



CASE STUDY | INVOLUNTARY APPOINTMENT CHANGE

The pastor (elder) and the congregation have requested Rev. Bruce's appointment at Gotham UMC be continued.

A week after the appointment year began, the SPRC chair requests Bruce's immediate removal. A formal complaint has not been filed, but the church insists that Bruce's pending divorce and anger management issues have made it impossible for him to continue serving. The SPRC chair insists they will stop paying Bruce and are taking his keys to the church building.

Given the timing, Bishop Gordon has limited options, but works with the Cabinet to find Bruce another appointment at Metropolis UMC. Metropolis is about six hours away from his current residence. Bruce says he doesn't want to be removed from his current appointment and his family situation won't allow him to move that far so he refuses the appointment.

With no other appointments available, the Bishop appoints Bruce to Transitional Leave until something becomes available, possibly a few months away.

At the next clergy session, Bruce requests a Judicial Council ruling on the legality of his Transitional Leave status from Aug. 1 – Jan. 1 when he was waiting on a new appointment. The Judicial Council rules that Bruce is due back pay from the beginning of Transitional Leave and must receive an appointment.

Questions

1. What questions does this situation raise for you?
2. What other resolutions might have been proposed?
3. What other action steps could've have been considered?
4. What could have protected the conference from being required to pay the pastor for the time he wasn't appointed?
5. What are the relevant Discipline paragraphs or other resources that inform your decision?
6. How might this scenario have been anticipated, mitigated, or avoided?



CASE STUDY | RENEWAL OF LICENSE

You are preparing to meet with the dCOM to review continuing the local pastor licenses for your district. Teresa's name is on the list. She's appointed to Midtown UMC and seems to be serving effectively. She's been a local pastor for the last five years and is in the 2nd year of her current appointment. This was a hard appointment to fill because of limited available salary and the need for full-time ministry coverage. Teresa is bilingual; a skill that enhances the church's neighborhood ministry.

While Midtown struggles a bit financially, the small congregation seems to be steady and has shown some renewed interest in social justice ministries. Teresa has been working with the city council to provide support services for immigrants moving into the community and some new worshippers have started attending. Midtown's worship is becoming more diverse, and more reflective of the surrounding neighborhood.

There are a variety of opinions about immigration within the congregation. While not everyone in the church is active in social justice ministries, the Outreach Committee supports Teresa's work with immigrants. This growing ministry is challenging and encouraging the Outreach Committee to expand its service and outreach.

Shortly before the dCOM meets with Teresa you learn two things:

- (1) Three lay persons tell you Teresa is "harboring illegal immigrants". They want you to "do something about this".
- (2) Teresa has not completed course work in the Course of Study this year and the dCOM is questioning if the license should be continued.

Questions

1. How do you proceed with the dCOM meeting given this new information?
2. What questions does this situation raise for you?
3. What additional information would be helpful in coming to a resolution?
4. What are the relevant Discipline paragraphs or other resources that inform your decision?
5. How might this scenario have been anticipated, mitigated, or avoided?



CASE STUDY | DISAFFILIATION AND ¶ 2553

First Church, a county seat congregation in a rural area of the conference has decided to disaffiliate. The pastor, who has announced his retirement, learns that a committee has been meeting secretly to discuss disaffiliating with the United Methodist Church. The pastor is surprised, dismayed, and hurt, by this closed-door committee conversation and feels powerless to counter this group's approach.

The pastor calls the District Superintendent to inform her of what is occurring. He informs her that he has learned that the group has hired an attorney named Dalton, who he understands has a website and is leading United Methodist Churches to disaffiliate without following ¶ 2553 of *The Book of Discipline*.

The pastor informs the DS about a congregational meeting scheduled to vote on disaffiliation.

[This new paragraph (2553), "Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality" became effective at the close of the 2019 General Conference.]

Questions

1. How do you respond to the scheduling of the disaffiliation vote?
2. What questions does this situation raise for you?
3. What additional information would be helpful in coming to a resolution?
4. What are the relevant Discipline paragraphs or other resources that inform your decision?
5. How might this scenario have been anticipated, mitigated, or avoided?



CASE STUDY | INEFFECTIVENESS

In the last week, you've received a significant number of emails from many of St. Mark's members expressing frustration with their current pastor, Diane. You speak with the SPRC chair and learn that the SPRC is also unhappy with her performance. Worship attendance has declined, giving is down (forcing many central ministries to face unanticipated funding cuts), and the second administrative assistant to work with Diane has just resigned. She is a full-time elder and has served St. Mark for about 18 months.

When you raise the church's concerns with the Cabinet, you learn that the last three churches Diane served have requested she be moved. You prepare to meet with St. Mark's SPRC. In reading through the supervisory file, you find, for reasons of "confidentiality", the previous DS removed notes made during their tenure.

Questions

1. How do you proceed with the pastor, SPRC, Bishop, and Cabinet?
2. What additional information needs to inform your decision?
3. What would be a positive outcome in this situation – for the pastor, for the church, for the conference?
4. What steps need to be taken if a status change is requested?
5. What if Administrative Location is considered? What do you need to do?
6. What are the relevant Discipline paragraphs or other resources that inform your decision?
7. How might this scenario have been anticipated, mitigated, or avoided?