

* centennial quilt

Display library

* windows pictures on small easels

Idea Mart

90 yr history / banner

* windows book

* coloring book

* 200th anniversary bulletins

Administrative Board

There are many ways to add life to your charge conference. Perhaps your congregation will want to consider some of the following ideas:

- Use music to involve participants. Singing hymns helps everyone participate. Even reports may be set to music!
- Record major events in the life of your congregation on a videocassette that can be viewed at your charge conference.
- Use slides or color prints to tell the story of the congregation's ministry. Prepare a script to use with the slides or captions to use with pictures.
- Prepare a booklet on last year's highlights to help people see what has been accomplished in your church. (You also might use such a booklet to introduce visitors and new mem-

- bers to the church's ministries.)
- Arrange the room to promote a warm, open time of fellowship.
- Meet in a room where chairs may be arranged so that participants see one another.
- Be sure the room is well lighted.
- Decorate the room in a theme appropriate to the season.
- Have refreshments available.
- Make sure the room temperature is comfortable.
- Provide a printed agenda to help participants follow the progress of the meeting. Include the scheduled adjournment time to keep people looking ahead.

Which of the ideas in this column appeal to you? Consider the steps the administrative board could take to implement those ideas.

Observe this year's charge conference. What arrangements worked well?

Charge conference will be what you make it.

Which ones would you change? Charge conference will be what you make it. You can give it life and spirit. Remember, planning now for the 1987 charge conference gives you more options than waiting until the last minute.

—James M. Fogle-Miller

Section on Ministry of the Laity, General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 840, Nashville, Tenn. 37202-0840.

Administrative Council

The annual charge conference can be a positive experience for the small membership church and the district superintendent. Several superintendents offered suggestions for ways to make charge conference a time for reflection, celebration and planning. Some of these suggestions are given below.

Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of all United Methodist congregations have

Charge conference can celebrate achievements.

fewer than 200 members. Encourage your district superintendent to plan charge conferences with small membership churches in mind. (Variations may be made for the larger churches in the district.)

Prior planning by the superinten-

dent, pastor and key lay leaders is crucial. Be sure leaders understand expectations and goals. Consider the following ideas:

- Suggest that beginning pastors visit and observe other charge conferences as they prepare for their first ones.
- Set the meeting at a day and time that encourages the highest participation.
- Involve laypersons in a discussion of the ministry of the congregation. Begin by asking, "What good things have happened in this church during the past year?"
- Celebrate achievements in serving and witnessing.
- Hold the charge conference as a banquet where outstanding leaders and accomplishments are recognized and retiring leaders honored.
- Take time to consider the congregation's ministry in the year ahead.
- Ask, "What should this congregation be doing next year?" Informal discus-

sion can provide a basis for planning the congregation's future ministry.

The charge conference may be one of the few times during the year that the district superintendent visits the charge. Use the occasion to build trust and understanding between the district superintendent and the local congregation.

To help build trust, allow time for the concerns of the people to be heard in addition to the formal agenda items. Affirm the good things that are happening.

Like most of us, small congregations need to know they are valued and that their concerns have been heard. Charge conference can be a time to make this happen.

—A. Clay Smith

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Council on Ministries

Fall means charge conference, and charge conference may imply boredom! The first is inevitable, but the second is not. You can make this yearly event a celebration of ministry in your church.

Help everyone to participate by seating them around tables in the fellowship hall or a large classroom. If tables are not available, arrange the chairs in a circle or semicircle.

Although the district superintendent usually sets the agenda, the local

Make your charge conference a celebration of ministry.

church council on ministries can decide how to present the information.

Consider using a questionnaire to cover the agenda. Provide a copy for each person. Have pencils available for those who need them.

To stimulate discussion, have participants answer the questions together

with each person jotting down the answers.

Note the sample topics and questions below.

United Methodist history. When and where was the United Methodist Church officially organized in America? How did we come to be known as United Methodists?

Local congregational history. When was our local congregation organized? Has it always had its current name and location?

Trustee matters. What is the value of our buildings? How much insurance is carried? Is the coverage adequate?

Membership report. How many members have been added since the last charge conference? Which members have died since the last membership report? (Allow those present to recall their relationships with deceased church members.)

Connectional church matters. How many churches are in our annual conference? How many districts are there? What area is included in our district? What plans do we have for financial support for ministries beyond

ourselves, such as outreach ministries or the missional priority?

Goals and objectives. Did we accomplish our intended membership gain? How will we minister in our neighborhood?

Nominations and personnel. Who will be the lay leader next year? Who will serve on the administrative board?

If you use the approach outlined above, you may hear comments like these:

"This was the most interesting charge conference I have ever attended."

"I learned more about my church tonight."

"I wasn't bored!"

If you would like a copy of the charge conference questionnaire described in this column, write to the Section on Ministry of the Laity at the address below. You will receive a single copy which may be duplicated.

—Wallace H. Kirby

Section on Ministry of the Laity, General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 840, Nashville, Tenn. 37202-0840.

Missions

A man went to his class reunion and when he returned home, a friend asked how it went.

"It was terrible," he confessed. "My classmates were all so old and fat and bald that none of them recognized me."

Sometimes churches change as much as people and can hardly be recognized as the same place. A church in Ohio was struggling to meet its budget. It did not meet the conference benevolence apportionments and paid little on conference-recommended General Advance Specials. Missions was a low priority item.

The church property was deteriorating. There was little faith that enough

money could be collected to repair it. As a matter of fact, not much was happening.

Today that church of 270 members meets its budget without any great struggle. It pays its conference apportionments for benevolences. The giving for conference General Advance Specials exceeds the askings by 1,000 percent.

In addition to these Advance Specials, the congregation raises \$10,000 or \$15,000 yearly for mission outreach. Over a five-year period 26 members of the church have spent from 10 days to two months as Volunteers in Mission in Haiti.

The church property is in excellent repair. There are five active Bible-study groups. The people have grown

spiritually and have much more dedication and purpose.

What brought about this great change? Members of a Lay Witness Mission inspired some of the members

Sometimes churches change as much as people do.

to participate in a short-term mission work team in Haiti. As a result of their trip, members heard for the first time about a missionary conference. They had serious doubts that such an event would work in their church, but, having seen the need in Haiti, they resolved to