Spirit begins to animate the body of Christ and become the hands and feet of Christ in this world.

The second area of the work of the DS is personnel leadership and supervision. Aspects of supervision are shared in this new structure between the DS, Clergy Coordinators, and the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. This area of ministry has four different emphases. The first is appointment making, which cannot be shared with others and relies heavily on the DS’s pastoral leadership, and which assumes that trust has developed through the building of healthy relationships and leading spiritually. The Cabinet and the Bishop work prayerfully and strategically to match a church’s needs with a pastor’s gifts and abilities. As we do so, the body of Christ is built up and strengthened for ministry. A sense of koinonia grows increasingly as each local church’s current needs are considered and matched as closely as possible with the right pastor. The second area under personnel leadership is clergy recruiting and development. The DS shares this responsibility with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCom)

²⁹ Carder, “Living Our Beliefs,” 98.

(composed of both lay and clergy) and local churches to identify and discern calls to both lay and pastoral ministry. It also deals with the training of ministers, a task shared in this model by the DS, the District Leadership Team, DCom, and the Clergy Coordinators. With this work, the body is built up, edified, and equipped to carry out its mission of bringing the hope and light of Christ to the world.

The last area under personnel and supervision leadership is human resource issues. This deals with a wide range of issues in the church. Some examples are an appointment that does not match in spite of the efforts of the cabinet and Bishop, ethical issues involving clergy and/or laity, and disciplinary measures due to dereliction of duty by clergy. This part of the ministry of the DS takes an exorbitant amount of time. Meetings with churches tend to happen at night and these meetings tend to be long and emotional. If an ethics investigation is needed, these too tend to be long evenings due to their often emotional nature. In addition, DSs are usually asked to serve on the investigation teams of other districts, in addition to their own district responsibilities. All of this ministry enables the body—the church—to carry out its mission to grow disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The third area of the work of the District Superintendent is administrative leadership. Some of this work could be shared with Clergy Coordinators. However, I have opted to keep this under my purview and only draw on the Clergy Coordinators to do this work if I am unavailable for some reason. This administrative leadership has mostly to do with Charge Conferences, but it also involves tasks such as a church wishing to sell property or to build on their property. Charge Conferences can give a deeper glimpse than consultations about how God is moving overall in the church, the church's stewardship of their finances, property, and in the giftedness of the people in the church. Conferences are an opportunity to encourage the laity in greater ministry in

their church, as well as at the district and conference level. Conferences are events at which candidates for ministry are affirmed and certified as well as events at which lay servants, who serve the district in a variety of ways, are affirmed. All of this works to build a sense of koinonia.

Charge Conferences afford the DS the opportunity to cast a vision that God has laid upon her or his heart. It is a time to remind churches of their responsibility to “[*remember, tell, and embody*] the story of Jesus Christ.”³⁰ The more that we remember and tell the story, *and particularly our own story*, the more we begin to embody the story as our own and our faith becomes solid. Remembering our story within God’s recasts it into our present moment.³¹ By doing this in koinonia, we recast all of God’s faithfulness to save and deliver us from the storms of life to the present and God becomes more real and alive to the community.

The last area of the work of the DS is strategic or visionary leadership, otherwise known as the work of the Chief Missional Strategist. Within this new district leadership structure, the DS, Clergy Coordinators, Coaches, DCom, and the District Leadership Team all have the responsibility not only to think strategically for the district but also to provide the leadership training, resources, and connectional staff to help local churches think strategically about their communities, their needs, and what God is calling them to fulfill. This is extremely important for the mission that the church (the body of Christ) is called to carry out. Here we help the churches to think beyond their four walls and truly become the body of Christ to their area of the world and beyond. All of the other areas support this area of leadership. The others are more about the internal nurturing of the church so that this area can focus on the churches’ impact upon their communities and their proclamation of Christ in both word and deed to one another and the

³⁰ Kim and Hill, “Healing Our Broken Humanity,” 33.

³¹ Crapps, “Psychology of Religion,” 212.

world around them. The work of the DS and the various leaders in this new district leadership structure is crucial in our ecclesial connection for building and living out our call to be the koinonia and the body of Christ.

Moses as a Model for Shared Leadership

Moses' life reminds us that there were two occasions on which he was counseled to delegate authority and leadership to others in order to share the burden of leading. First, in Exodus 18 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, visits Moses and his daughter. The day after he arrives, he goes with Moses and sits with him as he judges on behalf of the people of Israel. When he saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone."³² Jethro continues by counseling Moses about selecting capable leaders to share the load. He explains that Moses should "let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."³³ In a similar vein, Clergy Coordinators or even the Administrative Assistants can handle minor issues, while all important matters that require an interpretation of the *Book of Discipline* go to the DS's attention.

Second, in Numbers 11 the people of Israel are complaining because they do not have meat to eat. Once again, they cry out and "remember" what they had in Egypt. Moses then turns to the Lord and asks why God has laid all of this on him. Incidentally, Moses echoes Jethro's

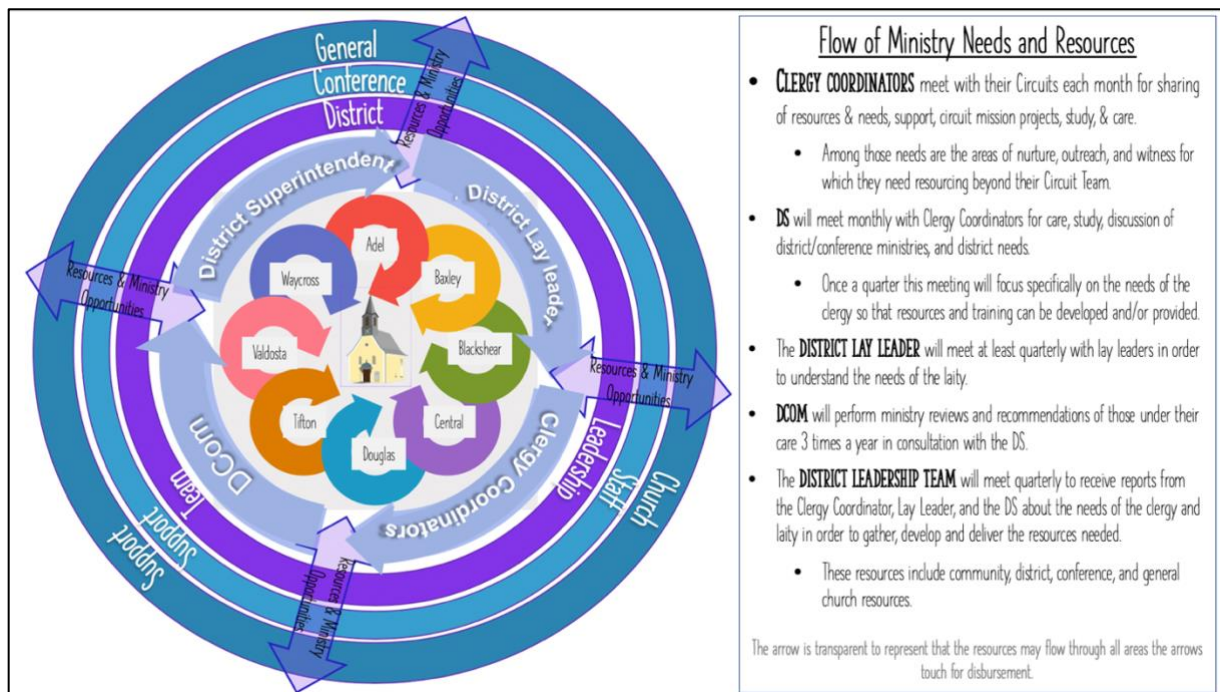
³² The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Ex. 18:17

³³ The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Ex. 18:22–23.

words heard in Exodus 18 when he says, “I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me.”³⁴ He recognizes his limits this time. In response, God directs him to pick seventy men who can help him lead. Again, Moses is modeling the rationale for a shared leadership. Delegating some of the responsibilities of the DS to other capable clergy and laity is not laziness on the part of the DS nor is it to make the DS’s life easier. Rather it is to allow the DS the time to attend to those responsibilities that are rarely tackled due to time constraints. Not only that, but it is also biblical to share ministry. Even Jesus shared his ministry with twelve disciples.

Proposed Solution: *New Structure Proposal*

The infographic below illustrates a proposal for a new district leadership structure. It explains the flow of communication between the Lay Leaders, Clergy Coordinators, the DS, coaches, District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM), and the District Leadership Team (DLT), as well as the flow of resourcing from various sources.



³⁴ The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Numbers 11:14.

The following is a brief overview of how each role or resource in the structure will operate.³⁵

Proposed structure of support for district clergy:

- **Clergy Coordinators** meet with their Circuits monthly for care, study, the sharing of resources & needs, support, & circuit mission projects.
 - Among those needs are the areas of nurture, outreach, advocacy, and witness for which they need resourcing beyond their Circuit Team.
- The **District Superintendent** will meet monthly with Clergy Coordinators for care, study, discussion of district & conference ministry, and district needs.
 - Once a quarter this meeting will focus specifically on the needs of the clergy.
- The **District Lay Leader** will meet at least quarterly, but preferably monthly, with the lay leaders of the churches in order to understand the needs of the laity. The DS can join these meetings from time to time via Zoom to discuss needs and be present and visible for laity.
- **District Committee on Ordained Ministry** will perform ministry reviews each year on all under their care. The **DS** is present, participates in discussions and votes regarding reviews, and will note any needs discovered in these reviews.
- The **Clergy Coordinator, Lay Leader, and the DS** will report quarterly to the **District Leadership Team** the needs of the clergy and laity
 - Their job will be to gather, develop, and deliver the resources needed.
 - These include community, district, conference, and general church resources.

³⁵ See Appendix C.

Description of key roles within structure:

Clergy Coordinators and Circuit Groups:

In 1989, the General Church study determined that supervision and development can be a shared responsibility through the formation of support groups.³⁶ A form of these groups, called Clergy Clusters, was put into place with the 2014 downsizing in SGAUMC. However, most did not function effectively. Therefore, my work for this group has been to re-envision its purpose. A district is divided into smaller areas I have renamed Circuits. Each Circuit has a lead clergy, called a Clergy Coordinator, chosen by their District Superintendent based on their willingness to lead beyond the local church, to take this work seriously, and to do so out of a sense of duty to the Church. Key to the success of the Clergy Coordinators, and part of the revisioning of their role, is a close relationship with the DS. The DS will hold the responsibility for spiritual formation, support and accountability of their Clergy Coordinators on a monthly basis.

Another revisioning is that the relationship between the DS and Clergy Coordinators is analogous to the relationship between the DS and the Bishop in some ways, and therefore can be considered a cabinet for district purposes only. The major difference, however, is that a DS is an extension of the Office of Episcopacy. Clergy Coordinators cannot be an extension of the DSs because that would make them an extension of the Bishop, violating the *Book of Discipline* and polity. Therefore, responsibilities such as appointments, clergy disciplinary, and interpretation of the *Book of Discipline* within the district cannot be shared with Clergy Coordinators.

³⁶ Yeager, "Exercising The Gift," 34.

“Supervision may be done through the establishment of support groups and with the DS working closely with those groups as they develop not only the spiritual formation phase, but also the work related frustrations . . . [including] critiquing sermons, preparing for charge conferences, and doing some problem solving.”

Clergy Coordinators have the duty of assisting the DS in a number of areas. In addition to caring monthly for spiritual formation, support, and accountability of their clergy and lay supply, they also collaborate with the DS around needs, planning, and promoting district ministries. Clergy Coordinators act as an additional person in assisting clergy and lay supply in answering minor issues, sharing ideas and resources, and making sure that sacraments are duly administered where lay supply serve churches, as well as other duties assigned by the DS, such as presiding at a Charge Conference.

District Leadership Team (DLT)

The DLT, or equivalent, already existed but many were inefficient. In this new structure, their main role is planning, gathering, and implementation of resources. Within the DLT is one place where additional Missional Strategists support the work of the district and collaborate, becoming a team with the Chief Missional Strategist, the DS. The DLT members consists of a leaders assigned to each ministry focus within the district. The ministry foci within each district, however, are customizable for each district. One district might group ministry into Nurture, Outreach, Witness, and Advocacy. Another might develop ministry foci via the needs and concerns of clergy and laity.

Though there are representatives for each area of ministry, those representatives do not have a separate committee to help carry out their work. The help comes from the rest of the DLT, as well as other gifted district laity and clergy, when needed. For example, if the need pertained to laity training, then the District Lay Leader on the DLT would take the lead in developing and/or gathering and implementing the targeted resources. However, the entire leadership team will be ready to help and be assigned tasks that will help in the development and implementation.

If there are other clergy and/or laity passionate about education, they may be asked to help; however, they are not assigned to a committee.

District Lay Leader:

The District Lay Leader (DLL) is the elected leader of the laity for the district. That person's responsibilities are training the local church lay leaders, as well as helping the laity understand their role in ministry in and outside the local church.³⁷ However, the DLL will work like the Clergy Coordinator in the sense that they will meet often—at least once a quarter but preferably monthly—with other Lay Leaders in order to keep close tabs on the needs of the laity. As part of the DLT, at each quarterly meeting the DLL will report what the laity have expressed as their needs. In this way there will be a flow of information from the clergy *and* laity perspectives.

Coaches:

A District Superintendent/Chief Missional Strategist is responsible for recruitment and development of clergy, as well as helping churches grow their ministries and outreach by ensuring they have what they need for ministry. Both of these can be addressed partly by the addition of coaches to the ministry plan for pastors and/or churches. In *Exercising the Gift*, Yeager gives a rationale for such coaching. He noted “that program boards and agencies have not yet gotten the ‘grass roots’ message that what local churches need is not more canned programs and resources, but *leadership in helping* [emphasis added] the local church to develop its own missional vision and *leadership to implement* [emphasis added] those visions.”³⁸ This is exactly what coaches offer, and this structure places a premium on their use.

³⁷ Reist, "The Book of Discipline," 507.

³⁸ Yeager, "Exercising The Gift," 22.

The purpose of a coach for clergy and/or the local church is to ask the right questions, as well as to help clergy and laity learn how to ask the right questions themselves, namely questions which are thought-provoking rather than that elicit simple yes or no responses. The questions are designed to expand the situation and illuminate the opportunities in ministry rather than focus on obstacles. In addition, coaches help clergy and laity learn to reframe their perspectives towards a new way of thinking about their ministries and the purpose to which God has called them individually and collectively as a church.

An added bonus of a coach is that they can be an additional avenue of discovering needs of clergy and churches. For instance, while resourcing the clergy and/or church, the coach may become aware of other training or resources needed. The coaches can work with the pastor or church to create a report regarding any new needs they may feel helpful to share with their DS. However, it is the clergy or church's responsibility to share this information.

District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCom)

This is an existing committee of district clergy and laity who help supervise those serving churches. They conduct a ministry review of licensed pastors, make decisions of continuance/discontinuance of licensed pastors, and approve candidates for ministry. An addition to this committee's work in this structure involves ministry reviews with lay supply and pastors received from other denominations (regardless of acceptance of ordination credentials), as well as recommending approval or discontinuance of lay supply or clergy from other denominations. It is important to give real value to the insights the DCom members gain from these ministry reviews. In addition to keeping pastors accountable to the teaching and doctrines of The UMC, this committee is a major resource for understanding training needs of pastors. It is imperative

that DSs be fully involved on this committee and give guidance during discussions of clergy and lay supply.

Other Resources and Practices:

- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Mapping: In order to address needs innovatively and economically, asset-based community mapping saves time and allows for proper stewardship of resources available. See the asset map developed for the South Central District of the SGA in Appendix D for an adaptable example and full description.
- A Central Digital District Resource Center: Digital resource links have been placed on the district website by category. This is both for the use of the clergy and laity as well as for the District Leadership Team.³⁹
- Resource Libraries: **Practical Resources for Churches (PRC)**⁴⁰ is an ecumenical resource, which offers subscribers a lending library of a variety of studies, curriculum, and more. A **District Sharing** page on the district website provides a list of curriculum resources and equipment, as well as contact information, that district churches are willing to share with others in the district.⁴¹
- Staffing and Creative Help
 - An Administrative Assistant *empowered* to help with straightforward issues.
 - Various Conference Staff: Don't forget to adequately rely on conference staff.
 - **Coaches** serve as one creative way of providing extra staffing resources.
 - **Clergy Coordinators** act as another staff resource when empowered.

³⁹ See Appendix D.

⁴⁰ <https://www.prcli.org/>

⁴¹ See Appendix D for more information.

- A **contracted IT staffer** can be helpful to the district office as needed but is also available to the district churches as needed, without the churches incurring any major overhead expenses.
- **Practical Resources for Churches**, with a judicatory membership, has consultants who will develop retreats and necessary training upon request. In addition, PRC is available to help churches get started in a new ministry area, trouble shoot issues, and discern how to meet a need.

Immediate Impact:**IT Staff:**

- They manage the district website, newsletters, and surveys, freeing the Administrative Assistant to be available for other items. In addition, this staff has been a resource to multiple churches through the pandemic in navigating online ministry.

Church Coaching:

- Three churches have received church coaching this past year. This coaching has helped them refocus their church's mission. Additionally, thirty-five churches have used trained On-Boarding coaches when receiving new clergy. All except one report that this was extremely helpful in the success of the new pastor.

Clergy Coaching:

- There are eight clergy who have used clergy coaching in the past year. Some were for specific reasons, such as for preaching. Others were for overall growth. All report their coach to have been beneficial in their ministry and would recommend this resource to others. Many of their churches reported notable improvement in their preaching and general ministry.

Clergy Coordinators (CC):

- They have embraced their new role as spiritual leaders to their clergy. The clergy feel more supported and cared for. The CCs have called to let me know of health situations. This helps me stayed connected better with the clergy. At the time of the writing of this paper, they have reported the first round of concerns among the district.

Resource gathering and implementation:

- The concerns reported by the CC's had to deal with clergy receiving CEU's during the pandemic. The Leadership developed the training topics based on District Committee on Ordained Ministry review meetings and what clergy asked for themselves. Online training was researched and options delivered to clergy via email and the district website.

District Superintendent

The final element crucial to the success of any model of district leadership is the District Superintendent. A cultural shift is needed from this position being seen as a managerial position to reclaiming its pastoral and missional role. Even in the 1989 study, DSs reported wanting “more time with local churches . . . [and] more time with pastors for doing pastoral work or supervision at times other than crisis or appointment-making situations.”⁴²

Therefore, a key role of the DS in this new proposed district leadership structure is being pastoral and building healthy relationships and trust with the clergy, SPR chairs and Lay Leaders, Clergy Coordinators, DCom, and the DLT. This has always been a goal for DSs; however, time restrictions and little ministry support has often meant this has been an underdeveloped area. With support from this new structure, responsibilities are shared and time

⁴² Yeager, "Exercising The Gift," 22.

is created for the DS to be more relational. They must be present and visible in church services and special events throughout the week as much as possible. The time spent in pastor and SPR consultations can also be leveraged to build relationships and get to know clergy and key laity.

An important time investment for the DS in this model is with their Clergy Coordinators. The Clergy Coordinators will help see to the spiritual growth and development of clergy/lay supply under their care. However, in this model, just as the Bishop is responsible for accountability of the spiritual growth of their DSs, the DS will be responsible for the spiritual formation, support, and accountability of their Clergy Coordinators.

The District Superintendent should meet with Clergy Coordinators monthly. In an effort to build healthy relationship and encourage growth, the first items on the agenda should be questions modeled after John Wesley's class meetings. Kevin Watson reports that in class meetings "participants actively discuss the state of their current relationship with God and how they are living out (and sometimes failing to live out) their faith."⁴³ Therefore, the DS should first ask how they and their families are doing. This is vital to them knowing that the DS cares and wants to invest in them. Second, the DS should ask, "How it is with your soul?," for this is crucial to their spiritual growth. At the first couple of meetings, the DS will need to answer these same questions first because the trust level will not be there to support such transparency. However, over time clergy will share their life and spiritual walk more freely. Though Wesley's class meetings did not involve studies, spending some kind time in study or devotions together should come next. Only after their souls have been tended to should district business and ministry matters be discussed.

⁴³ Watson, "The Class Meeting," 9.

The role of Chief Missional Strategist (CMS) is played out in several arenas in this model of leadership. First, in casting the vision of the district and communicating with and gathering information from Clergy Coordinators, the District Lay Leader, and the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. Listening and giving value to their insights about the spiritual and missional needs of the district is imperative to the effectiveness of the district ministry.⁴⁴ Second is the work of leading the District Leadership Team to develop and carry out the resourcing. All of these groups work as missional strategists alongside the DS, the Chief Missional Strategist.

Charge Conferences (CC) are a third arena important to the strategizing role of CMS. They offer a time for the DS to cast the district vision in a sermon. Doing this in individual or very small groupings of churches speeds the building of trust. Sky McCracken, a DS from Tennessee, states, “For a D.S. to truly be a CMS, s/he must be involved at the congregational level.”⁴⁵ There is no substitute to being with the laity and clergy to help build healthy relationships. To enhance this time, the DS can hold pre-CC consultations with pastors to ensure that all the paperwork is in order and approved by the Church Council. This allows the voting of business items to be done in one vote or by like items voted on together. The extra time created by handling the business in such an efficient manner can be spent on conferencing “in dialogue, assessment, celebration, repentance, and prayer.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Dietterich and Arthur, “District Superintendent, Key To District Revitalization,” 27.

⁴⁵ McCracken, “D.S. as Chief Missional Strategists,”
<http://revdsky.blogspot.com/2013/09/0-0-1-1264-7209-paducah-district-60-16.html>.

⁴⁶ McCracken, “D.S. as Chief Missional Strategists.”

Outside Data:

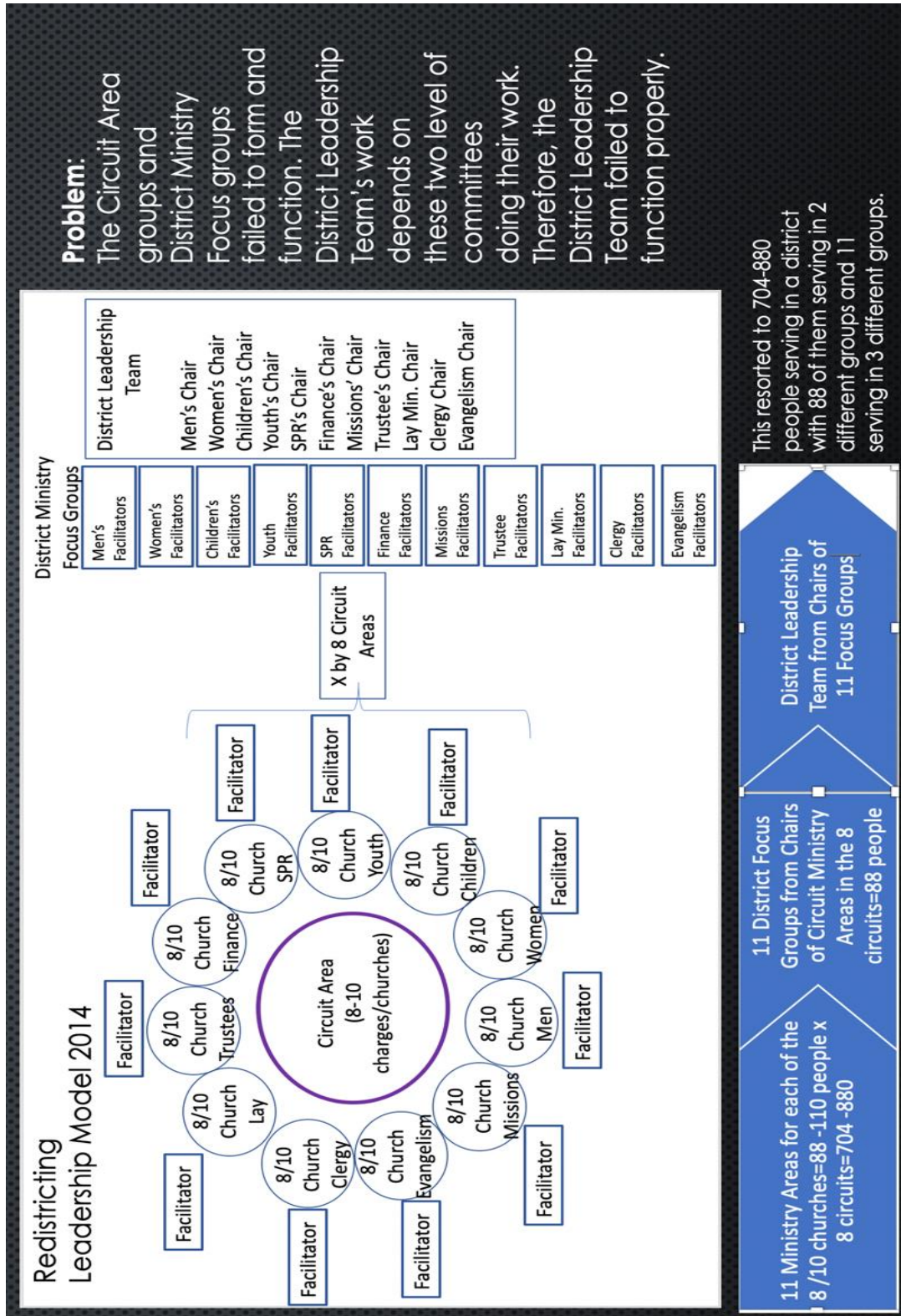
Due to time constraints, a fuller report of the effectiveness of this new structure was hindered. However, outside data can confirm success or failure of these resources individually. Collectively, this outside data along with my own data, lends credibility to and corroborates the impact seen in my district when the resources are combined into one structure of leadership. I interviewed the Rev. Dr. Nancy Rankin from the Western North Carolina Conference and Laura Dallas of the North Carolina Conference Media Center about the impact of coaching and free media resources for churches. Both affirmed the positive impact these resources had for pastors and churches in the conferences they served.⁴⁷

Conclusion

This is certainly not the only model of leadership available. However, I had the opportunity to practice this model during a pandemic. In addition to the verbal feedback from clergy and laity about their needs being met and their effectiveness of ministry in their communities, district apportionments provide evidence as well. People tend to vote with their checkbook in the church when they feel something is important. Even through the pandemic that engulfed 2020, district apportionments increased in my district by almost 10 percent over the previous year's. This is evidence of the importance of positive relationships and resourcing the churches as fully as possible, helping them regularly experience the benefit of the connection in their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

⁴⁷ See Appendix F

Appendix A: Previous SGA District Structure



**Appendix B:
Book of Discipline Description of DS Responsibility**

Responsibilities of District Superintendent/Chief Missional Strategist

Pastoral Leadership	Personnel Leadership and Supervision	Administrative Leadership	Strategic/Visionary (Missional) Leadership
<p><u>Building Healthy Relationships:</u></p> <p>This is with both pastors and churches in order to foster trust, which allows the DS to have conversations that help clergy and churches they serve to develop a vision and plan for missional outreach. This requires more relational time and less time doing other tasks.</p> <p><u>Spiritual Leadership:</u></p> <p>Imperative to be the example of spiritual leadership that moves clergy and laity into a deeper relationship with God and neighbor. Sometimes this might require hands on pastoral care. Building systems of clergy care is necessary to share the pastoral care burden.</p>	<p><u>Appointment Making:</u></p> <p>Pastoral leadership builds the kind of trust needed in the area of appointments. To make strategic appointments that match the gifts and skills of the pastor with the church and the needs of the community, will require getting to know the clergy, church, and community.</p> <p><u>Clergy Recruiting/Development:</u></p> <p>Requires the DS to work with the DCOM and churches to develop a culture of hearing and cultivating a call to ministry, which includes laity called to serve in district churches and leadership.</p> <p><u>Personnel (HR) Issues:</u></p> <p>With so much time spent "putting out fires," what alternatives exist to free up the DS's to focus more on being a mission strategist? What other Conference resources are available to help with HR issues?</p>	<p><u>Charge Conferences:</u></p> <p>Joint Charge Conferences cut down on some of the administrative burden and can even be led by another elder if necessary. While some are critical of no longer having a charge conference in each local church, is it possible that joint charge conferences can free up the schedule of the DS to be present in each local church once a year?</p> <p><u>Administrative Assistants:</u></p> <p>Do all districts have full time administrative assistants to assist with administrative tasks? Can laity from the district volunteer?</p>	<p><u>Strategic Structure & Planning:</u></p> <p>The district superintendent (chief missional strategist), along with the district leadership team (missional strategist), must listen and discern the needs of the pastors and churches. Then they must develop or gather the resources needed for greater ministry of the church. To do this the DS must ensure there is an effect leadership structure that supports strategic and missional resourcing of the church.</p> <p><u>Resourcing:</u></p> <p>The district superintendent as Chief Missional Strategist can provide the leadership and tools necessary to help churches to think more strategically. Strategic thinking helps to let go of programs that no longer are bearing fruit while embracing new possibilities that might bear fruit. The district superintendent must be a catalyst for change that challenges risk-averse clergy and congregations to become risk takers.</p>

Appendix C: Greater Description of Key Roles

Details on the Clergy Coordinators

The DS, Clergy Coordinators, and pastors will work together in order to support the clergy and increase the effectiveness of the ministry of the local church. The way in which they will relate to each other will be as follows:

- The Clergy Coordinators will meet monthly with their clergy and lay supply as a group. In addition to care and support, they are expected to have specific discussions about the current needs of the pastors and churches in the Circuit at each meeting and how the district can help.
- The DS will meet monthly with their Clergy Coordinators. The purpose of these meetings will be to grow them as leaders, inform them of important direction coming from the Conference level, and to collaborate about the ministry of the district. Once a quarter that meeting will focus on understanding the current needs in among the circuit clergy and churches.
- The lead Clergy Coordinator and the DS will then meet with the DLT immediately after this quarterly meeting to give a needs-based report.

The most important responsibility of the Clergy Coordinators, aside from attending to the souls of their clergy, is discussing with their pastors the needs of the circuit and how they would like the office of the DS to help supply those needs.

Details on the District Leadership Team

The flow of needs and resources will proceed in the following way through the DLT:

- Once the DS and the lead Clergy Coordinator share the needs with the DLT, the correct ministry representative on the DLT will be determined based on the specific needs. They will lead the process of gathering, developing, and delivering the resources needed. These resources may range from curriculum to training to church or clergy coaching. They will come from various sources including community, district, conference, and general church resources.
- The remainder of the quarter is spent gathering, developing, and planning the implementation of the resources to be delivered by the next quarter, unless they are immediately available or unless it takes longer to plan such as a workshop with a highly sought-after speaker.

Details on Coaches:

According to IPEC Coaching (which is accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), one of the largest coaching accreditation programs), at least one third of Fortune 500 companies use coaching for leadership development. In addition, 86 percent of all companies see a Return of Investment (ROI) after utilizing coaches and 96 percent of participants would go through coaching again.⁴⁸ This tool has mainly come to us from the secular world of business. Now Conferences across the UMC have begun to implement some form of coaching for churches and clergy.

For the purposes of this research, a survey was given to coaches from a variety of sources. Reflecting on what the role of a coach is and why they felt coaches are important, one coach stated:

⁴⁸ IPEC Coaching, “Everything You’ve Wanted to Know”, <https://www.ipeccoaching.com/hubfs/What%20is%20Coaching%20-%20iPEC%20Coach%20Training.pdf>.

Often a coach is an outside resource person who can come alongside the church or the pastor to assist around a particular set of issues. This may include discerning a vision, developing a discipleship plan, goal setting, conflict resolution—just to mention a few. Sometimes the coach is present/public—sometimes I have coached pastors in a behind the scenes approach that empowered them as a healthy leader.⁴⁹

Another coach stated:

Coaching has a goal of helping congregations or pastors be healthier, more mission focused, more engaged in a hope-filled ministry that impacts the community and beyond for Christ. Like those who go to counseling—the client can receive excellent feedback, but the actions that follow really rest on the client and not the counselor. . . spiritual maturity is one the biggest foundational pieces a coach needs to work on and encourage the pastor/laity to continue developing.⁵⁰

Though many Conferences are beginning to staff coaches, the problem is that the number of conference-level coaches tend to be too few in number to be effective conference wide. In South Georgia, there are four coaches who serve 588 churches. In many cases, having resources closer to the district level is more effective. Even more effective is to have resources at the district level, conference level, and even from non-conference sources. Therefore, this structure I am proposing uses two to four trained district coaches, conference coaches, and non-conference coaches through such agencies such as Passion in Partners.⁵¹ The district should keep in mind the need to include coaching in the budget for times when outside sources need to be called upon, as well as offering a small stipend for the travel of district-trained coaches.

Coaching brings many benefits to the ministry setting. A coach is an outside source that brings objectivity to the discovery of needs and a path forward. The congregation is often unable to hear what is needed from the pastor and other supervisors like the DS. Congregations often

⁴⁹ Survey of Clergy and Church Coaches.

⁵⁰ Survey of Clergy and Church Coaches.

⁵¹ <https://pipministries.org/>

trust an outside source, who doesn't seem to have anything to gain or lose in the decisions of the church, faster, thereby speeding up the process of discovery. Accountability is another benefit of coaching. The coach and the coachees set action-oriented goals at the end of each session. A report on the progress with these goals usually begins the focus of each session before new material is covered. Another benefit is that "a coach brings knowledge and experience of a variety of tools, processes and models" that are not usually known by the clergy or the local church.⁵² This allows them to try something they have never thought of before.

In addition to benefits, there are many challenges that will need to be overcome and/or addressed in a coaching relationship. The two most important challenges are the ability of the coach and the receptivity of those being coached. Along with a skilled coach, those being coached must be open to having someone walk beside them in the process of discovery. It is important that they buy in to the idea of coaching. This leads to another challenge of coaching, which is trust. The more trust there is in the relationship, the more receptive the coachees will be to what the coach leads them to discover and plan. Other challenges are communication barriers, the willingness to think outside of the box, and chemistry between the coach and coachees. In addition, an important area that presents a challenge is the power dynamic of the DS in the ministry of the clergy and churches. "The power dynamic could rush people toward certain solutions because they think that is what the DS wants."⁵³ The DS should make it clear that coaching does not offer a prescribed set of answers but rather a path for the coachee or church to find answers that are right for them.

⁵² Survey of Clergy and Church Coaches.

⁵³ Survey of Clergy and Church Coaches.

There are some challenges that are almost solely the responsibility of the coachees. Application, at a couple of different levels, is imperative to successful coaching. First is the immediate application of the current goals and discoveries. However, future application is important as well. A coach brings an array of new tools for coachees to use in their planning. The purpose of taking the time to teach clergy how to use these tools is so that the clergy and/or church can continue to use the process for re-evaluation and re-imagining in the future once the coach has left. Therefore, their ability and willingness to learn how to use the tools and then to apply them in continual re-evaluation and re-imagining is also key to continued successful results.

Other challenges to the success of this relationship are honesty and integrity. These challenges apply to both the coach and those being coached. Most importantly, they lead to the development or breakdown of trust. If the coach is not honest about what they see, those being coached will not reach a real discovery. However, the reverse is also true. If the coachees are not honest in their answers to the thought-provoking questions that lead to self-awareness and collective discovery, then real discovery will likewise not be achieved.

Appendix D: Resources and Practices

Promotion of new resources

Promotion of the following resources will be important in helping each clergy and church use them to their fullest. A new district website has been developed. We will be steering our clergy and laity toward the website in our newsletters and by links on our Facebook page. These links will highlight monthly resources, which will also be highlighted in our newsletter. In addition to the opportunities that the DS has to tell others about available resources in consultations or charge conferences, Clergy Coordinators and the District Lay Leader will also play an important role in sharing information about the various resources available in this new structure. I also hold a Zoom meeting every two weeks with clergy to connect and help resource them.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Mapping:

For addressing needs innovatively and economically, asset-based community develop is your friend. To get a proper understanding of what resources are currently available and where they are, every district should spend some time doing asset mapping of resources available to the district and local churches. The sources of these resources can be from the community, the district, or the Annual and General Conferences. Doing this on the front end will save time when a need surfaces since available resources and their location have already been mapped. Below is the asset map developed for the South Central District of the SGA. It can be used as a guideline with some adjustment for other districts to use.

Resourcing in the Areas of Leadership/Worship/Preaching/Technology/Age Related Ministries, etc.			
Community	District	Annual Conference	General Church
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations • Schools • Chamber of Commerce • City and County officials • Rotary • Kiwanis • Shelters • United Way • Non-profit professional resources • Colleges • Recreation Departments • Boys and Girls Club • Ministerial Associations • Chaplaincy at Hospitals • Emmaus community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Coaches • District Website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing all online resources • Listing curriculum resources available through district sharing of local church resources • Those with graphic design skills • Computer & software training • Website designers/trainers • Those with Preaching gifts-training • Cluster groups • ERT training • Report training • Conflict resolution • Dynamic preachers for revivals, camp meetings, etc. • Retired clergy • Clergy/Laity w/Professional skills • UMW • UMM • Lay speakers • Lay servants • Certified lay ministers • Gifts at creating systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. GA UMC Website • Connectional Ministries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectional Ministries • AC Clergy/Church Coaches • Camping • Hispanic Ministries • Zoom at Noon Trainings/discussions • Congregational Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church planting • Strategic planning • Training • Tools for revitalizing structure and foundation • Resources for revitalizing nurture ministries • Resources for revitalizing outreach ministries • Resources for revitalizing witness ministries • Congregational development tools • Ministerial Services • Pastoral Counselor Services • Administrative Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Entry Specialist • Preaching resources for giving and church finances • Print Resources on giving • Social media giving resources • Videos • Pastors kit • Administrative Services • Derek is available to help with Stewardship Campaigns • SGA Communications • GNTV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • umciving.org/pastors/resources • Resource UMC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resourceumc.org • Um Commission program that partners with youth ministers, campus ministers, parents, and youth • UM Communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local church marketing • Video & Audio production • Communication audit • Web services • Church advertising • Videos for church • Graphics library • Social media library • Branding toolkit • My Com newsletter • Research • umdiscipleship.org <p>Other Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • textweek.com • ministrymatter.com • YouVersion Bible Events (digital bulletins) • churchonlineplatform.com • Lewis Center – Leading ideas

A Central Digital District Resource Center

A digital component for resourcing has been added to the district website. Most of these resources resulted from the asset mapping mentioned above. The district worked to gather the links of these resources into one easy-to-find place. They can be found on the district website under the category of the individual ministry that one is in need of resourcing. The benefits of this resource are twofold. First, it will help clergy and churches in solving some of their own small resourcing needs that may not require intervention from the DLT. However, it is also a major resource for the DLT as it will be the first stop in discovering if there are already resources available for a particular need rather than reinventing the wheel or wasting time over and over again searching for these resources. Many of these resources come from a judicator membership to a resourcing center called Practical Resources for Churches (PRC).

Resource Libraries:

Practical Resources for Churches (PRC) Library

This resource is modeled after the NC Annual Conference, which has a physical Conference Resource Library with paid staff, an online resource, and catalog portal through which one can check out resources from their physical library. A physical library is not economically feasible for the SGA, nor for my district. Rather than having a physical location, resources are available for check out in two ways. The first avenue is to check out resources such as curriculum and Bible studies through the lending library feature of PRC. The PRC has a physical library that is available to judicatory members with an online catalog and order form. The PRC will mail the books to the church and the church only needs to pay for shipping.

District Sharing Library

The second avenue for access to Bible studies, Vacation Bible School curriculum, and more is again through our website on a page labeled District Sharing. The district has requested churches to send in a list of curriculum resources and equipment that they are willing to share. Under the District Sharing page, these resources are listed by category along with the church and contact information of the person to call in order to check out the resources. This is a way of having a library of resources without having the overhead of a building and staff. The resources are housed within the individual churches themselves, yet there is a district list that informs others of what is available. In addition, it promotes connectionalism among the district and it allows all churches to be good stewards of the resources God has given them.

Staffing Helps

Staff within the districts in the SGA are limited to the DS and the Administrative Assistant, with a few exceptions of contracted employees. It is important to empower the Administrative Assistant to handle many small situations. There are many answers to straightforward *Book of Discipline* questions that the pastors could find on their own, but some pastors are not sufficiently versed in using the *Book of Discipline*. This frees some time up for the DS, as many short calls eventually add up to a lot of time. There are also Conference Staff that help resource persons when needed. However, they are limited in number, most have very specific jobs (such as camping, data specialist, etc.), and they serve 588 churches in the South Georgia Annual Conference.

I have found it necessary to be innovative in finding ways to provide our district with extra help beyond the Administrative Assistance and conference staff. The **coaches** mentioned previously serve as one creative way for extra staffing resources. In addition, **Clergy**

Coordinators act as another staff resource. The South Central district also contracts with an **IT person**, who is an addition to the Conference communication and IT staffer. Our contracted IT staffer helps the district office as needed but is also available to the district churches as needed. A district could also add this to their district apportionments in order to provide a great asset to their churches. I have found over the last year (and particularly through this pandemic) that if the churches see the benefits they derive from the district apportionments they pay, they are more willing to pay them.

Practical Resources for Churches

This is another staffing help for the district. With a judicatory membership, PRC consultants will develop retreats and trainings that are needed, once provided with the information concerning the need. They are an ecumenical ministry. However, among their consultants is a UMC consultant who works to ensure United Methodists get what they need. In addition, PRC is available to help the local church get started on a new ministry area, trouble shoot issues, and discern how to meet a need.

Appendix E: Impact of Structure

Due to the time challenge of implementation of this structure and all of its resources before the deadline for this project, the long term effectiveness of the proposed structure is still to be determined. District coaches are still in the process of being trained. However, conference coaches and non-conference coaches have been used in my district. In addition to putting the structure and additional resources in place, there is a learning curve and trust issue that take time to overcome. The clergy and laity must become accustomed to the process and to the availability of such resources. Many have never experienced the district leadership as a resource before, while others have had promises made to them—without any follow through.

Immediate Impact of New District Structure and Process:

IT Staff:

The IT staffer was able to help a church with uploading a video service while their pastor was out sick. They are available to churches, at the cost of the district, to help with any IT issue. This staffer also keeps our website up to date. After my Administrative Assistant and I decide what will go into the monthly district newsletter, the IT staffer puts it together and publishes it. This person also generates all surveys that are used to gather information needed for the district. Finally, this person has assisted in setting up virtual or hybrid district meetings like Charge Conference, District Conference, and District Set-up meeting.

Church Coaching:

Within my district, I have used church coaching for a church which rejected their new pastor, blaming all of their problems on a pastor who was only there for six months. We brought in our Director of Connectional Ministries, who was trained in clergy and church coaching. She

coached the clergy and the church separately for six months. Despite the coaching, we still ended up moving this clergy person. However, the incoming pastor was very appreciative because their work was enhanced by the advance work of church coaching that had spent extensive time on getting the church to think through where they had been, where they currently were, and where they felt God was calling them to be.

One church used a TIIMs minister (Transitional Intentional Interim Minister). This was an appointed clergy. A TIIMs minister acts as a coach in many ways. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The UMC considers them “necessary when a sitting pastor must leave his or her congregation before a permanent replacement can be appointed. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including an unexpected health crisis or early retirement by the current pastor. Such circumstances usually lead to a period of disruption for a congregation, and a good interim pastor can help the church move forward and successfully continue its mission.”⁵⁴ A pastor was removed in the middle of the year for failure to complete District Committee on Ordained Ministry requirements. This caused tremendous turbulence in the church. However, thanks to a TIIMs minister who worked on several areas of healing, discovery, and visioning, the church is thriving under its new pastor.

In addition to this coaching, every church which is receiving an incoming pastor is offered On Boarding by a properly trained coach. This is not forced on them but is strongly encouraged by the Bishop and the DSs. Out of around forty new appointments within my district one year, only about ten churches opted not to participate in this resource. There has been only one negative result from On Boarding. Accidentally, the coach shared with the new church some

⁵⁴ GBHEM, “Interim Ministry,” <https://www.gbhem.org/clergy/chaplains-pastoral-counselors/interim-ministry/>.

areas of growth from this pastor's previous On Boarding experience from another church for which they had not been a good fit. We ended up moving this pastor to another appointment, using lay supply for the remaining months of the year while the church went through church coaching. All other experiences with Onboarding of a new clergy have gone well.

Onboarding has been a new experience for the SGA Conference. Bishop Lawson Bryan was the first to introduce this concept to our conference. The following defines and explains the process of Onboarding.

This strategic meeting happens after the clergy person arrives for their new appointment and is usually scheduled for a date soon after he or she begins their new role. . .

On Boarding responds to two challenges:

The first is - How do you learn about the new church quickly and sooner, rather than stumbling upon some important information later?

The second is - How do you create a bond with key volunteers, staff and lay leaders who need to advise you, support you, and have your back? After an on boarding experience, they will celebrate you!⁵⁵

This is example of something that has come to the church via the secular world where many major corporations use it when bringing a new CEO (or other new staff) on board.

Clergy Coaching:

Clergy coaching has been used within my district as well. I receive coaching myself and it has helped me tremendously to ask the right questions, in particular at times when difficult conversations were needed. In addition, my coach has been a great help in setting goals that I want to achieve within my district and keeping me accountable to those goals. I believe so passionately in the positive impact of this resource that I have made it available for free to clergy wanting to use it or when I become aware of a need for a coach for a particular clergy. This

⁵⁵ SGAUMC, "Onboarding," <https://www.sgaumc.org/on-boarding-overview>.

information might come to me through their Clergy Coordinator, after a personnel issue has been addressed, during pastor or SPR consultations, or from District Committee on Ministry reviews. One clergy, whose congregations over the years had consistently complained about their preaching, received coaching for about six months on preparing sermons. This clergy is not our most dynamic clergy but now preaches solid sermons due to help received from such a coach.

Among the clergy who accessed this resource was one whom the cabinet included in a plan to raise the effectiveness of this clergy in their next appointment. This clergy had had several one to two-year appointments back-to-back that were not positive. In a team effort, several DSs who were familiar with this clergy on various levels met with the clergy as a team. We created an action plan, and coaching for six to eight months was a part of the plan. This pastor is experiencing a good transition in their new appointment due to the help they have received through monthly coaching, and the new church is very satisfied.

In addition, I chose two clergy with potential to be solid leaders in the Conference to go through the Bishop's Emerging Leader Initiative coaching. This coaching works through the clergy's strengths using several evaluations, helps the clergy become more self-aware and competent, and helps them develop a plan to become more fruitful. In the 2010 Council of Bishop's Call to Action Steering Team report, fifteen characteristics were identified that help clergy become more successful and fruitful in ministry.⁵⁶ While working through this process, the clergy pick three of these areas on which they need to work the most. Then they decide on a desired outcome for this goal, create an action plan, identify target behavior, and finally identify the support they will need to reach this goal. The plan is shared with the DS and when the DS consults with the clergy, they go over the goals and their progress. I am really excited about this

⁵⁶ Call to Action Steering Team, "Call to Action Steering Team Report."

resource because it gives the DS something tangible to use to develop their clergy. The two clergy that are going through this coaching have affirmed its positive impact in their ministries. Not only would they do it again, but it has been useful enough to them that they would recommend it to others.

I have also now had the first quarter meeting after putting the new district leadership structure in place. The Clergy Coordinators reported that the clergy were concerned about getting Continuing Education Units during this pandemic while in-person events have been canceled. My Clergy Coordinator Chair, who also happens to be my District Committee on Ordained Ministry Chair, presented it to the District Leadership Team. They agreed that we needed to provide something online so the pastors could receive CEUs. My Clergy Coordinator Chair, my Lay Supply Minister representative on the DLT, and I met to discuss the topics that are most needed based on the District Committee of Ordained Ministry reviews and what the lay supply feel they need more help with. In addition, we discussed where to access these classes online and if we need to supplement these online classes with an extra Zoom time to ensure that items we want are emphasized. During the winter and spring of 2021, we will be hosting classes for preaching, sacramental theology, and pastoral care during a pandemic.

The available time for implementation before the deadline of my project hindered a fuller report of effectiveness of this new district leadership structure. However, outside data from other conferences that use some parts of these resources in their structure can confirm success and/or failure individually. Collectively, this outside data, along with my own data from my district, can lend credibility regarding the impact these resources have when combined into one structure of leadership.

Appendix F: Outside Data

Responses to Questions about Coaching

by Nancy Rankin Coaching, LLC

1. What benefits does a coach provide for the ministry of a local church and/or clergy?

Pastors, church staff, and laity can benefit from a coaching relationship when they are going through a transition of pastoral or staff leadership; or when they need to set specific goals for their ministries and/or outreach to the community and seem stuck as to how to move forward; or when they need to address challenges in the areas of clarifying their vision, values, and alignment of their ministries accordingly. Coaching can help churches address challenges in the areas of discipleship, stewardship, evangelism, spiritual formation, worship, and other facets of ministry.

Coaching can help pastors, staff, and laity address conflict in the congregation and/or among themselves. Coaching can help with developing staff relationships and team building. Coaching can help congregations address issues of growth and decline and how to live into the size of their present congregation.

2. What real impact did you observe among churches or clergy who utilized coaches?

I have been coaching pastors, district superintendents, and laity for three years as a certified coach through International Coach Federation. I retired in 2018 after serving for 35 years as a pastor of small to very large congregations, the last two of which had over 1,000 members. I also served two terms as a District Superintendent and was also the Conference Church Development Director. My coaching includes my own Western North Carolina Conference but I also coach clergy in three other conferences.

So, my observations come from my personal experiences as a leadership coach. I had a contract with a conference to coach seven of their clergywomen who were moving into their first large churches with staff. In addition to the fact that many of them went in as the first female senior pastor their churches had ever had, we also addressed their own development into the role of senior pastor with supervisory responsibilities for the largest staff they had ever had. Each of their contexts had unique challenges we addressed as the clergywomen identified. Some [of the

clergywomen] met with strong resistance, while others soared from the beginning. They all are still serving in those churches, having overcome various challenges, and they would identify their own growing sense of self-confidence as a senior pastor.

In each coaching situation the clergywoman named what she wanted help with and in the coaching relationship I function as a deep listener, offer the best questions I can, all to stimulate within the coachee their best thinking and approach to the challenges. We would set goals for her next steps and if I were aware of resources that she might find helpful I offered those. At the end of the contract, I led a two-day retreat with them. Several of them asked to continue with me on a private coaching contract.

I have been asked by District Superintendents to coach pastors who are new to their appointment, just graduated from seminary and taking their first appointment, pastors who are serving resistant, conflict riddled congregations, and pastors who have experienced personal trauma.

I am currently coaching two pastors whose churches are considering a merger with another congregation. I coached a pastor sent to organize and develop a new cooperative parish, and pastors leading new initiatives in their parishes. Again, each would say the coaching experience brought them clarity about what they needed to do and a sense of accomplishment in being able to move forward with their people to do ministry well.

A recent celebration from the pastor sent to start a new cooperative parish is that even though the four churches did not want to be in a cooperative parish model initially, at the end of the two years I ...coached their pastor they...agreed that they want to stay in the cooperative parish model together.

Pastors who have sought me to be their coach on private contracts have included pastors asking for help in navigating through being placed on personal leave because of a trauma they experienced in their church. Some are struggling with whether to ask for a move to a new appointment. One is developing her new non-profit ministry and wants to transition from parish ministry to leading this non-profit ministry.

Some were starting new worship services or new outreach programs and sought coaching to make sure they were seeing all that needed to be done and involving the people who could best help make it happen. I am currently coaching a district superintendent whose conference is restructuring and enlarging their districts. I

want to be clear; I have coached many male clergy, as well as female clergy, and clergy of all ages.

I was contracted by a District to work with a design team whose task was to help a church transition to housing a community center for their part of the county. It took a year, but they did exceptional work in developing their vision, defining their stakeholders, holding listening sessions throughout the area with the people they sought to serve, writing a concise job description for the designated director, developing their by-laws, and doing grant writing and fund development. They helped to name the new Board of Directors who were able to step into the leadership of a well-developed plan thanks to the work of that design team, and I hope, with my help as their coach.

I became keen on using coaching while I was the Conference Director of Church Development. I was new to the position and one of my colleague developers in another conference told me about the value of having a coach. I hired a coach who helped me plan and implement an assessment process for identifying potential church planters, update and improve our church planting process, better communicate the work of Church Development to our conference, develop training for district Church Development teams, and to provide coaching for all our church planters. He also helped me navigate through some tough conference staff relationships.

Our conference has utilized coaches for pastors who have been identified by the bishop and district superintendents as emerging leaders. When I served as a district superintendent, we had a coach assigned to work with us a group as we started our relationships with our new Church Vitality Assistants, now called District Vitality Associates, who worked with us in our new role of being missional strategists.

I hired a coach when I returned to parish ministry in a large congregation that was drowning in debt. He helped us address the debt, make helpful changes in our contemporary worship service, and update our facilities and grounds.

And in my final service as a District Superintendent, I used coaches to help all my churches and pastors that were experiencing cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments for the first time. (There were 14 of them). I also had training provided to those congregations.

I realize this is far more than you were probably looking for, but I am so passionate about the value of coaching I wanted to share a robust look at what a gift coaching can be to pastors, congregations, and for the district superintendents and bishops who care for them.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you. I would be happy to talk further with you about coaching.

God's blessings,

Nancy B. Rankin

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Responses to Questions about Media Resources

by Laura Dallas

Director of North Carolina Conference Media Center

1. What real impact have you observed among churches or clergy who utilized the NCUMC's media and digital resource center?

I see the most impact in providing and recommending print resources. Largely, these resources are used in adult small groups, especially in Advent or Lent. Stewardship and confirmation resources are also popular. Many clergy and small group leaders reach out (or follow our promotions) to get recommendations of resources, and these enable me to steer our churches towards Methodist materials over resources produced by other denominations. The use of the Media Center saves money at the local church and allows space for the conference to recommend resources in line with our priorities and Methodist doctrine. It also saves time for the pastor and other ministry leaders who do not need to research their own resources.

2. Has the media center or digital resource portal been used more? What material is most sought after? And who frequents [them] the most (clergy, lay supply, laity)?

We continue to add new users. Studies for adult small groups are our most popular resources. I work with both pastors and lay ministry leaders, especially small group leaders. Clergy may be more frequent but not by much. I encourage our clergy to have their lay leaders contact me directly.

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