

 GUIDELINES

pastor

*Providing Spiritual
Leadership for the
Church in Mission*

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General Board of Discipleship

PASTOR

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Some paragraph numbers for and language in the Book of Discipline may have changed in the 2008 revision, which was published after these Guidelines were printed. We regret any inconvenience.

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Contents

Welcome	4
Called to Spiritual Leadership	6
The Spiritual Life of a Pastor	
Pastoral Responsibilities	8
Pastor as Spiritual Leader	
Pastor as Worship Leader, Preacher, and Teacher	
Pastor as Trainer of Laity	
Pastor as Administrative Leader and Steward of the Vision	
Pastor as Custodian of Institutional Integrity	
Pastor as Participant in the United Methodist Connection	
Pastor as Community Minister	
Three Final Thoughts	26
Conclusion	27
Resources	28
General Agency Contacts	Inside Back Cover

Welcome

You are so important to the life of the Christian church! You have consented to join with other people of faith who, through the millennia, have sustained the church by extending God's love to others. You have been called and have committed your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to a position of leadership. This Guideline will help you understand the basic elements of that ministry within your own church and within The United Methodist Church.

Called to Spiritual Leadership

Each person is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, and that ministry takes place in all aspects of daily life, in and outside the church. As a pastoral leader or leader among the laity, your ministry is not just a “job,” but a spiritual endeavor. You *are* a spiritual leader now, and others will look to you for spiritual leadership. What does this mean?

First, *all* persons who follow Jesus are called to grow spiritually through the practice of various Christian habits (or “means of grace”) such as prayer, Bible study, private and corporate worship, acts of service, Christian conferencing, and so on. Jesus taught his disciples practices of spiritual growth and leadership that you, as a disciple, are to share with others as they look to you to be a model and guide.

Second, it means that you always keep your eye on the main reasons for any ministry—to help others grow to a mature faith in God that moves them to action on behalf of others, especially “the least” (see Matthew 25:31-46). This is an aspect of “disciple making,” which is the ultimate goal of all that we do in the church.

CULTIVATING VISION AND MISSION

As a spiritual leader, a primary function you carry is to help those you lead to see as clearly as possible what God is calling your church to be and to do. Ideally, your church council first forms this vision and then forms plans and goals for how to fulfill that vision. As a leader, you will help your team remain focused and accountable to honor the vision and goals to which the church is committed. You will help your team create and evaluate suggestions, plans, and activities against the measure: *Does this move us closer to our church's vision to bring others to God in this place and time?*

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCING

While there are appropriate and useful business-like practices that apply to church life, Christian practices distinguish the church as the church. In the United Methodist tradition, how we meet and work together is important. “Christian Conferencing” involves listening not only to each other, but also listening intently for the will of God in any given task or conversation. This makes prayer essential in the midst of “business as usual.” As Christians, we are called to “speak the truth in love.” This is a special way to speak in which we treat one another as if each of us were Christ among us. As a spiritual leader in your ministry area, you have the privilege and opportunity to teach and model these practices. By remembering that each of us is beloved of God and discerning the presence of God in all that the church does, every task becomes worshipful work.

THE MISSION OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The United Methodist Church is a connectional church, which means in part that every local church is interrelated through the structure and organization of districts, conferences, jurisdictions, and central conferences in the larger “family” of the denomination. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* describes, among other things, the ministry of all United Methodist Christians, the essence of servant ministry and leadership, how to organize and accomplish that ministry, and how our connectional structure works (see especially ¶¶125–138).

Our Church is more than a structure; it is a living organism. The *Discipline* describes our mission to proclaim the gospel and to welcome people into the body of Christ, to lead people to a commitment to God through Jesus Christ, to nurture them in Christian living by various means of grace, and to send persons into the world as agents of Jesus Christ (¶122). Thus, through you—and many other Christians—this very relational mission continues.

(For help in addition to this Guideline and the *Book of Discipline*, see “Resources” at the end of your Guideline, www.umc.org, and the other websites listed on the inside back cover.)

Called to Spiritual Leadership

What an exciting, energizing, and challenging time to serve as a pastor in The United Methodist Church! Opportunities not even imagined a few years ago exist today to proclaim the gospel; to lead persons into meaningful spiritual experiences and into the world in Christian service.

Pastors are in a unique position to shape and respond to the spiritual searching so evident in our culture. People are hungry for what is available through the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our challenge as pastors and churches to make this gospel accessible to them in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their lives and that help them grow in faith.

At the same time, the call to be an effective pastor of a local congregation in today's world offers many challenges and difficulties. People are very busy with work, civic and community responsibilities, children's activities, home duties, and more. Consequently, their connection to God tends to be seen more as an option rather than an experience that is at the very heart of human life. When people do become involved in a church today, they want to experience the presence of God and of Christ in their lives, to participate in a caring community, and to work for something larger than themselves. They bring with them a very high level of expectation about the quality of the experience they find there. Typically, they want this experience quickly and easily.

How then does a pastor respond to this spiritual hunger in the church and in the world and to all its competing claims? How can a pastor become more faithful? What does a good pastor look like? This Guideline, aimed primarily at newer pastors, will look at your roles and responsibilities as a pastor and review the basics of what ministry is all about.

All Christian ministry is a response to the love and forgiveness of God manifested in our individual and collective lives. This is the basis for all that we do as Christians. It is crucial that all pastoral activity is deeply rooted in this understanding. The spiritual life of the pastor is the essential foundation that undergirds all the roles and responsibilities of a pastor. All the good ministry you do will flow from your own connection to God.

The Spiritual Life of a Pastor

Second Peter 3:18 urges us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” and that is only possible if we remain con-

nected to Christ by attending to our own spiritual life. So the first challenge, before helping others grow spiritually, is to attend to our own spiritual connections. The work of pastoral ministry is so busy that it often seems as though there are not enough hours in the day to do everything. You may wonder how to give your spiritual life the time it needs and deserves. The answer is to take the time *intentionally* and *consistently*, to make it a priority, and then to have a means of accountability.

Expand your devotional practice beyond prayer and Scripture study. Be aware of the many other ways you can encounter the presence of God, through visitation, worship, journaling, social activism, conversation with Christian friends, physical activity, and contemplation or meditation, for example. Just be careful not to let visitation, worship preparation, and other aspects of ministry replace the attention you give to your own spiritual development.

One pastor shared that he'd found that the way to become more patient was not to force himself to be more patient nor to keep reminding himself, "be more patient, be more patient," which could lead to an external change of accommodating. The way truly to become more patient was to practice the spiritual disciplines through which God continues to change him and mold him into a more patient person from the inside out.

The practices that you find most helpful will vary according to your gifts and personality. You may benefit from working with a person (friend or spiritual director) or group (sharing or covenant) who will hold you accountable for growing spiritually. To round out your spiritual life, practice at least one discipline that is not your natural tendency. For instance, introverts may need time relating in a spiritual growth group; extroverts may need the discipline of meditating alone. (See Resources section for *Looking at Type and Spirituality*.)

John Wesley and the early Methodists emphasized using the means of grace as foundational spiritual practices. It is a wonderful list. You will find them in the *Discipline* (§103, page 74). Another helpful resource on the means of grace is *Opening Ourselves to Grace: Basic Christian Practices*.

In addition to *daily* and *weekly* intentional spiritual practices, longer and more extensive times of personal growth are beneficial. The *Discipline* directs clergy to "engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation," including a "carefully developed personal program" of leave "at least one week each year and at least one

month during one year of every quadrennium.” These leaves are not to be considered vacation, but professional development, and should be “planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which [the pastor is] appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee” (§351). This provision by the church for the pastor’s continuing spiritual formation is a testament to the value placed upon this underlying foundation for your entire ministry.

To ensure that this concern is not overlooked, consider working with the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to clarify the *Discipline’s* mandate for time for intentional spiritual practices. Plan both short- and long-range spiritual formation opportunities and make them a part of the rhythm of the church year and your life. Bishops and district superintendents affirm the importance of taking this time for spiritual growth and renewal.

Sometimes we pastors stand in our own way. One district superintendent found in talking to pastors that they had overwhelmingly experienced no resistance from staff/pastor-parish relations committees in seeking time for spiritual renewal. Many committees think that clergy already are taking such time or should be. You need to maintain your spiritual health in order to provide essential and effective spiritual leadership. There are numerous resources to help you do this. (See Resources for suggested materials.) The point is to secure the resources that best meet your needs, do the planning and consultation, and make sure that your spirit is nourished. The most difficult but essential part is for a pastor simply to claim the time!

The spiritual life of the pastor is the basis of her or his ministry but also provides a foundation for the whole congregation. It is your ministry. The congregation looks to you as a model for spiritual maturity and nurture. If you fail to nurture your own spiritual life, you not only shortchange yourself, but you are also ill-equipped to function well as the spiritual leader in the congregation.

Pastoral Responsibilities

All pastors have the same general responsibilities that fall into four main categories, described as Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. This four-fold ministry includes (but is not limited to) preaching; worship; studying and applying Scripture to daily life; celebrating the sacraments; developing congregational leaders; attending to the day-to-day business of the church; caring for the spiritual and temporal needs of the congregation and community; modeling for and leading the congregation in acts of com-

passion, mercy, and justice; and nurturing the congregation for mission and ministry in the transformation of the world as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ (see the *Book of Discipline* ¶331).

In addition, the *Discipline* lists at least 15 different responsibilities of the pastor (¶331), and that is only the beginning! In this Guideline, we will cluster those responsibilities into seven major areas:

1. spiritual leader
2. worship leader, preacher, and teacher
3. trainer of laity
4. administrative leader and steward of the vision
5. custodian of institutional integrity
6. participant in the United Methodist connection
7. community minister.

In settings where there are multiple pastors on staff, these responsibilities are often divided in ways that are appropriate to the setting and to the gifts of the various pastors.

Pastor as Spiritual Leader

Christian spiritual leaders are “committed, practicing and growing disciples of Jesus Christ who worship, live, and act in the world so that those they lead and those they walk with experience the unconditional love of God.

“Effective spiritual leaders:

1. Practice spiritual disciplines and participate in Christian community.
2. Hold God’s vision before followers, keep an eye on the primary task of the church, and see the whole picture.
3. Are skilled at calling others into relationship with God/Jesus Christ and empowering them for ministries to which they are called.
4. Know and utilize methods that empower people, build community, and ensure effectiveness.
5. Are comfortable with change and actively seek to learn new tools and practices to help their community of faith be effective in the world.
6. Are ethical persons who demonstrate honesty, compassion, responsibility, commitment to excellence, respect for others, and the practice of appropriate boundaries.
7. Love the church of Jesus Christ; understand and support United Methodist tradition, doctrine, and structures” (from work done in the Wisconsin Annual Conference).

The pastor is a primary spiritual leader in any congregation. Your responsibility as the pastor is to help individuals, groups, and committees draw nearer to God, to stay focused on God in their lives, and to work together on Christ's mission in the world. Intelligence, skill, and ability are all important and useful in the work of pastoral ministry, but the usefulness of these characteristics is greatly influenced by the depth of the spiritual life of the person who employs them.

Many people are familiar with the idea of helping persons with their spiritual growth. Fewer people have given much thought to helping a group or whole congregation grow through intentional practices that are a part of the life of all the events that happen in a church. All meetings and gatherings shape people. Christian spiritual practice as a part of these meetings and gatherings invites corporate openness to God.

John Wesley and the early Methodists always began and ended any time together with prayer and singing. The singing had a teaching function because the hymns they used often expressed major ideas and beliefs of the faith. Such disciplines can help us remember through the whole meeting that we are God's people gathered to do "administering."

Another corporate discipline that some groups have used at the beginning of a meeting or time of gathering is lighting a candle as a reminder that Christ, the Light of the world, is present. Several pastors have reported consecrating Communion elements at the beginning of church council or board meetings and then placing the elements at the center of the room during the meeting, again as a reminder of Christ's presence. The meeting ends with Communion being served. Other groups use questions at the end of a session. For example,

1. What has gone well?
2. What could be improved?
3. Where have we seen God?

Or, adapted from John Wesley's rules for United Societies,

1. Have we avoided evil in what we have done?
2. Have we done all the good we could?
3. Have we used the means of grace?

Help the congregation or a group stay focused on God by inviting members to think about and adopt corporate spiritual disciplines that encourage them to stay connected to Christ and to remember who we are as the community of faith.

Pastor as Worship Leader, Preacher, and Teacher

Perhaps there is no greater desire among the laity than that of having pastors who are effective leaders in worship, in preaching, and in teaching Christian doctrine. These qualities go straight to the heart of the work of the pastor, and as such they should receive a major portion of your time and effort if you are the sole pastor of a church. They should be deeply grounded in your own spiritual life. This is true in every size congregation. For many people, their primary, perhaps only, contact with pastors is in worship, so your effectiveness in these areas is highly significant.

WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Worship services are the primary time when faith communities come together to praise God. In worship, we remember again who we are: a community shaped by God's incredible love, grace, and forgiveness. We rehearse what we believe as Christians through the stories of our faith. It is important that you order and conduct the worship service thoughtfully, with attention to the needs of the congregation and community. Several orders of worship are found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* and elsewhere (see Resources). Be sure that bulletins and oral instructions are clear to visitors and newcomers to the faith as well as to regular attendees.

The pastor has a primary role in shaping the worship life of a congregation and the responsibility to see that the worship is inclusive and appropriate theologically, liturgically, visually, and culturally. But this is too critical a part of ministry to be left to the pastor alone.

Share worship preparation and planning with the worship chairperson, worship committee, and other professional or volunteer worship leaders. Provide them with a copy of *Worship* in the Guidelines series. This Guideline suggests numerous ways to involve other staff and laity in planning.

Consider forming task groups of worship committee persons, staff who work with worship and music ministry, and other volunteer planners to work with you on particular parts of the church year. This provides an excellent possibility for teaching and for giving many persons within the congregation ownership in a significant work in the life of the church family. Involving laity in worship planning tends to bring diversity and life to the weekly service that it may lack when only one person is doing it all. You surrender neither the authority nor the responsibility for prophetic ministry in the congregation, and you create a fertile place for helping laity

develop their faith. It models using the different gifts that God has given to people in the congregation and helps you plan with a fuller awareness of the people's needs.

The worship service may include one or both of the sacraments of our faith—baptism and Communion. United Methodists believe that in baptism and Communion, in the common elements—water, bread, and grape juice—God is present in a unique way. These physical elements can reach people in ways that words never will.

Presiding over the sacraments in worship is an important function of a pastor. It is a high honor to enter into people's lives in this way and should be done with joy and dignity. We celebrate the great heavenly banquet in Communion and eating the bread of heaven. We receive a new member into the body of Christ in baptism. Only those licensed or ordained may celebrate the sacraments. Prepare for and preside over baptisms and Communion in a way that enhances their meaning and sacredness for the congregation. A more seasoned clergy colleague could help if you need further assistance or learning in this area. (See Resources for more guidance.)

LEADERSHIP IN PREACHING

Most worship services in our tradition include a time of preaching. Through the sermon you apply biblical truths to current situations in people's lives and share the good news of Jesus Christ. Major elements in good preaching include studying the text, knowing the culture and how the text applies to the lives of people, and effective (practiced, if necessary) delivery. Excellent preaching *always* requires time. You must spend time in spiritual, theological, and biblical preparation and be in tune with the culture. (See Resources for preaching and lectionary helps.)

Many pastors use the common lectionary as the basis for their preaching. (See page 227-37 in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*). The lectionary provides Scriptures for each Sunday in the church year, and there are ample commentaries and helps available for preparing sermons on these texts. One very important advantage to using the lectionary is that it provides a system and order for Scripture that covers most of the Bible over the three-year cycle and thus leads away from the temptation to preach repeatedly on favorite texts and themes.

Other pastors prefer to preach sermon series relating life issues to a biblical perspective. Using a series allows a pastor to address a number of related issues in a way that lectionary preaching may not, such as prayer, social issues, or the phrases of the Lord's Prayer. Others mix the two methods.

One of the best ways to grow in your ability to preach is to find a few faithful friends, parishioners, or colleagues (perhaps other than your spouse) with good listening, speaking, and analyzing skills who are willing to lend a helpfully critical ear to your sermons. Videotaping and watching your worship leadership, perhaps with a clergy mentor or colleague, will also provide valuable insight to your skills and will reveal areas that need improvement.

In preaching, as well as in other areas of ministry, always keep in mind the prophetic nature of the Christian faith. The mission of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures was to point the people back to God and to God's justice and mercy, especially when the culture was promoting values contrary to compassion for the least and lost of their community and world. You should follow the Pauline admonition to "speak the truth in love" as you include the prophetic element in your preaching.

Being "Certain"

Even though you feel quite certain of a particular position on an issue, how do you know it is really from God and not from some other source? On current, significant moral issues, the Church is almost never united, and individuals with mature Christian faith often hold different positions on the same issue. When you do risk taking a stand, it is helpful simply to acknowledge this truth. It is imperative when taking a specific stand that the pulpit never be used to advance a personal agenda, justify one's own behavior, or manipulate the congregation. In addition, any righteous anger expressed in such preaching must have its grounding biblically as God's righteous anger and not one's own.

PASTOR AS TEACHER

Making disciples of Jesus Christ is in part a teaching activity, and the role of pastor as teacher must be neither underestimated nor ignored. Pastors need to be effective teachers and to be involved in the formal and informal teaching settings of the church. By virtue of your education, you will know more about the Bible and religion than many of your congregants. Sharing your knowledge can help them grow if you teach in ways that enable them to learn. As with preaching, preparation for teaching takes time. (See Resources for teaching helps.)

Informal teaching moments occur in many ways, as when you are meeting with parents about baptizing their child, when someone asks in a meeting about some aspect of United Methodist practice or tradition, when you counsel couples for marriage, or when someone begins a hallway conversation saying, "Pastor, I've always wondered about..." Recognizing these moments means that you can make the most of them in your teaching role.

If you are on a staff with more than one pastor, your teaching role may be more informal, but it is important that you both teach and support the various educational endeavors of the congregation.

If you are the sole pastor, it is crucial for you to assume a role in the teaching ministry of the church. The chairperson of the committee on education, teachers and small group leaders, Christian education and formation staff persons, and others involved in the various teaching and learning ministries are valuable partners in providing learning experiences for the congregation. Encourage these persons or committees to develop a plan of education that includes all of the many possibilities that exist for learning and growth in the church—and support it with your participation—even if you serve a two point charge where the Sunday school of each church is during the worship service of the other. From the smallest child to the oldest adult, learning contributes to faith formation and disciple making. Courses on United Methodist history, doctrine, polity, and social issues (see the Social Creed in the *Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions*) are usually popular in the local church, and there are many helpful resources provided by the Church. (See Resources for *Forecast* and for short-term and in-depth studies.)

It is important to develop an intentional, life-long, disciple-making process to be sure that all persons, from those new to the Christian faith to the most spiritually mature, have appropriate settings where they can grow and develop. We never get to the point where we can stop growing in our faith, and that growth seldom happens by accident. For help in designing or evaluating your church's disciple-making system, see *Charting the Course: A Workbook on Christian Discipleship* in the Resource section. Every pastor should always be on the lookout for ways to enhance the teaching ministry in the local church. To do so honors the universal call to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Pastor as Trainer of Laity

All Christians—lay and clergy—are called to ministry in the world. Your work as pastor is not to do ministry for laity, but to equip lay persons to hear, clarify, and act on how God wants them to carry God's love, hope and justice into the world. Your special contribution is to offer the biblical and theological foundation that engages them in devotion and discipleship so that they feel secure enough to be effective in ministry. Bring up the idea—in preaching, meetings, and conversation—that God calls all of us to be in ministry and gives us gifts that equip and enable us for ministry. Many of us do not see the gifts and skills we possess, but others see them clearly. When we identify and claim gifts, we can begin to explore where our gifts, our

God-given passion, and the needs of the world meet. Within this juncture the focus of ministry emerges. Offer ample opportunities for lay persons to discover their gifts, including calling forth those gifts.

Many churches offer gift-discovery seminars or workshops that are oriented largely to how a person's gifts can be used in the church. This is important; some persons are called to serve within the church structure as teachers, choir members, or trustees, for example. Others are called to work beyond the walls of the church as community advocates, school board members, teachers, medical personnel, custodians, or public servants, for example. In either case, God calls us to be the hands, feet, and heart of Christ in the world.

Provide a variety of resources, including groups for accountability and support, to help leaders hone their leadership skills. Some training will be "on the job." Plan for and be aware of workshops, retreats, and classes where specific skills are taught; the skills learned there are usually readily transferable to work in the world. Check with your district and conference leaders for other educational opportunities for local church leaders.

There is a workshop training guide included on the CD-ROM with the full set of Guidelines so that you can lead a church training event for new and returning church leaders.

LAITY LEADERS

In the structure of The United Methodist Church there are particular leaders among the laity with whom you will work closely, depending on your role on the professional staff. Be sure to consult the Guidelines for each of these positions and to provide copies for these key leaders (and their committee members, if any). You will, of course, work with other leaders as well, but a healthy relationship with these key persons will be instrumental in realizing the vision and mission of your church. All of them should be persons of mature faith and deep spiritual commitment who are held in high esteem by the members of the congregation.

Lay Leader. Confer together regularly on ways of increasing the involvement of the laity in spiritual practices and in the ministry both inside the church and outside in the world. Keep the focus on ministry, and work together to identify gifts of the church members that coincide with the vision.

Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Chair. This person chairs the committee that has responsibility for maintaining open communication among the pastor and staff and the congregation. Ideally, the committee will include a person who has experience in personnel work or human relations. You will work together with the chair in matters of staffing needs if you have other staff. This is especially important at a time when any staff change is being anticipated. Normally this group will also help in evaluating your work. Failure of the pastor and staff/pastor-parish chair to communicate can result in devastating conflict in the church. (See Resources for assessment tools produced by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for pastors, staff, and staff/pastor-parish relations committees.)

Finance Committee Chair. Too often in our churches, finances determine ministry rather than ministry needs determining finances. You and the finance committee chair should work to attain a prayerful and good relationship that is focused on serving the ministry needs of the congregation and community.

Trustee Chair. The buildings and property of a local church certainly have an impact on its ministry. You and this chairperson work together to ensure that facilities are maintained primarily for *doing* ministry and not becoming the focus or end of the church's ministry.

Church Council Chair. In The United Methodist Church, many local churches are moving to the single administrative structure of the church council. Whatever the structure your congregation uses, you will need to be in close contact with the chair of this administrative body that oversees the whole ministry of the church.

The wise pastor will recognize her or his own pattern of strengths and weaknesses, realizing that the laity can both benefit from the strengths and can compensate for and teach in the areas of weakness.

Pastor as Administrative Leader and Steward of the Vision

The pastor has the primary responsibility to “administer the temporal affairs of the church” (*Discipline*, ¶331). Some larger churches will divide administrative functions among more than one pastor or between pastor and lay staff. It is very important with shared leadership that the staff and leaders spend time becoming a cohesive group.

Administration is always about people and therefore is a spiritual activity. As such it functions best when supported by personal and corporate spiritual practices.

The administrative style of a pastor either supports the congregation's spirit or harms it. People's lives are affected, for good or for ill, by how the pastor handles administrative duties. If, for example, you attend faithfully to working clearly and promptly with various committee chairpersons on the meeting content and agenda, you enable and empower those persons in their lay leadership. Handling such details poorly can create in those leaders a sense of frustration, devaluation, and dismissal of their contributions.

The mission to which God has called the church is its reason for being; administration is necessary to accomplish this mission. A simple definition of church administration is "directing and caring for the dealings and interactions of the church and helping things run smoothly." As the pastor, you will embrace and model the mission of making disciples and continually hold it before the congregation in worship, in meetings, and in informal conversations.

The pastor and each member of the congregation can help one another to ask of everything they do as a church, "How is this helping with Christ's mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world?"

While the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, how one understands it and goes about all the planning and details of doing it are subject to huge differences in understanding. The pastor(s) along with other church leaders will lead the congregation in visioning, focusing the vision, and exploring the gifts of the congregation in bringing the mission to fulfillment. Be careful that any personal need for success, feelings of anxiety, or desire for affirmation do not interfere with the congregation's participation in this process. Former Bishop David Lawson would remind us that, "one expression of spiritual leadership is the spiritual maturity and confidence in the leadership of God that will help a pastor not undermine the positive and creative leadership of the laity." (From a letter to the author from Bishop David J. Lawson. Used with permission.)

Central to this visioning process is your corporate sense of God's will for the congregation. In *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*, Gil Rendle and Alice Mann suggest three critical questions for a local church visioning process. (See Resources for more information about this book.)

- "Who are we?" invites the congregation to reflect on who its current members are and what gifts God has given them individually and corporately, the core values of the congregation, the current ministries and so on.

- “What has God called us to do or be?” invites opportunity for deep listening to God in whatever ways your congregation best does that. This discernment would include the material from the reflections on the other two questions. From this deep listening will come God’s vision for the church and ministries in which the congregation needs to be engaged. *The Way of Discernment* (Companions in Christ series) is a resource that can help your church leaders and members grow in their ability to listen to God more deeply.
- “Who is our neighbor?” invites consideration of the culture and makeup of the community in which the church finds itself, the needs of the community and of the world beyond.

These questions require significant dialogue and struggle to probe for meaningful answers. Your challenge is to encourage the participants to be open to God’s leading, to remain focused on the task, and to keep moving deeper and deeper into the places where the questions might lead. You will also need to ensure that the atmosphere of the discussions allows for holy conversations, which include open and honest sharing, looking together at the situation, and helping the congregation through any conflict that might arise as the vision comes. The ultimate vision may differ from what appeared to be developing in the beginning. But with prayer, persistence, and faithfulness to the work, any church has the ability to discern direction from God and to develop its vision for the future.

Every visioning process takes time and energy. The easiest part of the visioning process is coming up with the vision. The challenging part is reordering the life, structure, and resources of the church around that vision. In addition, some congregations lack experience in visioning and discernment and may need to be trained along the way. Some pastors also need a great deal of help in leading laity in an envisioning process. (See Resources for information on the Church Vitality Indicator and consult with the district superintendent or other conference staff persons who work with congregational development.)

You and your church leaders will always want to remember to monitor progress by evaluating the directions and results of the plans to see if they are moving the congregation toward fulfilling its vision and mission. Some congregations have developed systems to remind them of this important function, such as holding a yearly retreat or designating a specific meeting of a church council where this monitoring function is carried out on a regular basis.

Even though you will come up with a vision statement and will plan and carry out ministries, remember that, given the rate at which change is occurring in our lives, your church's vision statement will need to be looked at again on a regular basis. **God is always at work in our midst making "all things new"; and in order to pay attention, we need to continue the holy conversations about that to which God calls us.**

SEEING THE CHURCH AS A SYSTEM

Another administrative function of the pastoral role is to see the whole picture of the church's ministry. Every local United Methodist church is a system with definite responsibilities for mission and ministry within the community in which it is located. Each local church also has ministries and services that are unique to its particular place and time. The organization of the church in response to these unique ministries constitutes a system. The system in place in the church should be the result of shared communication and development. It should emphasize the gifts of the people, and it should be responsive to the callings and claims of God that the people feel upon their lives, responsive to the context of the church as well as responsive to the needs of the community. The pastor's role is to provide leadership, which enables the system to do its work. In order for the pastor to provide effective leadership in any local congregation, she or he must be able to look at the system as a whole to see what is working well, what is working at less than full efficiency, and what is working poorly or not at all.

It is important to remember that not everyone in the church is necessarily looking at the entire system all the time. Many people have interests in one particular part of the church (such as an excellent children's and youth ministry) and fewer interests in some other parts (such as its community advocacy efforts). The important thing, and a crucial job of the pastor, is (1) to hear the longings of God, the congregation, and the community and (2) then work together with other leaders to provide a *holistic ministry* that makes the best possible use of facilities and resources in order to accomplish the mission of the church in that place. Such a holistic approach also recognizes the inter-relatedness of all the various parts and ministries of the church. *Your challenge is to see the whole picture of the ministry of the church and note how the various parts relate to one another. Looking at the whole picture helps keep the focus on the mission.* When we only look at each part separately, we run the risk of having our focus become too narrow or too scattered. The means become the end, and the mission gets lost amid the many things that, while good, may not be essential.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

We don't usually notice whether the church is functioning smoothly—until it isn't! Of course, there is an ebb and flow in every facet of life, but attention to detail plays a crucial role in how smoothly the church functions. For many people, attention to details helps them know they are respected and cared for by the church and therefore by God. Consider how much easier it is to accomplish and fulfill your mission when:

- committees meet when necessary, begin and end on time, keep appropriate records, and members follow through on assignments
- conflict is addressed early and faithfully, with careful training of church leaders in group dynamics and conflict resolution
- the budget is realistic and balanced, bills are paid, reserves are adequate, and all the financial affairs are in compliance with the *Discipline*
- a disciple-making system is in place; Christian education and formation opportunities are supported with sufficient teaching, learning, and enrichment resources; and teachers and leaders are properly educated for the task
- details of hospitality are cared for consistently
- conference obligations, such as apportionments, statistical reports, and charge conference forms are paid or filed on time.

BUILDING UP THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH

In Ephesians, Paul admonished the community of faith to guard against what diminishes the quality of life of the Christian community. He urged the Ephesians against the petty practices of letting the sun go down on one's anger, evil talk, bitterness, wrath, wrangling, slander, and malice. Instead, he says, we are to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven [us]" (Ephesians 4:25-32). Building up the community means practicing and teaching these life-enhancing behaviors as well as rooting out the negatives in one's own life and in the community life.

We build up the community of faith through shared experiences such as retreats, working together on a work day or work camp, shared spiritual disciplines, caring for folks who are hurting, learning how as a congregation to manage conflict, teaching forgiveness, and talking about characteristics of the kind of faith community that the congregation wants. Choirs, women's and men's groups, youth and children's groups, Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and other small groups are also places of faith formation and community building when their leaders are equipped to be spiritual leaders, with attention to detail as well. (See Resources: *Cultivating Christian Community*.)

Pastor as Custodian of Institutional Integrity

Integrity is a crucial issue in the life of every Christian and every church because integrity has to do with living, individually and corporately, the values we espouse, doing what we say we will do, and being who we say we are. It is grounded theologically in God's own integrity of keeping covenant and of being trustworthy. Because we represent Christ to one another and to the world, our integrity is vital. To the extent a pastor or congregation does not live with integrity in all things, their witness will be diminished.

Institutional integrity is represented by those qualities that present the congregation to the community as a place of hospitality, honesty, safety, hope, and reconciliation. Institutional integrity is also about being faithful to the traditions, polity, and beliefs of The United Methodist Church and to its ethical standards. When the church misses the mark in any of these ways, serious harm can result for the witness of the Christian faith. *Conversely, if people know you and the church members are trustworthy, they have a better chance of experiencing God as trustworthy.*

Therefore, it is hardly possible to overstate the importance of the role of the pastor in maintaining the institutional integrity of the congregation. Four areas of institutional integrity deserve special mention:

- handling money
- safety
- upholding the traditions, polity, and beliefs of The United Methodist Church
- living up to the moral and ethical standards of the Christian faith and the denomination.

Handling money, regardless of whether it is your direct responsibility, **must always be done with the highest regard for honesty and clarity** so that persons may feel confident that their expressions of Christian stewardship in the church are treated with the respect due. The *Book of Discipline* contains clear guidelines for the ways offerings are to be handled from the time of collection until their deposit in a bank. You are responsible for guiding the committee on finance in establishing proper structure and procedures so that the guidelines are followed, records are kept, and funds are used as intended by the giver.

Safety in the church is a major concern. You and other church leaders (especially the staff/pastor-parish relations committee and the trustees)

should work together to see that risk management procedures are in place. These should ensure that everyone at the church is safe from any kind of physical or emotional harm from all members of the church staff and congregation. Sadly, the abuse of vulnerable children, youth, and adults is a growing concern among churches all across America. Part of the reason this tragic activity is becoming such a problem is that many churches have no policies in place to prevent abuse, or to deal with it once it has occurred. If your church has no policy or procedures, seek input from the persons or councils who work with children, youth, older adults; your education chairperson or committee; and other pertinent groups or persons to establish policies to reduce the risk of any kind of harm or abuse of anyone who is in the care of the church. *Safe Sanctuaries* and *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth*, both by Joy Thornburg Melton (see Resources) provide excellent and practical guidance for addressing this problem and taking steps to prevent abuse from occurring. It must be added that this is NOT optional, and vigilance is mandatory. Every church must have a “safe sanctuary” policy as well as procedures for those who handle money.

In addition to ensuring physical safety, the church can be an agent of hope and reconciliation for people who suffer spiritual and emotional wounds. Many forces in our culture work to overwhelm and condemn us, and the church offers a safe sanctuary for internal healing as well. As a custodian of institutional integrity, you have a significant role to play in the redemptive and restorative ministry of the church.

Another important part of institutional integrity is faithfully following traditions, polity, and beliefs of United Methodism. You are aware of the basic traditions of The United Methodist Church, such as open Communion and an inclusive understanding of who is welcome in our churches. (See Part II—Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task in the *Discipline*.) You are called to practice them faithfully, to the best of your ability, and to encourage and teach the congregation to do likewise. Our polity involves such things as episcopal appointment, itinerancy, annual conference, and charge conference. A pastor should understand the purpose and gift behind the parts of our polity and teach them to the congregation, both formally and informally. On those occasions when members get disgruntled about some aspect of polity, tradition, or belief, the pastor’s job is to interpret the positive aspects of why we do what we do as well as to teach processes through which change can be made. Even when we personally disagree with a particular item or aspect, we can disagree respectfully and work through the processes provided for change.

Our doctrine and theology set the stage for living up to the moral and ethical standards of the Christian faith and of the Church. Certainly no pastor should be involved in criminal activity, immoral behavior, or anything else that would undermine the mission of Christ. We have all read stories in the newspaper of clergy who have done unethical or immoral things, and we know how it harms the church. Pastors must be ever watchful and sensitive to actions that uphold the highest standards of behavior of the Christian faith. Paul pushed it further by inviting us to act so we would never “become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). If you find yourself being strongly tempted, get help immediately. This especially includes any addictive behaviors with alcohol, drugs, sex, work, gambling, shopping, and so on. We are more likely to give in to temptation and to use addictive substances or behave inappropriately when we fail to take care of ourselves. When we are too tired, too stressed, or too scared, we are more likely to make unwise decisions and do things we will later regret. This is another reason why attention to our own spiritual practices and renewal is so important.

Pastor as Participant in the United Methodist Connection

The United Methodist connection creates a very wide team for ministry because every United Methodist church is connected to every other one in important and powerful ways. This connection is at the heart of who we are as United Methodists. A thorough understanding of it is vital to the total mission of the Church in the world. Every pastor and lay person in The United Methodist Church is a part of an incredible network of ministry that is being done by our churches down the street and around the world. *No one person can fully comprehend the entire breadth of United Methodist ministries; a United Methodist pastor is a part of something great!* Consider four particular aspects of connectionalism that affect pastors.

A United Methodist pastor is in a covenantal relationship with all other United Methodist pastors in her or his own annual conference. This relationship is most specifically manifest in the Order of Deacons, the Order of Elders, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors. Pastors in the same conference bind themselves together by their commitment to living out their calls to ministry through participation in their particular annual conference. Paragraph 306 of the *Discipline* states, “An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for, and hold accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers during this

stressful time of change in the Church, and for a deepening relationship with God.” Ideally this relationship is one of both support and accountability. One way many clergy manifest this accountability and support is by joining together in small covenant groups, sharing groups, or study groups. Do pastors ever let one another down or speak ill of another pastor? Of course, because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (see Romans 3:23). *But the invitation in these relationships is to care for, support, and watch over one another as sister and brother clergy in Christ, always striving to do better and speaking the truth in love.*

A specific example of this covenant is that the *Discipline* (§332.4) prohibits pastors from conducting any kind of religious service (including funerals and weddings) in a pastoral charge, other than the one to which he or she is appointed, without the consent of the pastor in charge or the district superintendent. Keeping covenant means pastors only go back to former parishes when invited to do so by the current pastor in charge. Should you be invited by a former parishioner to return for some service, be clear that the parishioner must first discuss the request with the current pastor. It is the prerogative of the incumbent pastor to invite you to participate.

Another example of our responsibility in this covenant is reporting the ministries of the congregation on the charge conference and year-end statistical reports. In addition, you may be asked for church or clergy profiles to assist the district superintendent in the appointment process or for other reports. All of them should be completed accurately, honestly, and on time.

The pastor is part of the connectional system through the district, annual conference, and entire denomination (which extends around the world). Help, support, and a wealth of resources are available through all these entities, so ask—persistently, if necessary—for whatever help you need. Most annual conferences and some districts have centers or libraries with print, audiovisual, and other resources. District and conference staff persons often focus in specialized areas of ministry and can offer assistance, workshops, seminars, other resources, and resource suggestions. In addition, they understand the local, district, and conference processes for how things get done. On the national (and international) level, thirteen general boards and agencies serve the Church as well. (See the inside back cover.)

One pastoral responsibility and privilege of being a part of the entire Church connection is teaching and encouraging the congregation’s participation in this wider ministry through prayer, interpreting and paying apportionments fully, and second mile giving (for example, to missions, disaster relief,

Advance Specials, or other offerings). Pray for missionaries and church workers here and in other countries. Invite missionaries who are home on leave to speak. Keep informed of both the general uses of apportionments and specific stories of how apportioned funds have helped people both in this country and around the globe. This information is available through the district office or newsletter, the conference office, United Methodist Communications, the General Board of Global Ministries, and on the websites of those groups.

You may be asked to “participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities” and to “seek out opportunities for cooperative ministries with other United Methodist pastors” (*Discipline*, ¶331.3.c). Serving on a district, conference, or general church committee is both an honor and a responsibility, and it benefits the local church as well because of the added information, experience, and awareness it provides of the resources and ministries of the denomination beyond the local church.

Each pastor is connected to other institutions that are affiliated with or run by the denomination, such as hospitals, schools, social service institutions, and homes for children and youth or older adults. Many of these institutions were founded by United Methodists or by the denomination and maintain relationships through annual conferences. Secondly, some United Methodist clergy are appointed to these United Methodist institutions or to other institutions, such as chaplains in the military. Each pastor is bonded to each other pastor through the connection of the United Methodist system. Every pastor serving an appointment outside the local church is required to have a charge conference affiliation. If a pastor on extension ministry or a retired pastor is affiliated with your church, you will want to get acquainted, to involve her or him as is appropriate, and to celebrate his or her ministry.

Pastor as Community Minister

United Methodist pastors are in ministry beyond the particular congregation(s) to which they are appointed. John Wesley spoke of the whole world as his parish. Along with members of the congregation, the pastor is involved in the life of the community in ways that carry forth the mission of Christ in the world. Pastors are often called on to conduct weddings or funerals of non-members, to pray at public events, or to be on boards of worthy organizations. These can be seen as opportunities to bear witness to our faith, to our Christian lifestyle, and to our Lord in appropriate ways. Such opportunities also help you know the people and needs of the community that may lead to opportunities for ministry.

You need not wait for requests for service or participation but rather may actively lead the community in being more compassionate, inclusive, and

Christ-like. *Be sure to call forth and to support the gifts in your lay members who are engaged in community ministry. If we as Christians take seriously the mandate “to go into all the world,” most of our ministry will occur outside the walls of the church.* Encourage the church members to cultivate skills for community service, such as grant writing and community organizing. Some social justice issues are so great that religious, civic, and community organizations must work together.

The United Methodist Church has always supported Christian unity and ecumenism and encourages cooperation with other denominations in fellowship, worship, and ministry so that Christ’s church may live out of an integral sense of oneness. In addition, you may also have a chance to be a part of interreligious groups for worship, fellowship, and service to the community. Such groups and ministries will stretch your faith formation and offer new perspectives on culture and vocation.

Three Final Thoughts

In every local church there are certain unique personalities and structural realities with which you must work. These realities may be different from those in your previous appointment or the churches with which you are acquainted. Remain focused on the mission of the church you serve and on the whole system of ministry there. In addition, try not to get bogged down in structure. Structural changes may be appropriate, but they are usually best made after thoroughly understanding the existing system and then in collaboration with the church leadership. Arbitrary changes will most likely not be welcome and probably will be actively resisted.

No pastor, including you, is called to be a “super Christian” and certainly not a “plastic saint” with a thin veneer of piety. This kind of posturing will quickly wear out in the midst of congregational life. Pastors are called to live with strength and determination as real human beings engaged in the real struggles of life with a commitment to live as authentic and faithful persons. This kind of commitment should manifest itself in an effort to grow spiritually, live with integrity, and deal justly with all persons. It will also mean that at times you will have to admit to mistakes, to tasks that are beyond your expertise, or to particular weaknesses and vulnerability.

Show Christian strength and maturity by listening to the wisdom and counsel of others. No person is perfect. None of us has all the answers. Being willing to allow others to see your own vulnerability will help reduce their tendency to place you on a pedestal or to have *unreasonably* high expecta-

tions. Modeling the Christian life as a fellow journeyer striving to live out of a faith commitment is a crucial part of pastoral leadership.

Taking care of yourself emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually is absolutely critical in being the most faithful and effective pastor you can be. The only “tool” you really have to work with as a pastor is yourself, which involves your interest, your energy, your attitude, and your spirit. As a part of a self-care regimen, you will want to take all of your vacation (even when you really love what you do), set appropriate boundaries on your work, develop skills for confronting people in a loving manner, develop a system of accountability for spiritual growth, and take your days off. Your family also needs your attention and time. Disruptions in your family relationships will take their toll on you and on them. You are not required to, nor should you be expected to, sacrifice either giving or receiving the love and support of your family.

Conclusion

It is hardly possible to state with sufficient clarity the importance of the leadership role of the pastor in The United Methodist Church. It is a role that is pivotal if the congregation is to fulfill its mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. The pastor is one of the few persons in the church who is called to look at the whole of the church organization and be sure that there is an overall vision that moves it toward its mission. When this work is done with consultation and collaboration and with sensitivity to the views and needs of others, your work as pastor will be faithful and effective, allowing you to help advance the mission of the Christ.

Most importantly, you are entrusted with the spiritual lives of the persons within the congregation. It is a daunting and noble task that requires the best of your time, energy, devotion, and prayers and that shows its rewards in the transformation of persons and the growth of the reign of God. May God bless you and all our pastors as they pursue the call of God upon their lives.

Resources

**Denotes our top choices.

General Church Print Resources (see also inside back cover)

- ***The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 2008. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House).
- ***Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 2008). A set of twenty-six booklets providing guidance for those persons responsible for the various ministries of the local church.
- Job Descriptions and Leadership Development for Local Church Leaders* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2004. ISBN 978-0-88177-439-9). A set of sheets describing the positions of all local church officers. Contains a manual for leadership development that includes training designs.
- Program Calendar* (United Methodist Communications). Annual calendar with liturgical season and United Methodist Special Sundays highlighted. Also includes lectionary readings.
- Sharing God's Gifts*. (Free from United Methodist Communications). Provides easily accessible information about the structure and organization of The United Methodist Church and briefly describes its mission.

RESOURCES MENTIONED IN TEXT AND OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Assessment tools from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry which are found in the "Resource Library" of their website www.gbhem.org and at Cokesbury.
- United Methodist worship resources at www.gbod.org/worship. This site includes links to ecumenical and other resources.
- *By Water and the Spirit: Making Connections for Identity and Ministry* by Gayle Carlton Felton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1997. ISBN 978-0-88177-201-2). Describes the United Methodist understanding of baptism and helps connect it to discipleship in daily life.
- *Charting the Course: A Workbook on Christian Discipleship* by Teresa Gilbert, Patty Johansen, Jay Regennitter with John P. Gilbert (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007. ISBN 978-0-88177-507-5). This workbook will help a congregation look at and improve its own discipleship system.

- *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity*, by Lovett H. Weems, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993. ISBN 978-0-687-13341-3). Crucial elements for leadership in the church are identified as vision, team, culture, and integrity.
- Church Vitality Indicator ([www:cvindicator.com](http://www.cvindicator.com) and evquestions@gbod.org). A web-based congregational assessment and discernment tool.
- *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*, by Peter L. Steinke (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006. ISBN 978-1-56699-328-9). Wisdom about what is needed for healthier and more effective church leadership.
- *Cultivating Christian Community*, by Thomas R. Hawkins (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2001. ISBN 978-0-88177-327-9). Information about how to build community in a church.
- *****Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach***, by Peter L. Steinke (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006. ISBN 978-1-56699-330-2). Explores the emotional systems of congregations, ten principles of health, how congregations can adopt new ways of dealing with stress and anxiety, and how spiritually and emotionally healthy leaders influence the system.
- *****Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations***, by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2003. ISBN 978-1-56699-286-2). Theologically based handbook for planning that is attentive to the Holy Spirit and the congregation's unique calling and context.
- *****Leadership from Inside Out: Spirituality and Organizational Change***, by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2004. ISBN 978-0-8245-2137-0). A road-map for transformational leadership for both the new and the seasoned leader.
- *Leading Beyond the Walls: Developing Congregations With a Heart for the Unchurched*, by Adam Hamilton (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002. ISBN 978-0-687-06415-1). How to be a faithful and effective pastor.
- *Looking at Type and Spirituality*, by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jane A. G. Kise (Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc, 1997. ISBN 978-0-935-65230-2). Explores practices that are helpful to different personality types in a short and easily readable style.

- ***Opening Ourselves to Grace: Basic Christian Practices* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007. ISBN 978-0-88177-508-2). A DVD and CD which contains four-segment video which presents a clear and contemporary understanding of Wesleyan spiritual practices, a six-week Bible study, leader guide and other resources.
- *Our Spiritual Brain*, by Barbara Bruce (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002. ISBN 978-0-687-09266-6). A brief background on current discoveries of brain research and theory along with practical ways to use these learnings in Christian Education.
- *Sabbath Time*, by Tilden Edwards (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2003. ISBN 978-0-835-89862-1). Looks at the roots of Sabbath and how we can practice Sabbath better.
- *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, by Joy Thornburg Melton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998. ISBN 978-0-88177-220-3). Outlines polices and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse, including a plan for developing policies and procedures, training.
- *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries*, by Joy Thornburg Melton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003. ISBN 978-0-88177-404-7). Outlines polices and procedures to reduce the risk of abuse in youth ministries, including a plan for developing policies and procedures, training, etc.
- *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992. ISBN 978-0-687-03572-4). This helpful guide to the church year is filled with helpful suggestions and instructions for many kinds of worship experiences.
- *The Spiritual Leader's Guide to Self Care*, by Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2002. ISBN 1-56699-262-1). This guide, which is filled with exercises and suggestions for action, addresses seven areas of self care: creating a life vision, caring for yourself at work, nurturing relationships, caring for your spirit and body, caring for your finances, caring for your intellect, and sustaining a life vision.
- Studies for Christian formation and education: *DISCIPLE Bible Study and Christian Believer* (available from Cokesbury); *Witness* (Discipleship Resources); *Companions in Christ* (The Upper Room).

- *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* by Gayle Carlton Felton (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2005. ISBN 978-0-88177-457-3). The history, practice, and principles of Holy Communion in the United Methodist congregations, including the implications of this sacrament for mission and ministry.
- *The Way of Discernment* by Stephen Doughty (Nashville: The Upper Room, 2008). A part of the Companions in Christ series, this study will help persons and groups learn to listen to God better.
- *What Every Leader Needs to Know* (series). (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2004. various ISBNs). Each of the 6 booklets in the “What Every Leader Needs to Know Series” provides practical, basic resources that will enable leaders to create environments for faith formation, model Christian spiritual development grounded in the means of grace, and equip all people to be in ministry in their daily lives.
- *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, by Eugene W. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989. ISBN: 978-0-8028-0265-1). The three angles—prayer, Scripture, and spiritual direction—are key to pastoral development; if these angles are right, the lines—preaching, teaching, and administration—will take care of themselves.

WEB RESOURCES FOR PREACHING

- [**http://www.gbod.org/worship](http://www.gbod.org/worship) (free)
- Estudios exegetico homiletico
<http://www.isedet.edu.ar/SITIOWEB/EEH/EEH.HTM> (Spanish language, free)
- http://www.csec.org/Catalog_%20A-B.htm Texts and podcasts from the Chicago Sunday Evening Club (free)
- <http://www.day1.net/index.php5?view=transcripts&sort=liturgy> Text and podcasts from Day 1 Broadcasts (free)
- <http://www.pulpit.org/> The Living Pulpit (free and subscription)
- <http://www.homiletics.org/> Website for the Academy of Homiletics (free and subscription)
- <http://www.theafricanamericanpulpit.com/> The African American Pulpit Magazine (free and subscription)
- <http://www.festivalofhomiletics.com/index.html> The Festival of Homiletics (annual ecumenical preaching event)
- <http://www.preachingfromthecenter.org> (United Methodist preaching events)

