

How to Preside at a Church/Charge Conference

September 2010

This is a basic information sheet for an elder conducting an annual Church Conference on behalf of a District Superintendent.

The expectation for the Church Conference is that it is routine business and celebration. **In the event that hidden controversies arise, please table the item.** The Superintendent will call another Church Conference to take up the particular matter.

WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA?

Prayer and worship or a devotion: You may be asked to do this, or someone from the church may have something prepared.

Introduce yourself and invite brief introductions of folks gathered. If there is a large gathering, survey questions (how many of you are at your first Church Conference?) work well.

Membership Report: This includes reports from the membership secretary or the pastor, including those who have joined and those who have died in the past year. It is appropriate to offer prayer in memory of those who have passed. There is a vote on removing members by Church Conference action. Members may be removed in the third year they have been listed.

Pastor's Compensation: The comp form should have been reviewed by the DS or district office before the conference. The office checks for minimum compensation for years of experience, addition errors, and adequate allowances for full time pastors. **If there are serious questions coming about the comp form, table this action** until the DS can convene another Church Conference. The comp form should have been approved by the church council before it gets to Church Conference, so there should be no surprises. The formal motions of past years are no longer required. BE SURE TO GET SIGNATURES ON THE COMP FORM.

Officers for the coming year: Give people enough time to review the nominations list, checking to be sure their name is where they believe it should be. Trustees are voted in separately. A vote to accept the report will elect new members, chairs, and affirm the continuing service of those from prior years. The church council can fill any vacancies other than trustees as they occur.

Lay Speakers and Candidates for ministry: The first-time vote for a candidacy for ministry must be written. Renewal for candidacy and for lay speaking are simple motions for approval.

Volunteer in Mission Teams report is a new form. If the church has sent folks on mission teams, this form should be included in the information.

Other: The above are the required actions. The church and your circuit may have agreed to engage in discussion, offer celebrations, or hear other reports. Just check with the pastor before the Church Conference to know of unusual events.

HINTS AND HELPS

Basic Good Practices:

- Check with the pastor *before* the conference about plans and preparation.
- Arrive on time, have the church address and directions, have pastor's cell number.
- Listen, ask, trust the group, decide.
- If the church is unprepared for the motions, it is permissible to table the motion.
- Review the written packet before you convene the meeting.
- Balance formal and informal. (Be careful – one person's casual humor is another's sarcasm.)
- Be respectful of time.
- Remember that the decisions are the church's property. You are presiding, not advising.

RELEVANT DISCIPLINARY PARAGRAPHS

¶244 Organization of the local church and basic committees

¶ 246 The Charge Conference (note ¶248 describes Church Conference)
A Church Conference allows voting by all members of the church. Voting at a Charge Conference is described in ¶246.2.

¶246.5 The district superintendent may designate an elder to preside at a Charge or Church Conference.

¶247 Powers and Duties of a Charge Conference.

The "shall" subdivisions are as follows: (paraphrased)

¶247.3 Review and evaluate the mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, adopt goals and objectives from the church council. Note that there are a wide variety of ways to review and evaluate the mission and ministry of the church.

¶247.8-10 Examine – and recommend and renew as appropriate to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry – candidates for the ordained ministry.

¶247.11 Recommend, review lay speakers and certified lay ministers

¶ 247.12 Receive reports from Volunteer in Mission teams

¶247. 13 Set pastoral compensation

¶247.15 Receive and act on the membership report

¶249 shall elect ... leaders—the list of leaders is included in this paragraph.