

MEMBERSHIP AUDIT REPORT

The General Council on Finance and Administration is alerting local churches to changes in the *Book of Discipline* (2004) regarding membership. I am passing on the information.

New Membership Definitions:

Following are the new definitions of membership excerpted from the *2005-2008 United Methodist Membership Records Manual*:

- **Baptized member:** A baptized member is a person who has received the sacrament of baptism in a United Methodist Church or has received Christian baptism in another denomination and later transferred to a United Methodist Church.
- **Professing member:** A professing member is a baptized person who has taken vows declaring the Christian faith.

Regarding Faith Journey records:

- As long as the required information is generated and stored by the system, it is fine to use non-Cokesbury systems.

Many current church management software programs can be modified with the new terminology and the needed information fields to keep these records digitally, making record keeping quick and efficient.

Response to a couple of general questions encountered:

- Is a membership audit required?
A membership audit is required by the *Discipline* to be done annually. The pastor is responsible for ensuring that all membership records are accurate and up to date (*Discipline*, 340.3.b.6.).
- Where should we start?
These changes should begin January 1, 2005. This will ensure that everyone who is a baptized or professing member of the church as of that date is duly accounted for. Use the Preparatory Roll as the basis for Baptized Members. Gradually, you will be able to update older records, but there is no necessity to do this immediately.

A Resource:

- **2005-2008 United Methodist Membership Records Manual** is available through Cokesbury for a cost of \$10.

This manual, in addition to sample pages of the forms, has explanations on the Biblical Basis for record keeping and the historical value of church membership records in the Methodist tradition. Page 6 outlines the lines of responsibility for this record keeping, and the requirements from *The Book of Discipline 2004* are listed on page 7. A CD with printable forms for much of the required record keeping is also included.

An excerpt from an *Interpreter Magazine* report on the membership changes:

The 2004 General Conference redefined membership in the United Methodist Church. It abolished the old classifications – Full Members and Preparatory Members – and replaced them with new ones: **Professing Members** and **Baptized Members**.

The change in terminology signals a major shift in understanding what it means to be a United Methodist. It also changes membership record-keeping.

The new *2005-2008 United Methodist Membership Records Manual* from Cokesbury, developed by the General Council on Finance and Administration, may be helpful in collecting the data. Paragraph 230 of *The Book of Discipline 2004* details the records each church is required to keep. Here are highlights:

Each local church must maintain an accurate membership record for each baptized or professing member including:

- Name, address, date and place of birth, date of baptism, pastor and sponsors, and, as appropriate:
- Date of confirmation/profession of faith, pastor and sponsors;
- Date received by transfer, sending church and receiving pastor;
- Date transferred to another church, name and address of receiving church;
- Date of removal or withdrawal from membership and reason;
- Date of restoration of professing membership and pastor;
- Date of death, date and place of memorial service, place of burial and officiating pastor.

Each church is also to maintain a Constituency Roll with the names and addresses of nonmembers for whom it has pastoral responsibility. This includes children.

All professing and baptized members should have an individual Record of Faith Journey. Many churches have members complete their own forms with the pastoral staff. It is a way of starting conversation – and completing paperwork.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership (Last Charge Conference) _____
Total Members Received _____
Total Members Removed _____
Total Membership as of _____ _____

T – Transfer

OD – Other Denomination

PF – Profession of Faith

R – Restored

CC – Charge Conference Actions

WD – Withdrawal

WC – Withdrawal Under Charges

D – Death

PROFESSING MEMBERS RECEIVED

Name Date How Rec'd?

PROFESSING MEMBERS REMOVED

Name Date How Removed?

BAPTISMS (All Ages)

Name Date How Rec'd?

B – Baptized

P – Professing

INACTIVE MEMBERS

3 Years
(list by name)

2 Years
(list by name)

1 Year
(list by name)

Contact Efforts

- * Letter Returned Unable to Deliver
- ** No Response
- WD** Withdrawal

Membership Secretary's Signature

Pastor's Signature

Date

Date