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September 12, 1990

TO: Durham District Pastors
FROM: Albert Shuler
District Superintendent
SUBJECT: Guidelines for Open Itineracy

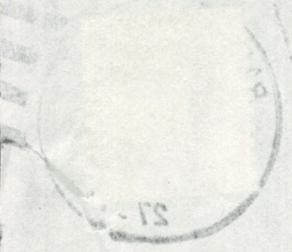
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Albert Shuler'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

I have enclosed a copy of the "Guidelines for Open Itineracy" for the North Carolina Conference. This document will be an agenda item for our 1990 Charge Conference. Make as many copies as you need.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me.

Continued best wishes.

Enclosure



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GUIDELINES FOR OPEN ITINERACY

The North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a process by which open itineracy can be effectively implemented within the North Carolina Conference. These guidelines seek to affirm disciplinary expectation and the need for preparing pastors, local churches, and Pastor-Parish Relations Committees, and to offer specific steps for implementation.

II. FOUNDATIONS FOR OPEN ITINERACY

A. *Biblical and Theological Foundations*

1. God is declared to be the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all people. We are the highest expression of God's creative work.
2. Jesus came to save the world, and this salvation is inclusive in its call so that "whoever believes" will be saved (John 3:16). Those who are baptized into Christ are called to the priesthood of all believers.
3. The New Testament epistles declare this call to all Christians (Galatians 3:28), and from this company of believing people, God calls individuals into the representative ministry of the church.
4. The church was given birth at Pentecost when God's Holy Spirit came to empower it for witness and mission. People from every part of the world were present in Jerusalem on that day, and did receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:5-11).
5. There is nothing exclusive about God's giving of the Spirit to enable ministry. Biblical and theological affirmations remind us that God's call to ministry is felt and answered by a variety of persons, whose unique qualities greatly enhance the witness of God's people to the world. We are commanded to give high priority to fulfill God's call in ourselves, and to participate in enabling others faithfully to obey it.

B. *The 1988 Book of Discipline*

1. *The Book of Discipline* addresses open itineracy on the levels of the local church Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the Bishop/Cabinet, and the Annual Conference.

2. The local church Pastor-Parish Relations Committees are instructed as part of their responsibilities to be "continually interpreting to the people the nature and function of the ministry, including cross-racial appointments and sensitivity to open itineracy." (§ 269.2f[1])
3. Bishops and Cabinets are guided in appointment-making by the directives of *The Book of Discipline* which states: "Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, color, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement." (§ 530.1)
4. *The Book of Discipline* states that "The Annual Conference...will assume responsibilities for such matters as: ... Consulting with the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet to determine what provisions are made for the recruitment and itineracy of racial and ethnic ordained ministers." (§ 740.3e)

III. PREPARING ALL CHURCHES FOR OPENNESS

There are a number of opportunities and ways in which churches of the Annual Conference can prepare themselves for open itineracy. Here are some suggestions:

1. Encourage pastors and members of differing racial/ethnic backgrounds to seek opportunities to work together on some forms of shared ministry (workshops, study groups, work projects, etc.).
2. Encourage pastors and lay people to come together in cluster groups to discuss what it means to be inclusive and how inclusiveness impacts the local church.
3. Continue the use of racial/ethnic leadership in workshops and seminars.
4. Encourage pastors to increase a climate of openness to all people through their preaching and pastoral ministry.
5. Ask pastors, choirs, and lay speakers of various racial/ethnic heritage to exchange churches.
6. Plan for congregations of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to worship together on a given Sunday by having one-half of each congregation worshipping in the other church.
7. Encourage the sharing of common meals, such as evening fellowships or pot-luck dinners.

8. Encourage in those districts where there are no racial/ethnic United Methodist congregations cross-racial/ethnic experiences through district lay rallies and other events in which worship takes place.

IV. IDENTIFYING CHURCHES AND PASTORS

There are signs which assist in identifying churches (white and ethnic/racial) and pastors (white and ethnic/racial) that are ready to work towards inclusiveness.

A. Signs of Readiness in Congregations:

1. The membership is racially mixed, with some ethnic/racial persons in key leadership positions.
2. Strength is evident in mission outreach, finances, and church growth and enough strength to persevere in face of opposition.
3. Members see the vision of inclusiveness as part of the church's mission.
4. The members appreciate cross-racial differences and see them as they are and not necessarily as they are perceived to be.
5. The congregations have a track record of accepting and working with pastors.

B. Signs of Readiness in Pastors who will Prepare Churches:

1. They are committed to the vision of inclusiveness.
2. They have earned the respect of the congregation. (Probably one year in an appointment would be required before major efforts could be made to prepare a congregation.)
3. They possess strong faith and self-esteem, and a willingness to persevere in face of opposition.
4. They are strong and effective preachers and teachers.
5. They possess pastoral ability to continue to care for those who do not share the vision.
6. They have the ability to appreciate cross-racial differences and to see them as they are and not necessarily as they are perceived to be.
7. They have a good track record of working effectively with congregations.

C. Signs of Readiness in Pastors who will be Appointed Cross-Racially:

1. They are committed to the vision of inclusiveness.
2. They have strong faith and self-esteem, with ability to persevere in face of opposition.
3. They are strong and effective preachers and teachers.
4. They possess the pastoral ability to remain loving and yet be firm with those who do not share the vision.
5. They are gifted in moving across cultural lines.

D. District Superintendents are to watch constantly for signs of readiness for cross-racial appointments, either by identifying churches or by listening for volunteer churches

1. This document will be shared at the 1990 Charge Conferences and each local church will be requested to give it careful and prayerful consideration.
2. After taking a year to study the document and giving it prayerful consideration, churches will respond at the 1991 Charge Conferences.

V. PREPARING SPECIFIC CHURCHES AND PASTORS

Pastors who are ready for cross-racial appointments need to be in churches that have shown signs of readiness. In preparation for such an appointment, these specific steps need to be taken with local churches and pastors:

A. Activities to take place in the first year:

1. Pastor earns the congregation's love and respect.
2. Joint ventures take place with a congregation of a predominantly different race. After a series of these opportunities, provide each local congregation with its own time for feedback and discussion (which might also help focus the congregation on its missional objectives over and beyond receiving a pastor of different background).
3. Training and support groups are to be made available for pastors and families who are preparing local churches, and for those who will be appointed cross-racially.
4. The Bishop will call gatherings of pastors and laity for mutual support and preparation.

5. A structured program of organized Bible study/spiritual discipline will be led by current pastor to address concerns and the spiritual dimensions of the process.
- B. Activities to take place in the second year:
1. Training for local churches who will receive cross-racial appointment will include open discussion of dreams and fears. (For example, some of the fears anticipated could be: what will this person's preaching style be like? what will friends think? how many members will the church lose? what will happen financially? how many people from other races will join us?)
 2. The Bishop, the District Superintendent, and the Cabinet will work with pastors who may be involved in cross-racial appointments. Concerns will be heard such as how my family will be received, ability to adjust to different worship experiences and the effect this appointment will have on my salary and future appointments.
 3. Appointments will be fixed and announced January 15 prior to June moving date in order that local church and incoming pastor may become acquainted before the present pastor moves. There are some possible ways this might be done: incoming pastor could preach a revival or lead a Bible study at the receiving church; a pulpit exchange, but not on the same Sunday for the pastor needs to be present with the incoming pastor; joint visitation, if this is geographically possible.

VI. SUPPORT FOR CROSS-RACIAL APPOINTMENTS

There are three avenues of support that should be continually available for churches and pastors in cross-racial appointments:

- A. Church Support
1. Continual affirmation must be given to churches that have entered into this covenant relationship for fulfillment of this new opportunity for ministry.
 2. Special occasions for celebration are to be shared with the broader church (i.e., articles in the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* and general publications, programs in neighboring churches, conference and district events).
 3. Training and support for Pastor-Parish Relations Committees will be offered where there are such appointments.
 4. Arrangements are to be made for sharing of experiences among Pastor-Parish Relations Committees where cross-racial appointments have occurred or are occurring.

B. Pastor Support

1. A support group is appropriate for the pastor and family within the congregation.
2. Congregations are to be made aware that the pastor and family have a need of other support groups beyond the local church.
3. The Bishop, the cabinet and all pastors in the conference will need to support and to affirm the cross-racial appointments.

C. Financial Support

1. If financial support (salary and/or program) is needed, requests should be made to the Conference Board of Missions.
2. Churches can receive assistance in financial planning through consultants from the Conference Board of Stewardship.
3. Other possible sources for financial help might include the Duke Endowment and agencies of the general church.
4. The Associate Director for Ethnic Minority Local Church Concerns with the Conference Council on Ministries will be available.

*Document prepared by Cabinet on 2/28/90
Document reviewed and revised by lay and clergy
representatives from each district on 3/12/90*

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