

## **A Summary of Items of Interest to Town and Country Members and Congregations as a result of General Conference**

**Church and Community Workers-**Resolution calls on the General Board of Global Ministries, in its support of the "mission initiatives," continue to recruit, enlist, train, adequately fund, and deploy Church and Community Workers; and further requests that the funding partnership continue between the local area, annual conference, and the General Board of Global Ministries in order to place Church and Community Workers in economically depressed areas where they are desperately needed. (Full text at end of this document)

### **Cooperative Ministry-**

*Forms of Cooperative Parish Ministry*

Paragraph 206.3 of the current Book of Discipline was deleted and new wording substituted (Complete text following summary statements)

*Resolution 52* (Revised name and deleted first and fourth paragraphs) "Plan of Support for Cooperative Ministry"; retains other paragraphs and resolution.

### *New Resolution*

THEREFORE, be it resolved that appreciation be expressed for the good work done by the National Cooperative Ministry Leadership Team across the quadrennia; and,

Further be it resolved that the General Boards and Agencies, the annual conferences, districts and charge conferences of The United Methodist Church be called on to implement processes which will eventuate in understandings of how to initiate cooperative projects, ministries, and parishes and to facilitate their movement toward local and global mission and ministry; and

Further be it resolved that the above Boards and Agency be expected to continue providing encouragement and financial support to expand the effective use of cooperative patterns and processes within the Church; and,

Further be it resolved that the above Boards and Agencies be called upon to bring together a group composed on persons from across the church who are knowledgeable and experienced in cooperative parish ministry to plan and carry forward a national cooperative parish consultation no later than two years following the General Conference of 2008 in order to facilitate broader use of existing cooperative forms and the incorporation of new patterns and processes which continue to emerge throughout the Church. (Full text of Resolution at end of this document.)

**Rural Chaplains Association-** rural chaplaincy will continue to be recognized as a special type of ministry for town and rural settings, and that the United Methodist Church commends and reaffirms its commitment to Rural Chaplains as the Rural Chaplains Association continues its work nationally, internationally, and ecumenically with lay and clergy, many of whom carry out their ministries under trying conditions and in difficult places; and, in particular, that the General Board of Global Ministries be encouraged to continue relationship with the Rural Chaplains Association in the future.

(Full text of resolution follows summary statements)

**Voting**-changes to *Paragraph 35* of the Book of Discipline were made to open voting on the election of clergy delegates to General, Central and Jurisdictional Conferences to include Associate Members, Probationary Members and Local Pastors who have completed their educational requirements and have served for 2 years. For Local Pastors this means the completion of the 5 year Course of Study. This now requires a 2/3 affirmative vote of the total aggregate members voting during the 2009 Annual Conference Sessions to become a part of church rule.

**A place at the Connectional Table**- The decision whether to have a town and country person seated at the Connectional Table with voice and vote was referred to the Connectional Table for consideration and action.

**National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministry**-affirmed by General Conference; continues to be assigned to the General Board of Global Ministries for implementation.

### **Text of Documents**

#### **Church and Community Workers**

**Whereas**, several bodies are unified in the development of four "mission initiatives" to be presented to General Conference 2008 in order to build a collaborative movement in Leadership Development, Building New Congregations and Revitalizing Existing Ones, Ministry with the Poor, and Combating the Preventable Diseases of Poverty; and

**Whereas**, Church and Community Workers are among those leaders involved in a comprehensive approach to the nurture, outreach and witness of both rural and urban churches; and

**Whereas**, developing contacts and linkages between local church/cooperative ministries and community groups is key to the understanding of and response to human hurt and need, and is a primary strength of the Church and Community Ministry program; and

**Whereas**, for decades Church and Community Workers have worked effectively in mission outreach with the United Methodist Church in town and rural, urban and specialized settings; and

**Whereas**, the goals of the Church and Community Ministry program are closely aligned with the focus of the proposed "mission initiatives" on leadership development, ministry with the poor and combating poverty; and

**Whereas**, Church and Community Workers are an effective cadre of missionaries serving within the bounds of the U.S.A. who are employed and assigned by the General Board of Global Ministries;

Therefore, be it resolved that the General Board of Global Ministries, in its support of the "mission initiatives," continue to recruit, enlist, train, adequately fund, and deploy Church and Community Workers; and

Be it further resolved, that the funding partnership continue between the local area, annual conference, and the General Board of Global Ministries in order to place Church and Community Workers in economically depressed areas where they are desperately needed.

## **Forms of Cooperative Parish Ministry**

Delete current ¶ 206.3 and substitute the following:

¶ 206. 3. Cooperative ministries may be expressed in one or more of the forms contained in the following categories.

a) Beginning and Exploratory Forms: 1. *Cluster Groups* – a group of churches located in the same geographic area with a loosely knit organization that allows the participating congregations and pastoral charges to engage in cooperative programs in varying degrees. A district may be divided into cluster groups for administrative purposes. 2. *Probe Staff* – composed of the pastors and other staff assigned to a geographic area to explore possibilities for cooperation and developing strategies for improving ministry. 3. *Group Ministry* – a loosely organized group of two or more pastoral charges in which pastors are appointed or assigned to charges. The pastors and/or lay council representing all churches may designate a coordinator.

b) Structured Forms: 1. *Multiple Charge Parishes* – intentionally organized group of two or more pastoral charges in which each church continues to relate to its charge conference on the organizational level and also participates in a parish-wide council. The pastors are appointed or assigned to the charges and also to the parish, and a director or coordinator is appointed or assigned by the bishop. 2. *Larger Parish* – a number of congregations working together using a parish-wide council and other committees and work groups, as the parish may determine which provides representation on boards and committees from all churches; guided by a constitution or covenant and served by a staff appointed or assigned by the bishop and involving a director. 3. *Blended Ministry* – the merging of the organizations and memberships of churches spread throughout a defined geographical area into one congregation that intentionally develops two or more worship/program centers, and for which there is one charge conference and one set of committees and other groups, guided by a covenant and served by a staff and a director appointed or assigned to the parish by the bishop.

c) Specialized Forms: 1. *Enlarged Charge* – two or more congregations, usually on the same charge and of relatively equal size that work as a unit with the leadership of one or more pastors. There may be a charge council and appropriate committees. 2. *Extended or Shared Ministry* – a larger membership church sharing ministry with a smaller membership church, usually served by the pastor(s) of the larger church. 3. *Cooperative Ecumenical Parish* – two or more local churches of different Christian traditions including a United Methodist congregation, working together. Either of the above forms may be utilized. 4. *Shared Facilities* – two or more congregations, one of which shall be United Methodist, sharing a building, office equipment, etc., such as congregations which use different languages or which are of different racial/ethnic/cultural groups. The congregations may enter into a covenant that ensures representation and preserves the autonomy of each congregation on such bodies as church councils, boards of trustees and other committees and work groups. The congregations may negotiate a financial agreement about the use of the facility in order to provide appropriate financial support.

## **Resolution 52 Plan of Support for Cooperative Ministries**

**WHEREAS**, cooperative ministry is an intentional style of team ministry that enables groups of congregations and their pastors and laity in a defined

geographic area, as United Methodists and ecumenically, to work together in ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness; and

**WHEREAS**, cooperative forms of ministry are proven to enhance lay leadership development, to provide greater support and peer accountability among clergy, and to further connectional awareness and increased resourcing from the connectional church; and

### *New Resolution*

#### **Cooperative Parish Ministry**

**WHEREAS**, numerous changes have taken place within the Cooperative Parish Ministry movement of The United Methodist Church, including general church oversight and new and creative processes and patterns; and,

**WHEREAS**, historically responsibility for Cooperative Parish Ministry was lodged, first, with the Office of Town and Country Ministry and, later, also with the Office of Urban Ministry in the General Board of Global Ministries; and

**WHEREAS**, in the past several years Cooperative Parish Ministry has included, for administrative and support purposes, the General Board of Discipleship, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, as well as the General Board of Global Ministries; and,

**WHEREAS**, some annual conferences are exploring the effectiveness of clusters in which all pastors agree to meet regularly for purposes of holding each other accountable for ministry, outreach and for leading their churches to develop both individual and collaborative cooperative ministry action plans; and,

**WHEREAS**, at this time staff of the General Boards of Global Ministry, Higher Education and Ministry, Discipleship, and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns are creating a administrative new pattern to carry forward work done by the National Cooperative Ministry Leadership Team which planned and carried to completion six national cooperative ministry consultations;

**THEREFORE, be it resolved** that appreciation be expressed for the good work done by the National Cooperative Ministry Leadership Team across the quadrennia; and,

**Further be it resolved** that the General Boards and Agencies, the annual conferences, districts and charge conferences of The United Methodist Church be called on to implement processes which will eventuate in understandings of how to initiate cooperative projects, ministries, and parishes and to facilitate their movement toward local and global mission and ministry; and

**Further be it resolved** that the above Boards and Agency be expected to continue providing encouragement and financial support to expand the effective use of cooperative patterns and processes within the Church; and,

**Further be it resolved** that the above Boards and Agencies be called upon to bring together a group composed on persons from across the church who are knowledgeable and experienced in cooperative parish ministry to plan and carry forward a national cooperative parish consultation no later than two years

following the General Conference of 2008 in order to facilitate broader use of existing cooperative forms and the incorporation of new patterns and processes which continue to emerge throughout the Church.

### **Ministries of Rural Chaplains**

**Whereas** the General Conference since 1996 has affirmed the ministries of Rural Chaplains and the Rural Chaplains Association, and called on the United Methodist Church to pursue Rural Chaplaincy as a significant means of enabling renewal in town/villages and rural churches and communities throughout the world; and

**Whereas**, the Rural Chaplains Association now has more than 100 active members (women, men, laity and clergy, United Methodist and ecumenical), including several persons from the international community; especially Russia, and

**Whereas**, the Rural Chaplains are lay and clergy persons who have sensed the call to live in, work with, and advocate for town and rural persons, families, congregations, and communities; and

**Whereas**, special emphasis is placed on responses to hate and violence, and advocacy for justice issues among all people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, or economic status; and

**Whereas** Rural Chaplains meet annually for support, encouragement, resourcing, and enrichment by means of workshops/focus events which explore biblical understandings and focus on person-related Chaplaincy-type skills as well as understanding issues of food production and multi-national economics that impact family farmers and farm workers, the growth of ethnic/migrant and other new populations, emerging challenges of forestry, fisheries, and other industries such as small manufacturing enterprises and prisons, changing patterns of land use and control, and struggles over environmental issues, global warming, water quality, and hazardous waste disposal; and

**Whereas**, each quadrennium the annual meeting and focus event is held in an international setting in order to continue developing international/global linkages by exposing participants to the cultural, economic, political, ecological and religious lives of people,

**Whereas** Rural Chaplains work with other prophetic persons/groups on the local level who are committed to long-term involvement aimed at developing local and outside resources that enhance the lives of rural congregations and communities; and

**Whereas** the Rural Chaplains Association greatly empowers the development of lay leadership, serves as a vital means of recognizing the gifts and graces of rural peoples, and unleashes new possibilities for God's Spirit to move across the countryside; and,

**Whereas**, Rural Chaplains will be an asset in the implementation of the National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministries approved by General Conference of 2000; and,

**Therefore, be it resolved** that rural chaplaincy continue to be recognized as a special type of ministry for town and rural settings, and

**Be it further resolved**, that the United Methodist Church commend and reaffirm its commitment to Rural Chaplains as the Rural Chaplains Association continues its work nationally, internationally, and ecumenically with lay and clergy, many of whom carry out their ministries under trying conditions and in difficult places; and

***Be it further resolved***, in particular that the General Board of Global Ministries be encouraged to continue relationship with the Rural Chaplains Association in the future.