

# Charter for the Deployment of Superintendents and the Establishment of Mission Areas for the California-Pacific Annual Conference June 2011

## **A Brief Introduction**

The Bishop and Cabinet of the California-Pacific Annual Conference will:

- reduce the total number of superintendents;
- organize each district into geographic units called Mission Areas for the purposes of growth, relevance, and vitality;
- guide the clergy and laity serving in each Mission Area to collaborate in mission and ministry;
- call for a task force to develop a plan for new district alignment.

## **Background and Context**

At the 2010 Annual Conference, the Conference Leadership Team introduced a plan to focus the conference's resources through the five essential ministries – Leadership, New Ministries, Compassion and Justice Ministries, Resources, and Navigation – to generate more energy for mission and ministry. In a similar but distinct effort, the Bishop and Cabinet are seeking to focus the role of the General Superintendent to guide and serve the mission and ministry of the church.

When the California-Pacific Annual Conference was formed in 1985, there were 505 congregations. Today, in 2011, there are 361 churches. During the same period of time, the total membership of the Cal-Pac Conference has declined from 138,926 to 82,667, and the average weekly attendance has gone from 64,262 to 48,664. Only 10% of United Methodist churches across the country are growing at a rate of 5% or more per year. In the context of fewer congregations, fewer members, and declining attendance, the Bishop and Cabinet are clear that, if we want a different outcome, we have to change what we are doing. It is time to change structures and strategies in order to more effectively serve our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Stewardship of our resources is also at issue here. In 2011, the cost of maintaining eight district offices (including superintendents and district staff) is approximately 20% of the entire budget for the California-Pacific Annual Conference. Rising costs on every front and a general decline in apportionment giving across the denomination present financial challenges that call for creative change.

Additionally, the function of superintendents has grown more complex and expectations of the role have compounded as our connectional system endures a variety of stresses. In these changing circumstances, the primary responsibilities and functions of

superintendents must be reassessed and refocused so they can be deployed in an effective manner.

### **What Drives This Change**

*“The task of superintending in The United Methodist Church resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendent....The purpose of superintending is to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry....*

*“It is also their task to facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for the equipping of Christian people for service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ and to help extend the service in mission” (§ 401, The United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2008 ).*

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, so the primary reason for these changes is to “initiate structures and strategies” that serve that purpose effectively. We believe that this approach will focus our efforts on the four foci of our denomination, helping us to develop new leadership, new places for new people, and ministries of compassion and justice that will have a broader, transformative impact on the communities we serve.

These changes are also a constructive way to address the financial realities of our Annual Conference. Even so, the true effectiveness of these changes will be measured by the answer to the question asked of each Mission Area, each congregation, and each United Methodist: What have you accomplished for the sake of the Church’s mission?

### **Biblical and Theological Reflections**

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus identifies himself by the fruits of his ministry:

*The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”....And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me” (Luke 7:18-23).*

Likewise, when Bishop Mary Ann Swenson addressed the General Conference in April 2008, she said that our identity as disciples of Jesus Christ is shown by pouring ourselves out for a world in need.

*“In a world that has embraced the ‘myth of scarcity’ in a ‘culture of consumption,’ God offers abundant life through Jesus Christ.... However, too often we live as if we had just one small cup to receive God’s gift. When used faithfully, the cup becomes Christ’s vessel for mission and ministry. When it is empty, its purpose is to be filled; when it is filled, its purpose is to be emptied. It receives only so it can pour out.*

*“As people of faith...we are the cup. Our purpose is to have God’s life-giving abundance flow through us, pouring out into the world, running over the four corners of*

*the world, transforming the world. We do this when we move beyond the myth of scarcity to the reality of God's abundance. God has poured out everything needed for ministry in this time, in this place and for all the people of God. Let us be the cup overflowing in a thirsty world."*

## **The Learning Process**

In anticipation of these changes, we have sought the wisdom and knowledge of our friends in other Annual Conferences that have made comparable changes, including California-Nevada, Indiana, Wisconsin, and West Ohio. From their experience with district mergers, deployment of district superintendents over larger districts, and Mission Area development (or "clusters" and "circuits" as they are known in those conferences), we have gained valuable insights.

The key strengths and intended outcomes they identify are: increased effectiveness of congregational efforts; the strengthening of individual congregations; and the cultivation of a culture of support and accountability at every level of the conference. The challenges and unresolved realities they have experienced include general resistance to change, language obstacles, cultural obstacles, and geographic challenges.

In recent years, a few of the districts in Cal-Pac have begun working with geographic groupings of churches and, from this experience, we have found the value of collaboration in mission, cooperative ministries, shared resources, and more; the full potential is yet to be realized.

## **The Proposal**

### **Change the Focus of the Superintendents**

*"The district superintendent shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy and of the churches in the communities of the district in their missions of witness and service in the world...(a) by giving priority to the scheduling of time and effort for spiritual leadership, pastoral support, supervision and encouragement to the clergy and to the churches of the district..." (§419, The United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2008 ).*

In July 2011, Santa Ana District Superintendent, Mark Ulrickson, completes his term of service. Bishop Swenson has designated Cedrick Bridgeforth (Los Angeles District) to be the Superintendent of Record for the Santa Ana District beginning July 1, 2011. He will be assisted by Kathey M. Wilborn (Long Beach District), Myron Wingfield (San Diego District), and Bau Dang (Riverside District). There will be no change in district administrative assistants or district offices at this time.

We expect that two additional district superintendents will come off the Cabinet at the end of June 2012, when the vision of a reconfigured Cabinet will be fully realized with a total of five district superintendents.

In order for this structure to work, there will be a dramatic shift in the role of the superintendents – what they prioritize, what they do, and what they do not do.

The priorities of the district superintendents will be:

1. to focus on the appointment process to provide effective leadership;
2. to foster collaborative engagement in the mission field;
3. to develop and maintain a structure of support and accountability for clergy and congregations.

District superintendents will give more attention to discipleship and leadership development in general, and training for Staff-Parish Relations Committees specifically, to establish systems and structures that foster healthy congregations. Congregational communications covenants, processes for conflict resolution, and regular Mission Area leader training are some of the tools that will be used to support congregations and clergy in making these changes.

District Superintendents will no longer meet annually with each Staff-Parish Relations Committee, but will consult with SPRCs when a change of pastoral appointment is expected, or as necessary to consult on such matters. They will, however, meet regularly with Mission Area clergy and lay leadership for the purpose of focusing on our common mission.

### **Establish Mission Areas**

Beginning July 2011, we will see the introduction of Mission Areas. A Mission Area is a region within a district determined by a strategic, geographic grouping of four to ten congregations within that region. The purpose of each Mission Area is to coordinate, encourage, and facilitate mutual support among clergy and laity in making a transformative impact on the people in their region. The objectives include, but are not limited to: 1) developing cooperative support among clergy and congregations; 2) identifying the assets, strengths, and opportunities available to meet the needs within their shared mission field, and; 3) collaborating and partnering in fruitful mission and ministry.

The Bishop and District Superintendents are currently in the process of organizing churches in Mission Areas with the expectation that all clergy and churches will participate in this structure and strategy.

### **Identify and Train Mission Area Leaders**

A Convening Elder will be appointed by the district superintendent for each Mission Area. The specific responsibilities for Convening Elders will be uniform across the annual conference. Training modules are currently in development.

### **Mission Area Clergy**

As stated above, Mission Areas become the primary point of support and accountability for the mission of the church. For that reason, clergy will be expected to meet at least quarterly to build relationships, share hopes and concerns, and chart their course. Beyond

these specific expectations, each Mission Area will determine the best pattern of gathering to accomplish its shared purposes. The general spirit of these gatherings should take shape around the questions: “What can we accomplish together, working cooperatively and collaboratively, that we cannot accomplish, either as well or at all, by ourselves?”

### **Mission Area Laity**

In a parallel and often overlapping manner, the lay leadership of each Mission Area will also convene quarterly to build relationships, share hopes and concerns, and chart their course. Once established, the spirit of these gatherings should take shape around the question: “What can we accomplish together, working cooperatively and collaboratively, that we cannot accomplish, either as well or at all, by ourselves?”

The lay leaders best suited to take the lead in this effort may not be the currently elected officers of the congregation. Instead, identify key participants by asking, “Who has a passion for the mission of the church and a proven track record of leadership?”

### **Outcomes and Measurements**

#### Four Foci & Essential Ministry Areas (MA)

- How is your MA developing more spiritual & principled leaders? List achievements.
- Given the report from the “Call to Action,” what steps is your MA taking in assessing and strengthening the vitality of existing congregations? List achievements.
- Where does your MA envision the possibility developing new ministries? List timeline(s).
- How is your MA actively engaging in ministries of justice and compassion with the poor? List local, regional, national & global deployments of servant disciples.

#### Mission Area Demographic Realities

- What are the assets in your MA for possible partnership in ministry?
- What are the primary and secondary needs in your MA? What are the short and long-term needs in your MA?
- How are the congregations in your MA a reflection of your demographic reality?

#### Congregational Realities

- What are the assets and resources individual congregations bring to enhance the effectiveness of the MA?
- How are you re-envisioning and re-directing your resources towards vitality?
- How is your MA utilizing congregational strengths and assets to meet community needs?
- What are the challenges in individual congregations? How are you collectively working on transforming congregational challenges into opportunities to strengthen and enhance your MA?

### **District Alignment**

The alignment of district boundaries is the prerogative of the annual conference, and the Bishop and Cabinet are convinced that, just as the number of superintendents is changing from 8 to 5, we should also change the alignment of districts from 8 to 5 (4 in California, and one Hawaii). To that end, the Cabinet will present a motion to the June 2011 session of the Annual Conference calling for a District Alignment Task Force to study the feasibility and requirements of changing the number and borders of districts in Cal-Pac.

### **District Staff & Offices**

As stated above, there will be no change in the number of district offices or in the number of district administrative assistants at this time, but we are working toward making that change by July 2012. When the district alignment plan is complete, however, we expect:

- The five districts will be staffed by five administrative assistants.
- The district offices will be located within their respective geographic regions.
- The need for additional district or transitional staff (part time or temporary) will be assessed as part of the planning and implementation process.

June 2011

## **Transition and Implementation Timeline**

### **Superintendent transitions**

July 1, 2011

Santa Ana District – a new DS of record is assigned, partnering with three other superintendents to give oversight for Santa Ana Mission Areas

July 1, 2012

(Assuming action by the 2012 Annual Conference to change District alignments) 1 or 2 district superintendents will rotate off the cabinet and the remaining 5 or 6 will continue to provide supervision during the transition to newly aligned districts.

July 1, 2013

If only one DS rotates off in 2012, another DS rotates off

### **Districts**

June 2011 – Annual Conference considers (and approves budget assuming 5 DS's) moving to 5 Districts, maintaining eight districts through June 30, 2012

June 2012 – Annual Conference acts on specific number of districts and boundaries proposed

### **Mission Areas**

Spring 2011

Initial boundaries set by the District Superintendents, followed by a year of implementation and adjustment in collaboration with Mission Area leaders, allowing for organic and serendipitous developments in pursuit of the church's mission.

### **Mission Area Leaders**

Convening Elders will be determined by the District Superintendents. Lay leadership to be determined collaboratively with clergy in each congregation. Training for Mission Area leaders will begin Summer and Fall of 2011.

### **Financial Impact of Changes in Superintendent & District Staff Compensation**

The Compensation for Conference Staff, including Superintendents and District Administrative Staff, has been frozen at 2008 levels. In 2010, a new formula was approved for setting DS compensation but, with the freeze, it has not been implemented. Implementation of the formula would accompany the reduction in the number of Superintendents. Any new district alignment plan will include appropriate compensation adjustments for non-exempt staff.