

Final Survey Findings
of the
STUDY OF MINISTRY COMMISSION II Draft Report
January 9, 2007-February 26, 2007

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2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charged with the task of examining the ministry of the United Methodist Church, the Study of Ministry Commission (Commission) began its daunting task immediately following the 2004 General Conference. The Commission sought to provoke dialogue within the Church on matters affecting ministry. A goal that has surely been met as evidenced, in part, by the survey responses. The commission proposed a variety of far reaching recommendations in their second draft paper report titled “Minutes of Several Conversations.” That draft paper was made available on the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) website between January 9, 2007 and February 26, 2007. That paper was accompanied by a survey on the proposed recommendations. The purpose of the survey was to provide the commission with a method to “listen in” on the conversations across the church. The survey also provides the commission with a quick synopsis of the approval level of United Methodists towards the Commission’s proposed recommendations.

During the short period in which the survey was available, 1020 persons from across the Church answered the survey questions and provided valuable feedback on the recommendations. Respondents alerted the commission to challenges and potential implications should the recommendations proceed as written in the draft report. The sheer number of survey responses indicates the importance of the Commission’s work. Many respondents valued the opportunity to enter the conversation, indicated by the number of respondents who also took the time to provide additional written comments. Each recommendation received comments from as few as 192 (19%) of the respondents to as many as 438 (43%) of respondents. This translates into 2,732 separate comments or statements written by survey respondents about the proposed recommendations. Clearly, these are important topics and issues that are not taken lightly by the ministry of the United Methodist Church.

Sample

The 1020 survey respondents come from across all jurisdictions of the Church. The majority of respondents are White or Caucasian (93%, 759) although 5% (40) are African American/Black, Latino/Hispanic and Native American. The average (mean) age of survey respondents is 51.99 (Std. 11.17) and range from as young as 20 years old up to 92 years. Nearly a third of the respondents were female (30% 257) and 70% (593) male. Respondents also represented a diverse ministry; 40% (337) Elders, 36% (303) Local Pastors, 7% (56) Deacons, 7% (58) in another form of ministry or in the process toward ordination and 11% (97) are laity.

Findings

Following each recommendation respondents rate their level of agreement with the proposal. Three additional agreement statements were posed for most recommendations. Agreement that the recommendation a) Clarifies sacramental authority b) Complicates Roles of ministry and c) Strengthens the connection. After which

opportunity to describe any additional comments or concerns is provided. The agreement scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) with the recommendation statement. Descriptive statistics are provided for each recommendation: frequency of agreement by conference relationship and the four item group mean. The group mean is calculated for each recommendation based on the sum of the respondent agreement rates on the four items for that recommendation. The group mean ranges from a possible minimum value 4 to a maximum possible of 20 where 12 is neutral.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Itinerant Elder Classification

Overall, most respondents agree (74%, 739) with the creation of the Itinerant Elder classification (M 3.89). A greater percentage of the Deacons agree (86%, 47) with this recommendation than Elders agree (77%, 258) and 66% (193) of Local Pastors agree. Most Elders (63%, 204) thought the Itinerant Elder classification clarifies sacramental authority, however, fewer than half of local pastors (43%, 117) or Deacons (48%, 26) agree. Few agree that the classification would strengthen the connection, from a low of 27% (72) of Local pastors to a high of 45% (143) of Elders agree. Overall agreement is highest for Other (M 14.43) and lowest for Local Pastors (11.70) which is less than a neutral rating.

More than a quarter (27%) of the respondents wrote a comment or concern about this classification. A large number of these concerns were about the affect of naming a particular group of elders as "Itinerant." Many believed this classification would increase the divisions among the ministry and reinforce a class based system of elitism, hierarchy, division and supremacy. A variety of comments and questions were raised about the voting rights of the three elder classifications as were concerns about the educational requirements of the Itinerant Elder classification.

Associate Elder Classification

The percentage of respondents who agree with the Associate Elder classification was much lower than those who agree with the Itinerant elder classification, but more than half (57%, 510) agree. Between 55% and 60% of Elders, Laity, Deacons and Local Pastors agree or strongly agree with the classification. Whether this classification clarifies sacramental authority is nearly opposite for Elders compared to Deacons; 52% (169) of Elders agree while 50% (27) of Deacons disagree. Half of the respondents in each group believe the recommendation complicates the roles of ministry, except Other where only 30% (16) agree that it complicates. Few believe the classification will strengthen the connection. In fact, one third of Deacons each agree, disagree and rate neutral. Overall, agreement is less than neutral toward disagree for all groups except Other (13.16). These low group means suggest little agreement with the recommendation.

The 229 (23%) comments on this classification illustrate the wide confusion regarding the purpose of the classification, the distinct role of the Associate, and how this

classification relates to the other classifications (both current and proposed). Again, educational requirements of the Associate were of concern. Some argue that the Associate and Local Elders classifications provided a needed method to locate, or not itinerate which was viewed as a positive outcome by some but negative by others.

Local Elder

Just under half (53%, 477) agreed or strongly agreed with the Local Elder classification. From 50% to 55% of Elders, Deacons, and Local Pastors agree with the classification, but fully 71% (41) of Other and 60% (55) Laity agreed with the classification. Half or more of all groups except laity thought this classification would complicate roles of ministry. Only a third of Elders, Deacons and Local Pastors thought it would strengthen the connection. Overall agreement is less than neutral for all groups except Other (13.45). The lowest mean rating is 10.70 given by Local pastors, but Deacons, Elders, and Laity means are only slightly more positive.

Comments were written by 30% (302) respondents. This recommendation elicited many comments about the underlying intent of the proposal. Many felt hurt by the recommendation, particularly the local pastors who believe this recommendation is damaging to their ministry. At the same time, a few local pastors thought this recommendation finally afforded them recognition for their work. Most often, comments addressed the requirement for a full time appointment and the anticipated consequences for small and rural churches. Several commented on the role of education in the classifications. The issue of non itinerancy evoked both approval (availability of choices) and disapproval (expected decrease in the itinerate ministry).

Sacrament Administration

The topic of administration of sacraments by the three new proposed classifications of elders was measured separately. A relatively high percentage of respondents strongly disagreed with this recommendation (28%, 240) but the same percentage strongly agreed (28%, 240). The majority of Elders (74%, 237) agree with the recommendation while less than half of the Deacons (47%, 26) and only 30% (88) of the Local Pastors agree. Further, most Elders (71%) and Deacons (60%, 31) agree the recommendation will clarify sacramental authority. Importantly, the majority of local pastors disagree (74%, 195) that the recommendation will strengthen the connection. The Local Pastor's group mean agreement is extremely low, only 9.09. Meanwhile, Elders agreement is fairly high (13.61) and Deacons are neutral (12.08). So, Elders support this recommendation but Local pastors do not and Deacons are in the middle.

For this portion of the recommendation, 29% (296) wrote a comment or concern. Most respondents reiterated concerns written in response to the three classifications. Great concern is expressed about the effect of removing sacramental authority from those who currently administer the sacraments which suggests that their role is not valued. Many expressed concern about the message sent to congregations whose minister can no

longer provide sacraments. Concerns about the consequences for the churches, as well as the additional demands placed onto the elder were expressed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Licensed Lay Pastor

Polarization of perspectives is evident in agreement with this recommendation. Equal percentages agree (23%, 201) as disagree (23%, 202) to the licensed lay pastor recommendation. Elders (73%, 244) and Deacons (70%, 38) agree with this recommendation, but over half (58% 173) of the Local Pastors disagree. Further, many local pastors (68%, 194) agree that the recommendation will complicate the roles of ministry. Meanwhile, Elders (64%, 210) agree this recommendation will clarify sacramental authority. Only 21% (58) of Local pastors, 36% (19) Deacons and 45% (147) of Elders agree that the recommendation will strengthen the connection. Overall, elders agree with the recommendation (13.56), but local pastors disagree (9.18).

More than one quarter (27%, 270) wrote a comment. Many of the comments and concerns voiced toward the three classification system were also found for the Licensed Lay Pastor recommendation. The removal of authority to administer sacraments, the affect of the recommendation on small and rural churches, the educational requirements, and the reification of the class system were all concerns also expressed to this recommendation. Several saw this recommendation as reducing or demoting clergy to laity. Many disagreed with this classification because it encompasses too broad a group of those in ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Blessing and Ritual Liturgy

This recommendation to develop a liturgy and ritual act for sending licensed lay pastors received fairly strong support both generally and across conference relationship group. The majority of each group agreed with the recommendation except local pastors, just half (52%, 156) of the local pastors agreed with this recommendation.

Fewer respondents (21%, 210) wrote comments to this recommendation. Some reiterated previously stated disagreement with the licensed lay pastor designation. This recommendation felt disingenuous to some particularly in light of the previous recommendation renaming local pastor to lay pastor and removing sacrament administration. Those who disagree often remarked that the act wastes valuable ministry time or time at annual conference. Particularly problematic was the recommendation for an annual liturgy, several suggested a liturgy only on the first time pastors are sent out.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Sacrament Administration

This recommendation addresses administration of the sacraments by Licensed Lay Pastors (LLP), Presiding Elders (PE), Bishops, and Deacons. The recommendation as it relates to LLP and PE is not well supported; 52% (455) disagree or strongly disagree that LLP shall not administer and 53% (461) disagree that presiding elders shall administer on circuit. Respondents were divided about the Bishop's role, the mean is neutral (3.19). Over half (59%, 514) agree that Deacons shall not administer but shall assist in sacraments. There is little support for denying administration to LLP or for PE circuit administration, some support for Bishops to grant authority in exceptional circumstances and some agreement that Deacons should not administer sacraments. Very few local pastors agree with the recommendation as it relates to the LLP or to the Presiding Elder. In fact, the mean for local pastors on the LLP and PE are 1.82 and 1.85 respectively- the lowest mean ratings found in the survey. Only 40% (22) of Deacons agree with the recommendation that the Deacon should assist only while 80% (266) of the Elders agree with that recommendation.

More respondents wrote a comment (43%, 438) to this recommendation than to any other recommendation. Respondents argue that this recommendation mistakes the real power and authority for sacrament which is God, not man. Respondents expressed concern about the expected decrease in sacrament administration as elders are required to be in multiple locations at the same time. Many viewed the ability of the Bishop to grant sacrament administration in "exceptional circumstances" as highly problematic as no definition of exceptional is offered. Great concern is also expressed about removing sacramental administration from those currently administering.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Remove "Commissioning"

More than half (61%, 517) agree with the removal of commissioning. The majority of Deacons (75%, 42) and Elders (70% 233) agree but only 44% (131) of local pastors agree with the recommendation. Over half of elders (57%, 184) agree it will clarify sacramental authority, 51% (166) that it will not complicate roles of ministry, and 46% (151) agree it will strengthen the connection. About one third of Deacons agree, disagree and rate neutral on clarification of sacramental authority. Less than one quarter (24% 12) of Deacons agree it will complicate roles and 44% (23) agree the recommendation will strengthen the connection. Local pastors rated lower on all statements, their group mean is below neutral (11.16). Overall, group means are toward agreement (13.42 - 14.15)

Only 21% (211) of the respondents wrote a comment to this recommendation. Many applaud the removal of the term commissioning as it is not understood, and therefore, not useful. Concerns are expressed about the process for ordination and whether persons not accepted into full conference relationship are de-ordained. Other concerns surround equating education and ordination.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Remove “service”

Just about half (49%, 414) of the respondents agree with the recommendation for removal of Service from elder’s orders. Most elders agree (67%, 221) but only 40% (22) of Deacons and 34% (98) of Local Pastors agree. Elders and local pastor’s agreement levels are nearly opposite; Local pastors agree 54% (149) that it will complicate, but elders disagree (54%, 173); elders agree (44%, 141) it will strengthen the connection, but local pastors (51%, 136) and deacons (45%, 23) disagree.

Fewer (19%, 192) commented on this recommendation than to any of the other recommendations. Those who did were concerned about the message sent to Elders and the church by removing Service from the elder’s description. Passionately, respondents argued that the primary example of service is provided by Jesus, and is therefore essential. Meanwhile, some wrote that the removal of service helps to clarify the different roles of the Elder and Deacon. Many wrote of their concern for not including sacramental administration for Deacons arguing those who are ordained should administer. Finally, some were concerned about the inclusion of “Word” for Deacons which may confuse roles.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Peer Review

Just over half (55%, 461) of respondents agree with the recommendation for peer review. More than half of the Deacons (56%, 29), Laity (52%, 46) and Other (64%, 33) agree that the recommendation will strengthen the connection but only 43% (142) of Elders and 39% (105) of Local pastors agree. The lowest group mean agreement rating is 11.61 (less than neutral) from Elders and the greatest group mean is 13.52 rating from Other. Laity group mean (12.64) is greater than any current ministry relationship.

This recommendation received comments from 31% (311) of respondents. Most who wrote a comment did not see peer review as a growth opportunity for their ministry. Instead, respondents expressed deep seated fear surrounding another layer of review. At the same time, others called for a stronger method of review for removing ineffective clergy and did not see the peer review as useful for that purpose. Legislating or mandating “peer review” also appeared troublesome for some who would prefer the peer review to be voluntary or optional.

SUMMARY

Overall, group mean agreement levels suggest agreement with Itinerant Elder classification (12.99) but less agreement with the Associate Elder (11.94) classification. Respondents do not agree with the Local Elder (11.56) classification or with the sacramental administration (11.73) by these classifications. Similarly, respondents

disagree with Recommendation two (11.28) for the Licensed Lay Pastor. Overall, respondents agree with Recommendation five (12.79), but although positive, are closer to neutral (12.38) on Recommendation six for removal of language of commissioning and service. Finally, overall respondents are precisely in the middle on recommendation seven (12.01) for peer review. The mid range average is due to the high number of respondents who rated neutral, rather than polarization of responses. It appears that respondents were simply unsure about this recommendation and what it would mean to them.

DISCUSSION

Many expressed concern about the value of their ministry suggested by each of the recommendations, particularly in the creation of elder classifications. Many times respondents charged that this classification reinforces a system in which Local Pastors are at the bottom and Itinerant Elders are at the top. At the same time, some argued the appropriateness of this hierarchy suggesting that the Elders who have more education and/or those who itinerate should be at the top of the pyramid.

Another very common theme throughout the survey was the great concern for the small, rural congregations. These congregations and the pastors who serve them are a large part of the United Methodist Church. The recommendations as proposed were viewed as injurious and perhaps fatal to these small churches. A concern that is most evident in the requirement for a full time elder. The financial cost to these churches and the anticipated decrease in frequency of communion is viewed as detrimental to the church and nearly impossible to implement.

Suggestions for increasing respondent openness to change in the ministry are discussed. Among them are providing additional information in relation to the key questions posed by respondents.

STUDY OF MINISTRY COMMISSION II: SURVEY FINDINGS

The Study of Ministry Commission (Commission) is charged, by the 2004 General Conference, to examine and explore the ministry of the United Methodist Church. The Commission's goal is to provoke discussion throughout the church to better understand the ministry and to advance the mission of the United Methodist Church. The Study of Ministry Commission will make a report to the 2008 General Conference on their findings and recommendations.

The Commission began meeting and made their first draft report available in 2005. Based on feedback to that report, the Commission continued to meet in 2006 and produced a second draft report titled "Minutes of Several Conversations." This document was posted to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry website on January 9, 2007. Seeking the wisdom, knowledge, and experience of the entire United Methodist Church, an online survey, "Study of Ministry Commission Survey 2" accompanied the draft report. The survey solicited feedback from the church about their level of agreement with the proposed recommendations.

A preliminary report based on 805 responses received through February 12, 2007 was presented to the Commission on February 22, 2007. The enormous response to the survey provided the commission with adequate information to begin revisions to their draft proposal. Therefore, the commission ceased data collection for that survey. The "Minutes of Several Conversations" and accompanying survey were taken off line on February 26, 2007 in preparation for the third draft of the Commissions recommendations.

Between February 12th and February 26th, another 217 persons responded to the survey¹. This paper presents the findings from all 1022 responses received between January 9, 2007 and February 26, 2007. The preliminary report primarily contained descriptive information regarding the level of agreement overall. A variety of improvements have been made in the reporting of the preliminary to the final document. This final report presents the agreement levels toward each recommendation overall, as well as agreement levels by conference relationship. Information about the respondent comments and concerns toward the recommendations are also provided.

¹ Over the 14 additional days between the preliminary analysis and close of data collection, 215 additional people completed the survey. With the addition of these respondents, the percentage of the respondents who are female increased from 28% of the total to 30% of the total. During that time period more African American and Native American persons completed the survey, increasing the racial diversity of the respondents. Finally, the largest percentage of respondents were Elder, during the 14 day period, more responses were received from conference relationships other than Elder.

DATA AND MEASURES

Instrument

A variety of profound changes to the ministry of the United Methodist Church were proposed in the Study of Ministry Commission's draft report "Minutes of Several Conversations." While the recommendations are specifically focused upon the ministry, the implications of the changes affect the entire United Methodist Church. Therefore, the perspective of a broad spectrum of people is required to understand the level of agreement and the array of potential implications of the proposals.

The survey was created to measure overall agreement with the recommendations and to obtain general feedback on the content of the recommendation which may include potential implications of the recommendation. Survey Monkey, an internet based survey administration and management tool was utilized. The survey consists of 56 items; eight demographic/biographic, 38 rating questions and 10 open ended essay questions. The rating questions are based on a 5 point Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)² with a middle rate of Neutral (3). Each survey section corresponds to one of the seven recommendations³ in the Commission's draft report. Respondents rate each of the recommendations on four questions: First, their level of agreement with the recommendation followed by whether the recommendation:

- Provides clarification of sacramental authority
- Further complicates the roles of ministry
- Will strengthen the connection

Each section ends with an invitation to write in any additional comments or concerns related to that recommendation. The text of each recommendation is presented separately for each question in the results and the text for all seven recommendation as presented in Appendix A.

To obtain responses from a wide array of the ministry, access to the survey was provided through a link on the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's (GBHEM) website (www.gbhem.org). Potential respondents were notified through a variety of communication channels about the Commission's report and the accompanying survey. Email notices were sent to Bishops, Board of Ordained Ministry Chairs and Registrars, Board of Ordained Staff Network, Chairs of Orders, Chairs of Fellowships of Local Pastors and to District Superintendents. The GBHEM e-newsletter was sent to Board members and Bishops (active and retired). The notices also encouraged sharing information about the report and survey widely. Although this is an effective method for reaching a broad spectrum of United Methodists, it does not allow for identification of

² The response choices are: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. Inadvertently, during the first days of the online survey, the scale ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Disagree which was immediately corrected. It is unlikely to have seriously affected the findings as only 15 respondents had completed the survey before the correction. Further, although the extreme was mislabeled the direction of the scale was clear.

³ Initially, the survey measured agreement with the first five recommendations. The final two proposed recommendations were added on January 10th; 18 participants did not have the opportunity to respond to those two recommendations.

the population response base. Therefore, response rates cannot be calculated as the number of persons who received the survey is unknown.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Simple descriptive statistics are calculated for each recommendation (Appendix B coding information). Frequencies are used to illustrate the diversity in the level of agreement for each recommendation. Agreement was measured on a five point scale and the midpoint is three, neutral. A neutral rating is difficult to interpret. Respondents may neither agree nor disagree to select neutral. They may not have an opinion and select neutral, or some who “don’t know” may select neutral.

The mean is also presented for all agreement level items. The mean takes into account all responses and provides a simple summary or average of the responses to that recommendation. Generally, a mean rating above three (Neutral) indicates that respondents, on average, agree with the statement to some extent. On the other hand, a mean below three indicates, on average, respondents disagree with the statement. A mean rating of three may indicate that more respondents rated neutral or, the Neutral mean could indicate polarity of response. In other words, similar percentages agreed as disagreed which pulls the mean toward the center, neutral. These differences can be observed in the frequency distributions.

Finally, a summary mean is computed for each recommendation is presented. This value is calculated based on the rating values for all four measures of agreement for the recommendation (general agreement, clarifies sacramental authority, complicate roles of ministry and strengthen the connection). The values for complicate roles of ministry are reverse coded for that summary mean.

Responder fatigue may account for the greater number of missing responses toward the end of the survey as this survey was quite long. Since the demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey, many respondents did not complete these final questions (Appendix C for information on missing cases). All analyses are based on valid cases, and for presentation, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Qualitative

Following the agreement rating items, respondents were provided an opportunity to write about any comments or concerns regarding the recommendation. Four comments fields were provided for the first recommendation (one after of the three elder classifications and one for sacramental administration of those elders). One comment field was provided for each of the following recommendations for a total of ten open ended questions. The majority of the respondents did not respond to these open ended questions. For each recommendation between one quarter and one third of the respondents provided comments. The fewest comments were written for

recommendation six (19%, 192) and the greatest number of comments were written in response to recommendation four (43%, 438).

Generally, respondents were more likely to provide a comment about things they disagree with, or are concerned about, than they are to write a comment expressing agreement. Respondents who feel strongly about an issue may take the time to write a comment. Further, the invitation was to write about comments or *concerns* thereby directly requesting written concerns rather than affirmations. For these reasons, information about the portions of the recommendation that respondents support is limited. Further, the concerns written reflect a sub population of those who completed the survey as well as a sub population of even those who disagree with the recommendation.

While each recommendation is presented separately in the survey, respondents had benefit of reading the “Minutes of Several Conversations” entirely prior to completion of the survey. For this reason, respondents did not always contain their responses to the particulars of the specific recommendation in their written comments or concerns. Sometimes, comments were in response to another aspect of the document they felt was important.

The open ended comments were printed out by recommendation and mined for themes. The purpose of the Commission was to provoke conversation, therefore, some concerns, ideas or suggestions presented many not have formed a specific theme but provided valuable information for the Commission’s work. Quotes are made directly from respondent surveys; spelling but not grammatical corrections were made to the text.

Sample

Achieving the goal to survey a diverse population of people across the United Methodist Church (UMC) was fairly successful. Surveys were completed by 1,020 people⁴ between January 9, 2007 to February 26, 2007. Responses were received from all jurisdictions, the fewest from the Western jurisdiction (36, 5%) and the greatest number in the Southeastern (34%, 255). The North Central jurisdiction is 27% (200) of responses, South Central 18% (132) and North Eastern 16% (121). This is generally consistent with the membership of the United Methodist Church. Using the most recently available data, Table 1, illustrates the lower United Methodist church membership and clergy membership in the Western Jurisdiction and the greater percentages in the Southeastern jurisdiction. Fewer survey respondents in the Western and greater in the Southeastern jurisdictions may be expected.

⁴ The survey was opened 1025 times. Four times the survey was viewed but no responses were given to any questions. A fifth time one question was written in one comment field; presumably this person completed the survey earlier, and after reflection decided to add a comment. The comment is included in the analysis. The five non response surveys are excluded from the total survey completion rates.

Table 1. Percentage of Total Membership by Jurisdiction: 2005

	Full Church Membership	Annual Conference Clergy Membership
North Central	18% (1,483,101)	23% (10,192)
Northeastern	18% (1,454,410)	19% (8,776)
South Central	22% (1,792,695)	18% (8,297)
Southeastern	36% (2,934,497)	32% (14,250)
Western	5% (405,208)	8% (3,633)
TOTAL	100% (8,069,914)	100% (45,148)

*Source: GCFA: 2005 Recapitulation Tables 1 and 4

Most respondents who answered were male (70%, 593), but a large percentage were female 30% (257). Respondents were quite diverse in age ranging from 20 to 92 years old. This means that the perspectives of those new to ministry as well as those with vast life experience are represented from multiple generations. In 2005, less than 5% of clergy (elders, deacons and local pastors) were under age 35 (Weems 2006). Not unexpectedly, the mean (average) age of survey respondents is 51.99 (Std. 11.17). Similarly, considering the little racial diversity (GCFA 2005) of the United Methodist Church, it is no surprise that the majority of the respondents to the survey were White or Caucasian (93%, 759). Only 3% (21) were African American or Black and 1% (9) Latino or Hispanic⁵, 1% (10) Native American, 1% (9) Multi racial and 1% (7) Asian or another race.

Nearly 40% (337) who responded identified as an Elder and 36% (303) as a Local Pastor. Almost 7% (56) are Deacons, 11% (97) laity and 7% (58) Other. The Other group includes those in any additional form of ministry, the retired, and those that are at some point in process toward ordination and full conference membership; hereafter referred to as Other. Unfortunately, 169 (17%) did not provide their conference relationship.

⁵ A few people refused to answer the question of race/ethnicity and many simply skipped the question (20% 205). One person commented that this question "should never be asked" and another queried "if we are all inclusive why should this matter." It is precisely because the United Methodist Church strives to be inclusive that this question is essential. The vast majority of the respondents are White or Caucasian meaning that responses do not reflect well the thoughts and ideas of African American/Black or Latino/Hispanic United Methodists or any other racial/ethnic group. The survey simply represents the thoughts and feedback of White/Caucasian United Methodists. Understanding whether there are differences in the acceptability of a particular recommendation by different groups is important to insure that the United Methodist Church is taking the interests of all members into account, not just the White/Caucasian majority.

As expected, 98% (272) of the Local Pastors are appointed to the local church. The majority of the Elders (74%, 226) are appointed to the local church but more than one third of the Deacon's are appointed *beyond* the local church (37%, 19) and 63% (32) are in the local church. All Deacons who responded had a current appointment, while 9% (26) of the Elders and just less than 1% (2) of the Local Pastors did not have a current appointment.

Half (50%, 48) of the laity who responded are male and half (50%, 48) are female (48). Local Pastors (76%, 229) and Elders (78%, 261), however, are predominately male. Just more than one third of the Deacons are male (36%, 20), 64% (34) are female. Very similar percentages of female (81%, 135) compared to male (84%, 392) clergy are appointed in the local church.

RESULTS

Recommendation 1

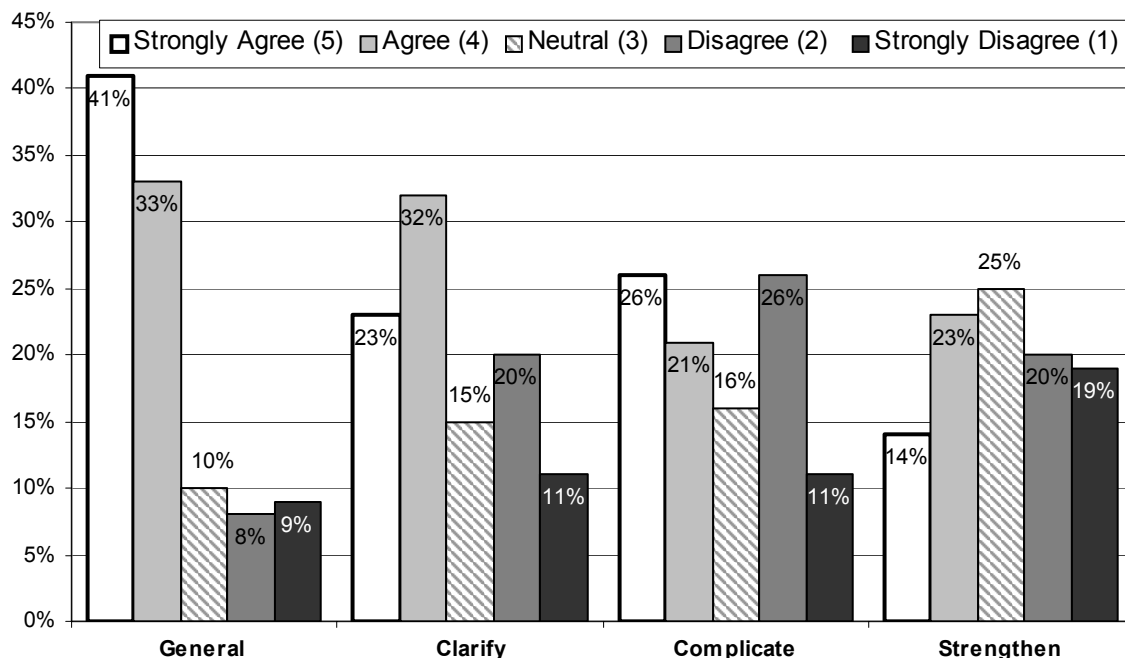
In the first recommendation, the Commission proposed “three classifications of elder in the UMC in distinct relationship with the annual conference.” Respondent agreement with each of the three classifications (Itinerant, Associate and Local) was measured separately.

Itinerant Elder

“Itinerant elders in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop and shall be faithful to the lifetime covenant of the order of elders. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed to places of ministry. They shall complete the probationary process as specified in ¶¶324-327, 335-336 in order to become members in full connection of the annual conference. They shall be held to the standards of responsibility, personal and professional growth, and mutual accountability specified in ¶¶333, 334, 350, and 351. Itinerant elders shall constitute the order of elders in an annual conference, and together with deacons, they shall have vote on all matters that come before the annual conference.”

The majority (74%, 739) of respondents agrees, or strongly agrees, with the creation of the Itinerant Elder classification (Figure 1). More than half (54%, 471) of the respondents believe the classification further clarifies sacramental authority. On the other hand, just under half agrees or strongly agrees (47%, 410) that this classification will further complicate the roles of ministry but at the same time, 37% (321) disagree meaning they do not see the recommendation as confusing ministry roles.

Figure1. Itinerant Elder Classification: Agreement Rating



Mean	3.89	3.35	3.25	2.95
Std.	1.26	1.31	1.37	1.31
N	999	868	872	860

Few agree (37%, 432) that this classification will strengthen the connection. A greater percentage disagrees with this statement than disagrees with any of the other statements regarding the itinerant elder classification. The greatest percentage of respondents rated this statement Neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. In fact, the mean rating is 2.95, the lowest mean of the statements regarding the Itinerant Elder classification.

Respondents agree with the general concept of the Itinerant Elder classification, but believe that it will do little to strengthen the connection and will complicate ministry roles. Interesting agreement differences emerge when examining the agreement level by respondent’s conference relationship. For presentation, ratings were collapsed to three levels Agree/Strongly Agree, Neutral, and Disagree/Strongly Disagree for presentation.

The majority of respondents within each conference relationship group agreed with the creation of the itinerant elder classification generally (Table 2). Deacons were more likely to agree than any other group. Local Pastors, however, disagree more often than any other group; only two thirds of the local pastors agree compared to 86% (47) of Deacons who agree.

Table 2. Itinerant Elder Classification rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	77% (258)	86% (47)	66% (193)	79% (46)	75% (73)
Neutral	7% (22)	4% (2)	13% (39)	10% (6)	7% (7)
Disagree	16% (54)	11% (6)	21% (60)	10% (6)	18% (17)
Total	100% (334)	100% (55)	100% (292)	100% (58)	100% (58)

The disparity in agreement between groups on the question of clarification of sacramental authority is interesting (Table 3). The “Other” group agrees (74%, 39) that this recommendation clarifies sacramental authority more often than other respondents. Meanwhile, local pastors are more likely to disagree (37%, 102) than others. Deacons and the laity are almost evenly split between agree and disagree on clarification of sacramental authority.

Table 3. Itinerant Elder:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	63% (204)	48% (26)	43% (117)	43% (138)	34% (18)	56% (150)	45% (143)	35% (19)	27% (72)
Neutral	9% (30)	20% (11)	20% (55)	14% (46)	30% (16)	15% (40)	22% (72)	35% (19)	24% (65)
Disagree	28% (89)	32% (17)	37% (102)	43% (136)	36% (19)	30% (80)	33% (106)	30% (16)	49% (125)
Total	100% (323)	100% (54)	100% (274)	100% (320)	100% (53)	100% (270)	100% (321)	100% (54)	100% (266)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	74% (39)	50% (45)	32% (18)	45% (41)	45% (23)	39% (36)
Neutral	8% (4)	20% (18)	18% (10)	22% (20)	29% (15)	27% (25)
Disagree	19% (10)	30% (27)	50% (28)	33% (30)	26% (13)	34% (31)
Total	100% (53)	100% (90)	100% (56)	100% (790)	100% (51)	100% (92)

The complexity of this recommendation is illustrated in the agreement levels on whether this classification complicates the roles of ministry. Approximately one third of Deacons believe that it complicates, while a third believe it does not complicate, and the other third are in the middle (neutral). Fewer elders are in the middle, but equal percentages agree as disagree. Local pastors are most likely to agree that it complicates roles and less likely to disagree that the recommendation complicates roles. The Other's ratings are more positive than Elder's, Deacons, Local Pastor's or even the laity ratings. Half of the Other group does not think (disagrees) that this recommendation further complicates the roles of ministry.

Few see this recommendation as strengthening the connection. Nearly half of Local pastors disagree that it will strengthen the connection. Deacons are less convinced than other group that the recommendation will strengthen the connection; the majority (65%, 35) rate neutral or disagree.

Summary Measure: Itinerant Elder

Presented in Table 4 are the mean values of responses for each conference relationship and each of the four recommendation items. The 4 Item group mean represents the overall agreement level for the recommendation taking into account the rates on all four items⁶.

Generally, respondents agree (3.89) with the itinerant elder classification. Agreement is highest from Other lowest from local pastors. Consistently, the lowest rate was for whether the recommendation will strengthen the connection and Local Pastors (2.62) rated lowest of all. The group mean slightly greater than Neutral (12.99). The least favorable mean is from Local Pastors (11.70) and highest from Other (14.43). There is some support for the itinerant elder classification.

⁶ Mean ranges from 1, Strongly Disagree to 5, Strongly Agree. The last column is the mean when all items are added ranging from 4 (Strongly Disagree) to 20 (Strongly Agree). The 4 Item mean is calculated for those who answer all four of the measurement items (N).

Table 4. Itinerant Elder: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

		General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Item⁷
Elder	M	4.03	3.61	3.11	3.16	13.69
	StD	(1.33)	(1.35)	(1.40)	(1.35)	(4.44)
	N	334	323	320	321	310
Deacon	M	4.15	3.26	3.00	3.00	13.42
	StD	(.99)	(1.35)	(1.16)	(1.13)	(3.63)
	N	55	54	53	54	52
Local Pastor	M	3.60	3.01	3.50	2.62	11.7
	StD	(1.25)	(1.24)	(1.40)	(1.27)	(4.17)
	N	292	274	270	266	247
Other	M	4.19	3.81	2.91	3.25	14.43
	StD	(1.15)	(1.14)	(1.28)	(1.29)	(3.86)
	N	58	53	56	51	51
Laity	M	3.91	3.28	3.20	3.01	13.05
	StD	(1.28)	(1.28)	(1.26)	(1.24)	(4.31)
	N	97	90	91	92	88
TOTAL	M	3.88	3.35	3.23	2.96	12.99
	StD	(1.28)	(1.32)	(1.37)	(1.31)	(4.31)
	N	836	794	790	784	748

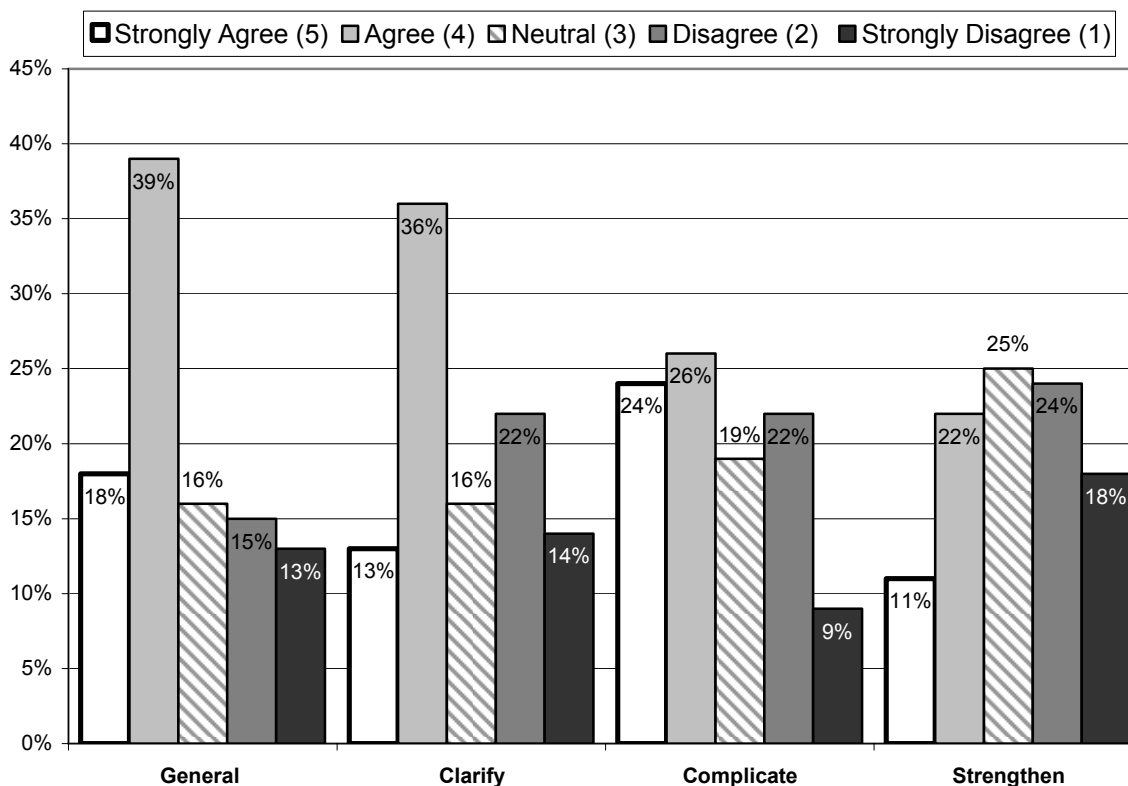
Associate Elder

“Associate elders in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop and are available to serve as appointed. They shall be appointed only to full-time ministry as pastors-in-charge and shall be faithful to the duties and responsibilities of ministry in the place to which they are appointed. Associate elders must meet the requirements of associate membership in the annual conference as specified in ¶¶321 and 322 as well as the standards of personal and professional growth specified in ¶¶350 and 351. All persons currently serving as associate members of an annual conference shall be ordained as associate elders. Their relationship to the annual conference continues to be governed by ¶321.”

Respondent’s agreement with the Associate Elder classification was much lower than that for the Itinerant Elder. Little more than half (57%, 510) agreed or strongly agreed with the classification generally. Less than half, 416 (49%) thought this classification clarified sacramental authority and 51% (432) believe it will complicate roles of ministry. Under one third (32%, 273) think it will strengthen the connection. The mean rating across all four measures is just slightly greater than neutral. Respondents were not overwhelmingly in favor of this classification and neither were they overwhelmingly disfavoring the classification; only 28% disagree or strongly disagreed with the classification.

⁷ Of the 1020 respondents, 819 answered all items but only 748 also provided their conference relationship. Twelve did not answer any of the Itinerant Elder items. Between one and three items were answered by 189 and 103 of those provided their conference relationship. Over half of those who did not answer all four questions were local pastors and one fourth Elders.

Figure 2. Associate Elder Classification: Agreement Rating



Mean	3.35	3.12	3.36	2.82
Std.	1.28	1.27	1.29	1.26
N	902	855	855	844

Nearly one third (32%, 109) of the Elders disagree with this classification (Table 5) but less than one quarter of each of the other groups disagree. In fact, the majority (69%, 40) of Other agree with the creation of the Associate Elder classification.

Table 5. Associate Elder Classification rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	55% (185)	60% (33)	57% (168)	69% (40)	55% (51)
Neutral	13% (42)	18% (10)	20% (58)	10% (6)	22% (20)
Disagree	32% (109)	22% (12)	23% (68)	21% (12)	24% (22)
Total	100% (336)	100% (55)	100% (294)	100% (58)	100% (93)

Half of the Deacons (50%, 27) disagree with the statement that this recommendation provides clarification of sacramental authority, a much greater

percentage than of any other group (Table 6). Around one third of each of the other four groups disagree with this statement. Interestingly, nearly opposite agreement patterns are observed between Elders and Deacons. Over one third of Deacons (37%, 20) agree and half disagree (50%, 27) while the opposite is true of Elders, one half agree (52%, 169) while over one third disagree (35%, 113).

Table 6. Associate Elder:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	52% (169)	37% (20)	46% (127)	52% (168)	48% (26)	54% (150)	35% (113)	32% (17)	27% (73)
Neutral	14% (45)	13% (7)	17% (46)	16% (52)	19% (10)	18% (49)	24% (77)	34% (18)	24% (64)
Disagree	35% (113)	50% (27)	38% (105)	32% (104)	33% (18)	28% (79)	42% (137)	34% (18)	49% (132)
Total	100% (327)	100% (54)	100% (278)	100% (324)	100% (54)	100% (278)	100% (327)	100% (53)	100% (269)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	65% (35)	45% (40)	30% (16)	51% (45)	43% (23)	33% (29)
Neutral	7% (4)	23% (20)	26% (14)	26% (23)	25% (13)	33% (19)
Disagree	28% (15)	33% (29)	43% (23)	24% (21)	35% (31)	32% (17)
Total	100% (54)	100% (89)	100% (53)	100% (89)	100% (89)	100% (53)

About half of all respondents currently in ministry believe that this recommendation further complicates roles of ministry. Only 30% (16) of the Other group, however, agree that this classification further complicates. The Other group also agrees that the Associate Elder classification strengthens the connection more often than does any other relationship. Almost half of the Local pastors disagree that the recommendation will strengthen the connection. Again, deacons are fairly split, but a large percentage of Other agree that the recommendation will strengthen the connection.

Summary Measure: Associate Elder

Agreement with classification overall is low, the mean is 3.35 which is positive but only slightly above neutral (Table 7). The 4 item mean is less than neutral at 11.93. As expected, the four item mean is greatest for Other (13.16) than for any other respondents. The next highest is the Deacons (12.19), but is only slightly more than

neutral. This recommendation for creation of an Associate Elder classification is not widely agreed on.

Table 7. Associate Elder: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

		General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Item⁸
Elder	M	3.24	3.20	3.35	2.85	11.96
	StD	(1.37)	(1.32)	(1.34)	(1.28)	(4.69)
	N	336	327	324	327	317
Deacon		3.53	2.87	3.20	2.98	12.19
		(1.05)	(1.24)	(1.28)	(1.07)	(3.81)
		55	54	54	53	53
Local Pastor		3.42	3.04	3.44	2.67	11.60
		(1.24)	(1.26)	(1.28)	(1.30)	(4.25)
		294	278	278	269	259
Other		3.59	3.41	3.02	3.11	13.16
		(1.14)	(1.21)	(1.20)	(1.15)	(3.71)
		58	54	53	53	51
Laity		3.35	3.11	3.40	2.94	12.01
		(1.20)	(1.16)	(1.18)	(1.21)	(3.92)
		93	89	89	89	87
TOTAL		3.36	3.13	3.36	2.83	11.94
		(1.27)	(1.27)	(1.29)	(1.25)	(4.35)
		836	802	798	791	767

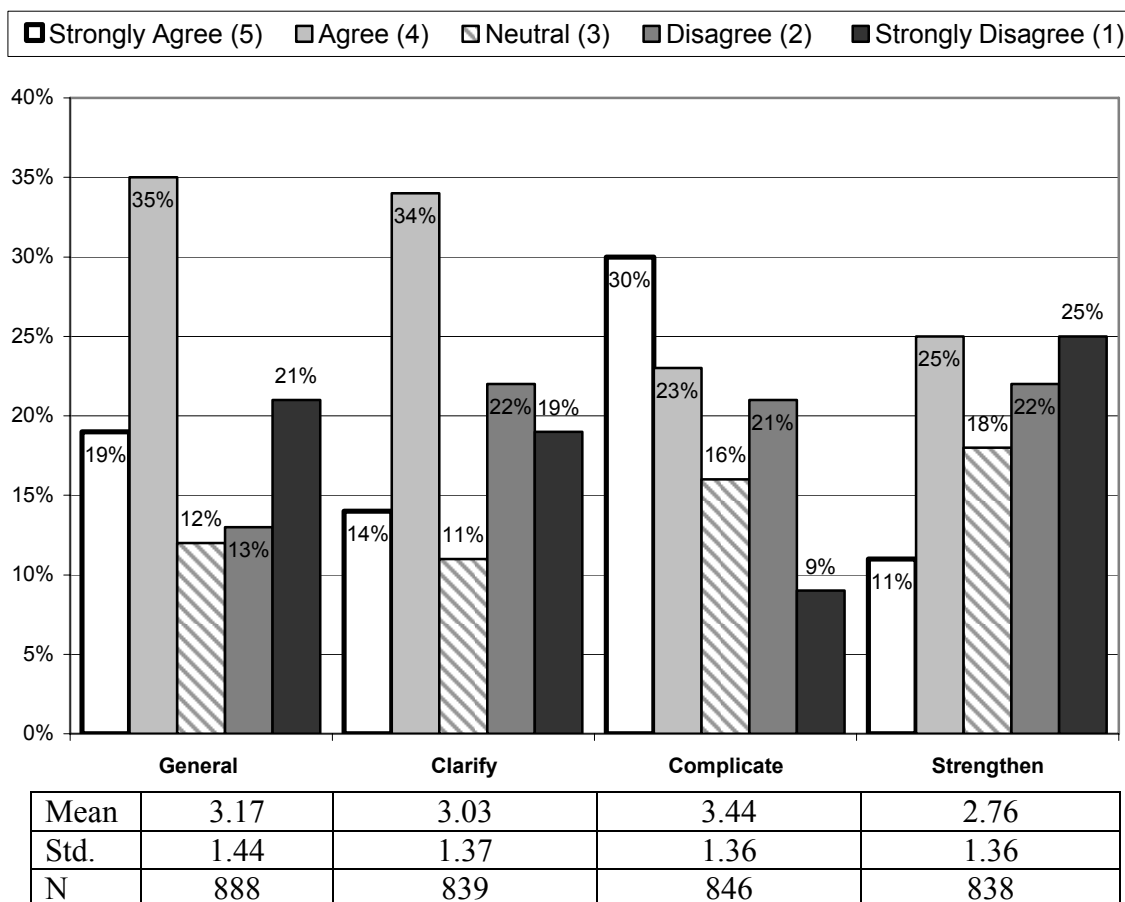
Local Elder

“Local elders in good standing may receive an appointment for one year at the discretion of the bishop and cabinet. They shall be appointed only to full-time ministry as pastors-in-charge and shall be faithful to the duties and responsibilities of ministry in the place to which they are appointed. Local elders are elders who: (1) have completed the 5-year Course of Study for local pastors as well as the requirements of ¶324.1-2, 7-14, and have been ordained as local elder, or (2) previously served as itinerant elders but now desire to be appointed to a local ministry and have resigned from the covenant of itineracy. Local elders are expected to continue their education through Advanced Course of Study, basic graduate theological studies, or other means that fulfill the requirements of ¶¶350 and 351. Their relationship to the annual conference continues to be governed by ¶316.”

Similar to the Associate Elder, just under half (53%, 477) of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the creation of the Local Elder classification (Figure 3). Just under half (48%, 407) believe it will clarify sacramental authority, and the mean is neutral. Half (53%, 452) agree that this recommendation will complicate roles of ministry and the mean (3.44) is toward agreement. Almost half (47%, 392) disagree that the Local Elder classification will strengthen the connection; the mean is less than neutral. In other words, half agree with all aspects while the other half are neutral or disagree.

⁸ Of the 1020 respondents, 818 answered all four of the Associate Elder items. Of those, 767 also provided conference relationship.

Figure 3. Local Elder Classification: Agreement Rating



By conference relationship Table 8 illustrates that, overall half or more agree with the Local Elder classification. And, the majority of Other agree. Although local pastors less often agree with this classification than the other groups, there are many who do agree; 50% (30) of Local Pastors agree with this classification.

Table 8. Local Elder Classification rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	53% (179)	55% (30)	50% (148)	71% (41)	60% (55)
Neutral	13% (44)	16% (9)	9% (27)	7% (4)	13% (12)
Disagree	34% (113)	29% (16)	41% (121)	22% (13)	27% (25)
Total	100% (336)	100% (55)	100% (296)	100% (58)	100% (92)

Deacons (41%) and Laity (41%) less often agree than other respondents that the Local Elder classification will clarify sacramental authority (Table 9). And, Deacons (46%) and Local Pastors (46%) more often disagree than other respondents. On the other hand, over half of Elders (52%) and the majority of Other (69%) believe that it does clarify sacramental authority.

Table 9. Local Elder:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	52% (172)	41% (22)	44% (120)	50% (162)	47% (25)	61% (170)	39% (126)	37% (20)	30% (82)
Neutral	9% (29)	13% (7)	11% (30)	15% (50)	19% (10)	13% (36)	20% (64)	20% (11)	13% (34)
Disagree	39% (127)	46% (25)	46% (125)	35% (112)	34% (18)	27% (75)	42% (137)	43% (23)	58% (157)
Total	100% (328)	100% (54)	100% (275)	100% (324)	100% (53)	100% (281)	100% (327)	100% (54)	100% (273)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	69% (38)	41% (36)	53% (48)	35% (19)	51% (27)	34% (30)
Neutral	6% (3)	17% (15)	20% (11)	21% (19)	13% (7)	27% (24)
Disagree	26% (14)	41% (36)	26% (23)	44% (24)	36% (19)	39% (35)
Total	100% (87)	100% (55)	100% (90)	100% (50)	100% (53)	100% (89)

Local Pastors (61%, 170) certainly agree that the Local Elder classification will further complicate the roles of ministry; less than one third disagreed. Laity are divided on this question. As was true for the other two classifications, respondents did not believe this classification would serve to strengthen the connection.

Summary Measure: Local Elder

Taken as a whole, Local Pastors were the least supportive of the recommendation for the creation of a Local Elder (Table 10). The four item mean for local pastors is 10.96, or just slightly better than disagree. All other groups were closer to neutral than to disagree but were on the negative side of neutral. There is little overall agreement with this classification of local elder.

Table 10. Local Elder: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

	General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items⁹
Elder	3.20 (1.44) 336	3.14 (1.40) 328	3.35 (1.38) 324	2.87 (1.35) 327	11.86 (4.99) 310
Deacon	3.22 (1.37) 55	2.91 (1.25) 54	3.21 (1.21) 53	2.87 (1.21) 54	11.71 4.34 52
Local Pastor	3.01 (1.50) 296	2.87 (1.39) 275	3.62 (1.38) 281	2.50 (1.41) 273	10.70 4.96 246
Other	3.66 (1.28) 58	3.53 (1.32) 55	2.93 (1.29) 54	3.21 (1.21) 53	13.45 4.14 51
Laity	3.37 (1.32) 92	2.92 (1.19) 87	3.40 (1.24) 90	2.92 (1.22) 89	11.71 4.35 86
TOTAL	3.18 (1.44) 837	3.04 (1.37) 799	3.41 (1.36) 802	2.77 (1.35) 796	11.56 (4.86) 745

Administration of the Sacraments

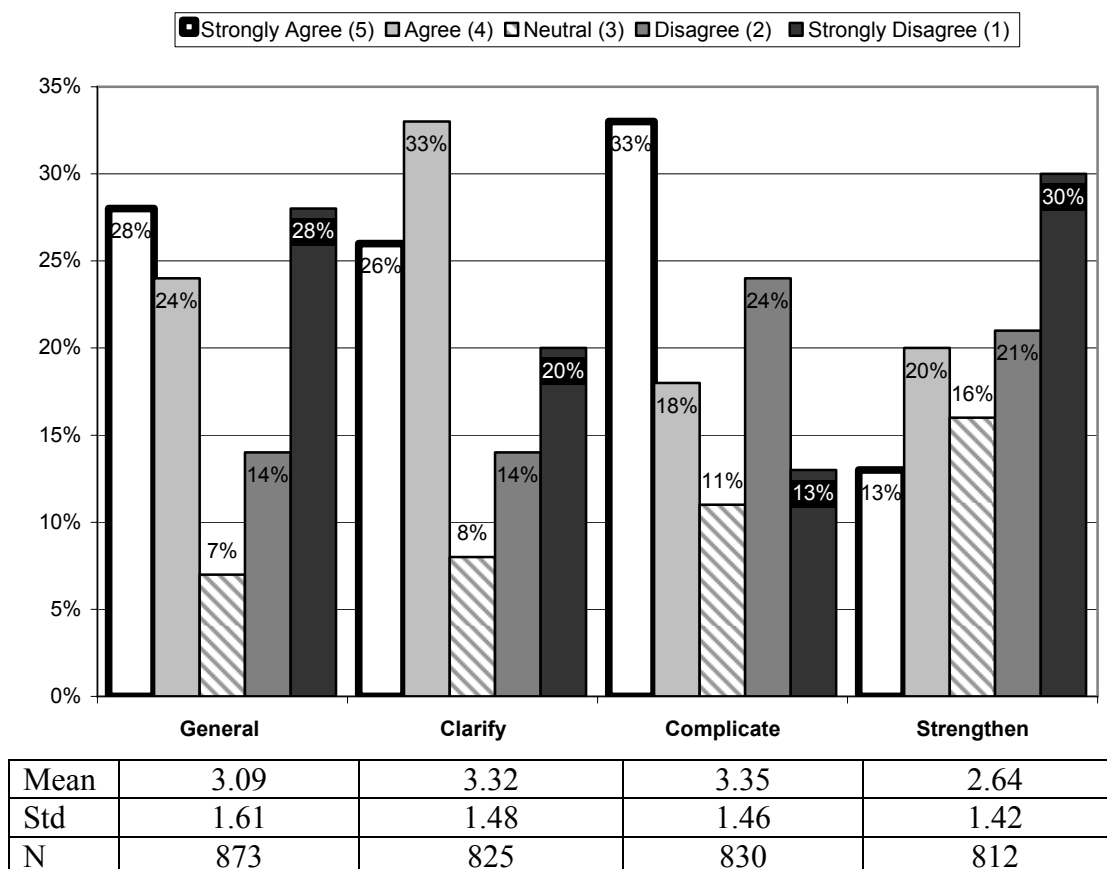
The final portion of Recommendation One addresses administration of the sacraments by these new elder classifications.

“Elders-itinerant, associate, and local-alone are authorized by the community of faith through election by the clergy session of the annual conference and ordination and appointment by the bishop to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Associate and local elders may administer the sacraments only in the charge to which they are appointed.”

Responses to this portion of the recommendation are interesting (Figure 4). Equal percentages strongly disagree (28%, 240) with this recommendation as strongly agree (28%, 240) indicating that feelings on this recommendation run high and are polarized. Very few (7%, 59) people are neutral or in the middle on this recommendation, most have an opinion one way of the other. One-third (33%, 274) did not think this recommendation provided clarification of sacramental authority. Since this recommendation addresses administration of the sacraments, it is encouraging that the majority (59%, 484) thought it clarified the issue. At the same time, more than half (51%, 428) thought this recommendation complicates roles of ministry and more than half do not agree that it will strengthen the connection. So, while general agreement is polarized, there is little agreement in favor of this recommendation. Because of the polarization, the mean for agreement on sacramental authority in recommendation one is neutral, 3.09.

⁹ Of the 1020 respondents, 811 responded to all four Local Elder items. Of those 745 also provided their conference relationship.

Figure 4. Sacrament Administration: Agreement Rating



The polarization becomes clearer when examining agreement with the recommendation by conference relationship (Table 11). The majority of Elders agree (72%, 237) while the majority of Local pastors disagree (64%, 188). Again, Deacons are evenly split between agree (47%, 26) and disagree (46%, 25). There is no consensus among the laity on this recommendation either. But, the majority of the Other are in agreement (73%, 40). Since no provision for Local Pastor’s administration of sacraments is offered in recommendation one, their disagreement with the recommendation is not surprising and the Other groups level of agreement is consistent with their general agreement with the recommendations.

Table 11. Sacramental Administration rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	72% (237)	47% (26)	30% (88)	73% (40)	44% (41)
Neutral	6% (20)	7% (4)	6% (17)	6% (3)	9% (8)
Disagree	22% (74)	46% (25)	64% (188)	22% (12)	48% (45)
Total	100% (331)	100% (55)	100% (293)	100% (55)	100% (94)

Agreement with the statement that the recommendation clarifies sacramental authority also illustrates the vast differences of opinion between Elders and Local Pastors (Table 12). Half of local pastors disagree (50%, 135) while the majority of elders agree (71%, 231). The majority of Local pastors believe this recommendation will complicate roles of ministry. Elders are not quite as sure; just under half disagree (47%, 150), over a third agree (39%, 125) and, a large percent (14%, 43) are in the middle (neutral). A fairly high percentage (19-20%) of elders and deacons rated neutral on this item, they don't have an opinion either way whether this recommendation will strengthen the connection. Local Pastors, on the other hand, are not ambiguous. The majority (74%, 195) disagrees; Local Pastors do not believe the recommendation will strengthen the connection.

Table 12. Sacramental Administration:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	71% (231)	60% (31)	40% (108)	39% (125)	44% (24)	69% (191)	43% (139)	35% (18)	18% (48)
Neutral	7% (23)	6% (3)	10% (27)	14% (43)	20% (11)	8% (23)	20% (64)	19% (10)	8% (22)
Disagree	22% (71)	35% (18)	50% (135)	47% (150)	35% (19)	23% (65)	37% (119)	46% (24)	74% (195)
Total	100% (325)	100% (52)	100% (270)	100% (318)	100% (54)	100% (279)	100% (322)	100% (52)	100% (265)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	76% (41)	57% (52)	33% (17)	54% (50)	47% (24)	27% (24)
Neutral	6% (3)	9% (8)	15% (8)	7% (6)	16% (8)	24% (21)
Disagree	19% (10)	35% (32)	52% (27)	39% (36)	37% (19)	49% (44)
Total	100% (54)	100% (92)	100% (52)	100% (92)	100% (89)	100% (51)

Summary Measure: Sacrament Administration

Both the overall mean and the group mean for the recommendation on sacrament administration is at or near neutral. The polarized agreement ratings from Deacons pull the mean toward the center on the 4-item mean, suggesting that the Deacons are in the middle or neutral (M 12.08). Overall, Elder's 4 item mean rating is agreement (13.61) with the sacramental administration recommendation. Those least in favor are Local pastors, the mean rating is 9.09 (the lowest possible rating is 4). There is no doubt that local pastors disagree with this recommendation. On the other hand, Elders and Other are in agreement with the recommendation but laity and Deacons are neutral.

Table 13. Sacramental Administration: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

	General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items¹⁰
Elder	M 3.81 (1.43) 331	M 3.74 (1.38) 325	M 2.99 (1.43) 318	M 3.07 (1.39) 332	M 13.61 (5.02) 312
Deacon	M 2.96 (1.56) 55	M 3.34 (1.44) 52	M 3.19 (1.36) 54	M 2.79 (1.24) 52	M 12.08 (4.93) 52
Local Pastor	M 2.32 (1.46) 293	M 2.71 (1.45) 270	M 3.87 (1.40) 279	M 2.01 (1.30) 265	M 9.09 (4.69) 257
Other	M 3.76 (1.39) 55	M 3.83 (1.31) 54	M 2.77 (1.28) 52	M 3.16 (1.41) 51	M 14.02 (4.50) 51
Laity	M 2.82 (1.59) 94	M 3.28 (1.45) 92	M 3.35 (1.46) 92	M 2.56 (1.36) 89	M 11.23 (5.09) 89
TOTAL	M 3.11 (1.61) 828	M 3.32 (1.48) 793	M 3.34 (1.46) 795	M 2.64 (1.42) 779	M 11.73 (5.28) 761

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 1

While the opportunity to write in a comment or concern was offered after each of the three classifications, of necessity respondents often commented on more than one of the classifications, making comparisons between, or questioning the relationship between classifications.

Itinerant Elder Classification

Over one quarter of respondents (27%, 273) wrote a comment in relation to the recommendation for an itinerant elder classification. More than half of the comments (53%, 137) were written by Elders. One quarter were written by local pastors (25%, 65), 5% (13) by Deacons, 8% (21) Laity, and 8% (21) Other.

The conflict between general agreement with the classification of itinerant elder and disagreement with the statements regarding the classification is apparent in the comments. Several argue that no real difference exists between the current system and the recommendation, therefore, the recommendation is not helpful. These respondents argued that this recommendation is a form of word play or word games with no substantial change. Others state the recommendation misses the real problem, “changing the name of our Order does not clarify anything, nor will it make a single step towards reversing our decades-old decline.” And similarly, “Changing, adding, subtracting the chairs on the

¹⁰ Of the 1020 respondents, 792 responded to all four Sacramental Administration items. Of those, 761 also provided their conference relationship.

titanic's deck does not impact the fact the ship is sinking." Another respondent strongly disagreed with all aspects of the recommendation charging "The definition is already implicit. Those who are wanting to change the present definition are the problem."

Some affirmed that itinerancy is important (historically, theologically) but, most comments did not address the appropriateness of itinerancy. Rather the effect of adding the word itinerancy to Elder caused concern. Some believed use of the word "itinerant" is problematic as it is meaningless outside of United Methodism or that it implies impermanence of ministry. A few took the opportunity to suggest an end to itinerancy or to highlight the problems inherent in itinerancy: "itinerancy will continue to deter young adults from participating in the office of ordained elder. It is part of our history that must be let go." While some thought "there should be some demarcation between those who agree to itinerate and those who refuse. This is a good way to deal with it" others wrote "Itinerate elders implies elders who do not itinerate which further weakens the itinerate system."

The most commonly cited concern for this classification is the predicted confusion as a result of the complexity of making three Elder classifications. For example, "talking about how complicated our ordination process is, and then proposing a further complexification of these rules is the very definition of what is wrong with us!" And another commented, "Only in the UMC can adding three additional classifications be seen as clarifying!" Some understood and supported the need for clarifying the roles, but remarked as did this person: "I fail to see how this new three-fold classification helps make things any clearer whatsoever. In fact, I think it further confuses the issue considerably." Commonly, respondents charged that classification adds unnecessary complexity to the ministry and will be confusing to laity or people in the pews.

Another common statement is that this classification system creates tiers, classes, elitism, division, supremacy and hierarchy. They argue that these negative outcomes will be harmful to the church and ministry: "This will further divide the clergy and promote favoritism in the conferences and discrimination." Another wrote: "This proposal confuses and divides, rather than connects these mutual workers in the ministry. All the levels of elder are doing essentially the same work and should be treated the same." One respondent charged:

"this recommendation (further) devalues and nullifies the equality of standing and full ministry of extension ministers, who serve Word, Sacrament, and Order in many places out in the 'real' world on behalf of the UMC...would make them local elders if I read this correctly, with much less voice in conference matters. Did not Wesley emphasize 'the world is my parish?'"

Several times respondents suggested that there are already divisions within the ministry. They argue that some ministers are not treated as real, worthy, or as equals. Some suggest that this classification system will devalue the Elder position. For example, "At a time when our 'doors' should be open, we confuse the world by telling them that not all pastors are equal in the sight of the UMC even though called by God." At the

same time, others argue that the creation of three levels will help to elevate the local pastor's position.

Concern was expressed regarding which of the three elder classifications have vote and particularly that the Itinerant Elder and Deacons have vote but not Licensed Local Pastors and Local elders. One respondent queried "why can't local pastors at least be able to vote on local pastor issues? Seems a little like taxation without representation doesn't it?" And finally,

"Itinerancy ultimately is used as the reason for not allowing Associates and Local Pastor's voice and vote for General Conference. Most Associate Members have been ordained as Deacons which seems to be ignored in the document. However, no change in voting status is recommended for Diaconal Deacons. How can non-itinerate Diaconal Deacons have full voice and vote while you continue to exclude Associate Members?"

Similar concerns are raised regarding the elder's conference relationship and the consequences of creating itinerant and non itinerant positions:

"It is unclear whether ordained itinerant elders are required to seek full membership status. Even if they are required, there is no penalty for not meeting the requirements within three years, since the itinerant elder will remain ordained and still be guaranteed an appointment. The only advantage to being a full member is that the person is eligible to be a presiding elder, a district superintendent, or a bishop, and they can vote on things like constitutional amendments. I don't see a lot of people wanting to put themselves through the probationary process for these advantages. We may end up with very few people who are full member itinerant elders."

Several approved of the availability of choices for elders inherent in this classification system. Some even argued for opening itinerancy to others in ministry: "It is unclear why itinerancy so understood need be linked to the Order of Elders and the MDIV." Others, however, argued that this classification system would result in fewer Elders who are willing to itinerate: "Why would anyone want to go through the expense of becoming an itinerant elder? ... In a more rural conference, where the pay scale is flat for elders/licensed local pastors anyway."

Throughout the survey respondents requested clarification and posed questions: the process by which someone becomes an Elder, whether elders may move between classification groups, and whether vote is maintained were of great concern to many. One comment that succinctly illustrates those concerns: "I'm not sure when 'ordination' takes place. Must one be ordained a 'local elder' first, before becoming an 'itinerant elder'? If so, is there a second ordination? What's the process of transitioning from 'local elder' to 'itinerant elder'?" Further, a wide variety of questions were posed regarding the movement process for every conceivable relationship or position in the ministry.

Many asked about the role and place of those in extension ministries: "may these itinerant elder be appointed to extension ministry as well as to local churches?" Similarly, many tried to figure out how they fit into the new classification. One

respondent wanted to know whether a commissioned seminary graduate becomes an associate, itinerant or a probationary itinerant elder. Another queried, “Where do ordained deacons who have completed the course of study and bachelors degree stand?” and another wrote “there still doesn’t seem to be a place for seminary-trained persons committed to full time ministry who are not able to fulfill the itineracy covenant.”

Similarly, the topic of educational requirements for the Itinerant Elder was a highly charged topic. Some argued this new classification system would result in fewer who are seminary trained: “Why go through seminary if you can become an elder through ‘easier’ means?” While others believe that becoming an Elder should require specific education: “Elder should be reserved to those with a theological degree, M.Div. only.” Still some commented that ordination and education must be separate.

Finally, the additional duties of Itinerant Elders to administer sacraments appeared to some to be over burdensome. The classification is viewed as placing additional demands (time, resources, money) on clergy: “They have a full plate as it is. Why ask them to travel to a parish where there is a local pastor who has already been giving the Sacraments? This will cause tension and possibly resentment among the Elders for having to go the extra mile.” Another respondent simply asked for clarification of these extra demands, will itinerant elders “have a church of their own in addition to traveling around administering the sacraments” and “how will itinerant elders be compensated?” Others wondered how the change would be put into practice. The historical and biblical basis for the changes was questioned: “Where is the Scriptural authority that prevents any baptized believer from administering the sacraments under certain circumstances?”

Associate Elder Classification

Fewer respondents (229, 23%) wrote a comment for this classification than to either the itinerant elder (27%, 273) or local elder (30%, 302) classifications. A larger percentage of the comments were written by the Other/In Process group (11%, 23) than made comments to the itinerant elder classification. Nearly half of the comments (45%, 98) were written by Elders, 32% (69) Local Pastors, 6% (12) by Deacons and 7% (16) by laity.

The comments illustrate the widespread confusion surrounding the purpose of the Associate Elder classification. One clear example is the statement: “I have no idea what an associate elder is?...offer more clarity here in the way of background information and I think you will strengthen the report and help the church.” The comments for this classification consisted of a plethora of questions about the details, roles, positions, and locations of the Associate Elder.

Respondents commonly argued that this classification is not necessary. Several see this classification as a restatement of a current classification: “we already have ‘associate member’ so I think it works great the way we are using them now.” Or, “This category already exists as with the Elders position and the Local Pastor's position. You are only changing the names. The functions stay the same.” Some argued that the

Associate should not be a separate group but simply recognized as another method for becoming an elder. For example, “Why not admit that this alternate path to ordination (COS + years of service + conference vote) is a legitimate way to become a full-fledged member of the Order of Elders and incorporate these persons into the category of itinerant elder?”

Some argue that this additional classification simply confuses matters “This category ought to not even be proposed. This is further and unneeded complication. It will be understood as well as 'commissioned' ministers are now.” Another argued that this classification is “semi ordination which only adds confusion.”

Often respondents argue that the only difference between classifications is in education. For example, “I think Itinerant Elder and Local elder are sufficient. Either there is an appropriate educational requirement for both or not. This will only serve to further confuse churches that do not get it.” As was true of the Itinerant Elder comments, some argue that educational level is less important than service, while others argue that education is critical. For example, “I support associate elders only because 1996 did away with associate deacons. Across the whole denomination we need a process that ends in ordination without requiring seminary education as we know it in this country.” And another similar comment : “Elevates Assoc member to a greater standing without commensurate preparation and examination. Only if Assoc members appear before Conf. Bds of Ord. Min. and answer the same questions as elders should this status be granted.”

Consistently, respondents requested clarification, and particularly, as this Associate Elder classification relates to the associate member ordained deacon. An abundance of questions and statements like the following are found: “What does this mean for a person ordained deacon and received into Associate membership in 1985?, ” or “Will Associate Members that have only been commissioned under 2004 Book of Discipline be able to go back and now be ordained.”

Where the Associate Elder is to minister also produced confusion: “I have questions about the 'pastor in charge' section. Surely this doesn't mean that this classification doesn't serve on staff at large churches!” Another wrote, “The term 'pastor-in-charge' is used -- does this indicate that if appointed as an 'associate pastor' or in other clergy position in a church/charge with more than one appointed position, the designation 'elder' and sacramental authority would be revoked until change of appointment?” Another queried whether “they are only ordained to that specific appointment?” And another indicated that limiting the Sacraments to the charge appointed would “prevent an Associate Elder from serving as Spiritual Director in Emmaus communities.” As one respondent articulated well:

“Y'all need to decide what the current status really is, and make it clear in the final paper what is different about the new proposal from the current status. Moreover, you've completely ignored the fact that many of the associate members we now have are deacons...the final paper must address what happens to the deacon's orders of the currently ordained associate members. Do they continue to be deacons and elders as are the elders we have who were first ordained deacons on the old two step process? And there doesn't seem to be

any clearly defensible reason that an associate elder shouldn't be permitted to serve as an associate pastor in a charge served by more than one pastor. If there is a reason, you didn't articulate it”

Many argued that this classification and educational level devalue Elders. The following extended comment highlights several of the common themes to this classification particularly the widespread concern of the relative value of each classification and an opposing view to the question of equal standing within the ministry:

“giving associate members who have only done Course of Study the same designation as elders who have invested in seminary study dilutes the value of the education and the arduous journey towards ordination and full membership as an elder. The reality is that associate members - local pastors - are not as thoroughly prepared to provide theological and pastoral leadership. If Methodism intends to continue to value education and preparation for ministry and intends to acknowledge that some persons are called and set aside for apostolic ministry, then the role and the identity of elder needs to be enhanced and solidified - not diluted. I realize this flies in the face of the movement for all clergy to be considered 'equals.' The reality is that all clergy are not equal - and to devalue the elder office means that even fewer young people will invest the time and money to prepare for ministry by attending seminary. The end result will be a cadre of clergy whose educational level drops dramatically and who have not developed high level skills of theological reflection and biblical interpretation. We can observe what happens to church movements that do not have high standards for ordination - the churches follow the ideology of the leader - and if the leader is poorly educated - then it is usually a self-determined ideology rather than a God-directed ideology.”

Many pointed out that this classification allows some to locate or be non itinerate: “Seems like a loophole for elders who don't want to itinerate” and, “this seems to be creating a ‘non-itinerant elder’ classification without specifically saying it.” As expected, some rejoiced while others expressed concern “Can people who attend seminary choose this classification? If so, I would imagine that most people, given the lack of enthusiasm for itineracy, would choose to be associate, rather than itinerant elders.”

On the other hand, others suggested allowing those with less education to itinerate and to make more individualized assessments of itinerancy. One respondent remarked that this is an important step to ordain as elders those who previously could not be ordained but that it “unreasonably ties together educational status -- which is what gets them the associate versus full status -- with the willingness to itinerate.” This respondent further explains that there are less educated clergy who are more willing to itinerant than some with full status.

Local Elder Classification

A greater number of respondents wrote a comment for the Local Elder classification (30%, 302) than did for either the Itinerant or Associate Elder classifications. Similar percentages of the comments were written by Elders (38%, 100) as were written by Local Pastors (37%, 107). Deacons wrote 7% (19) Laity 9% (26) and the Other/In process 9% (27).

As was true of the Associate and Itinerate Elder responses, many claimed this recommendation would further confuse and complicate. For example, “There is already considerable confusion between elder, deacon, local and the newly designated lay pastor. Why make it more confusing and more complicated?” Again, concern about the understanding of the church membership was expressed “Having many types of ordained persons provides clarity for those in the system, but is likely to complicate and confuse understandings for those outside The United Methodist Church.”

Several respondents do not believe that this recommendation makes any substantial changes to the ministry. Rather, they regard the recommendation as simply creating new titles, in essence giving the local pastor a new name of local elder. The implications of the new titles are dire to some. They suggest that the titles promote the creation of classes of ministry or a caste system: “Only the navy needs a petty officer, 2nd class.”

Many comments written for to this classification were quite passionate. Several expressed distrust and wondered about the Committee’s motives in creating this classification: “It makes one wonder what this is really about.” Another vehemently wrote:

“it would seem to me that this is once again nothing more than an attempt by the powers that be to try to do away with the small churches and local pastors in the thought that United Methodist will flock to the mega-churches to worship. It is my opinion that all this will do is to drive away United Methodists in the rural areas and once again we will have a downhill slide of congregations. Then the urban churches will be able to push through their own ‘agendas’ that they have been thrusting upon the rest of us for years.”

Others argue that local pastors are not adequately represented on the Commission and that the recommendations would be different if they had been included in the decision making process. Some felt disenfranchised by this recommendation, that the classification devalues their role:

“I go to Annual Conference every year and am made to feel like a specimen that has crawled out from under a rock, because I am not ordained. My ministerial work is just as valid as any elder’s. Perhaps more so. These full-time elders often have a staff that does the daily work of caring for the parishioners. I work full-time outside the home, while caring for my little flock. I work very hard for my church. This feels like a kick in the teeth.”

Some perceive this recommendation as an assault on local pastors. Several times respondents described the proposal as “a slap in the face.” Similarly, some elders believe this recommendation devalues their role, “Local pastors do not in anyway have to go through the responsibility of an elder. Yes, they are under the leadership of the Bishop but to give them equal standing is to belittle those that have worked hard and gone through far more to be an elder.” On the other hand, some believe that this recommendation would improve the status of local pastors.

The portion of the recommendation that elicited the most comment is the requirement that the Local Elder be appointed to only full-time ministry. This requirement is viewed to be particularly problematic for local pastors and small churches and was often viewed as an assault on local pastors and small churches. Local pastors most affected are those serving part time, 2nd career, those with a seminary degree, those who have been in ministry for several years, those with limited income, and young people. The unavailability of full time positions, family needs, second career pastors, the church's lack of sufficient funds to hire full time pastors, the bi-vocational and pastors serving more than one church are among the hardships described in the full time requirement. Many argued that full time should not be a requirement or at least provide some provision for the part time pastor.

One respondent pointed to the great number of part time appointments in their area: "Current district I serve has 40 full time appointments and 30 part-time appointments." Often, respondents pointed to the importance of the local pastor in filling in areas where elders refuse to go. Respondents also point out that Part time pastors often serve for much less compensation than do elders.

"Local pastors currently serve churches where no elder will go. Many of these people are second career people who are willing and able to serve small membership churches and to accept compensation less than recommended by the Conference. Some local pastors have more education and more life experience than ordained elders. With this definition, local pastors will disappear and small membership churches with them. However, the United Methodist members will not migrate to larger United Methodist churches, but rather to small membership churches in their locality regardless of church affiliation."

Also shown in the comment above are the very common descriptions of the hardships on churches and the perceived underlying message of this recommendation. Respondents expressed deep concern for the small and/or rural churches served by part time local pastors. Respondents charge that this recommendation is to benefit the large membership churches. Over and over, respondents pointed to the financial hardship on small churches for a full time pastor.

"Making ministry only a full time position effectively disenfranchises the thousands of small congregations that cannot afford the escalating costs of clergy, replaces calling, effectiveness and affinity with educational attainment and UM theology with conformity to COCU standards as the bar for being recognized as a fit pastor for a local congregation."

Respondents also commented on the issue of administration of the sacraments as it relates to the small membership churches and the full time requirement:

"This is also a slap in the face of the small membership churches that are served by the part-time local pastors. It is telling them that they are not as important as a larger church and they will be served the sacraments when it is convenient to a presiding elder. This is going to push the small membership church farther away from the rest of the connection."

At the same time, many respondents applauded the portion of the recommendation that sacraments should only be administered by those who are ordained. For example, “I highly affirm the effort to tie the sacramental role to ordination (calling to word and sacrament).” Another commented “I like the idea behind the classification (less non-ordained persons with sacramental responsibility).” One respondent cautioned the Commission “I applaud the idea of ordination to administer the sacraments. Of course, a big change like this in clergy classification might cause discussion, controversy, heated reactions. Be prepared!” Often, respondents questioned the advisability of a one year appointment: “I absolutely believe only ordained persons should be sacramental, but ordination is not meant to be a year at a time process.” Many argued that this leads to leaving “problem” churches and is not long enough to build trust.

Much discussion, both from those who agreed and those who disagreed was found. Many concerns were written regarding the frequency of the administration of the sacraments and the tension inherent in a goal of weekly sacrament combined with the anticipated decrease in administration with the approval of this recommendation. For example, one respondent described the discontinuity: “It seems funny to me that two years ago I attended a conference that pushed the idea that Methodist should return to weekly communion. I fully understand the desire for that, so the new answer is less communion?” The following comment illustrates the particular concern present for some churches:

“I am concerned that many local churches will not be able to receive Holy Communion. I have served as a local pastor for 2.5 years, the church grow 20% last year. The Holy Spirit is alive in our congregation, how sad it will be if my congregation is told they can no longer celebrate communion unless an elder is available. In the past 2.5 years, only once has an elder attended a worship service at the church I serve. It will be 3 years before I complete the course of study (which by the way is very expensive for someone being paid as a local pastor.) My congregation will suffer if this is approved”

Several applauded the time frame for the Course of study citing local pastors who had not completed their Course of Study in a timely fashion. For example, “Reserving sacramental privilege until COS is complete will address the widespread problem among LLPs of incomplete educational requirements” more strongly, “Thank you for requiring these folks to FINISH course of study and continue with the advanced course. Lack of training is a major drawback of our present local pastor situation.” And, some praised the focus on educational achievement. For example, “Many LLPs in my conference have served more than five years and yet have still not completed COS--some have served ten or more years and are in no hurry to complete COS.”

Respondents believe that completion of the Course of study will improve the quality as well as the quantity of ministers: “To have a policy that permits five year Course of Study local pastors to become ordained is wonderful. Again, the number of ordained will increase.”

At the same time, a variety of concerns were expressed about the educational requirements. Some thought that it was devaluing the elder. For example, “I do not

understand the idea of ordaining people who do not meet the qualifications for ordained elder ministry.” And another,

“We're dumbing down the Elder classification just so we can be in sync with the Baptists and Catholics in that all our 'clergy' are ordained. Where is our integrity in ordination if we are willing to ordain anyone? I have followed too many bad local pastors who understand little about the sacraments, and who are inept in their biblical knowledge. To offer them ordination seems sacrilege and a slap in the face of all ordained Elders.”

Others disagreed with the requirements for advanced course of study citing the lack of available educational opportunities and the financial strain placed on the local pastor.

“There are no educational facilities in Michigan in which to take the Advanced Course of Study. The University Senate does not recognize online theological training except perhaps for Asbury Theological Seminary which requires 5 years for an MDiv, costing in excess of \$60,000. For a local pastor that is over the age of 55, that is a daunting and nearly impossible goal.”

Confusion about the role of education and the value of seminary training was expressed. For instance one person queried “Why not allow a seminary graduate who does not wish to itinerate become a local elder?” Similarly, “why do course of study students receive higher considerations than students of seminary who are spending more time, money, and sacrifice than course of study?... This is where you find your young people and they are the heart of the future church. This plan is not fair or encouraging to us.”

Providing an option that does not include itinerancy was praised by some and also thought to increase the number of ordained. Others believed that ordination would improve the status of the local pastor “ordination will remove stigma and barriers that have truly hindered their pastoral effectiveness and appoint ability.” Others, however, expressed concern about the consequences “Will this status be an inducement not to be itinerant?” Many state that local pastors are an important piece of the United Methodist Ministry. Some predict this classification will deepen the clergy shortage. The following comment touches on many of the concerns raised by respondents:

“This would make appointment making a nightmare and would deplete the pool of appoint able clergy. It promotes entrenchment of pastors in their appointments. Given this option - why would anyone decide to go to seminary and experience the higher costs and the greater personal commitment and the extended preparation time when going to course of study yields the same kind of appointment and situation? Further, why would any elder choose to be itinerant and subject themselves and their families to the uncertainty of the appointment system? Is the pay scale going to be significantly different for itinerant elders? The difference in minimum salary for elders vs associate members is hardly significant today. Some local pastors are paid more than ordained elders today. If the desire is to level the playing field, then pay all clergy the same.”

Again, a whole host of questions were posed about the specifics of the classification, such as who would become a Local Elder and their specific function.

These types of process and role questions were posed more often for the Local Elder classification than to the Associate or Itinerant Elder classification. Some questions about the Local Elder were procedural, several addressed educational requirements and many proposed questions about movement between classifications and in particular between the Itinerant and Local Elder classifications.

Sacrament Administration

The final part of the first recommendation addresses administration of sacraments. Twenty nine percent (296) wrote a comment or concern. A greater percentage of comments were written by Local Pastors (41%, 120) than by Elders (35% 101), Deacons (6%, 17), Laity (11%, 31) or Others (8%, 22).

The concerns raised in this section are often restatements of concerns expressed in the three elder classifications. The creation of a caste or tiered system, division within the ministry, frequency of administration of sacraments, and the impact on small churches are all raised again in this section. Often, respondents argued that there is really no change just a restatement of current “diabolical” system. While others charged that United Methodism is attempting to “look like” other denominations, a concern also raised to the three classifications discussed earlier. Many affirm sacramental authority for the ordained. The problem, however, with this recommendation is that authority should not be based on location or appointment. And, several suggested providing Deacons with the ability to administer sacraments.

A great deal of concern was expressed about removing authority from those who previously administered sacraments. Often, respondents wrote about administering to their congregation and the ensuing impact on the congregation when they are no longer permitted to administer sacraments. Many see this recommendation as harmful to the church. Limits based on location are viewed as problematic. For example, “If a clergy is trusted to administer the sacraments in one location they should be trusted in another location. Laity do not understand or care but just want to know that ‘The Preacher’ is doing it.” And another wrote:

“The UNC has the most liberal access to the communion table. Our understanding is unique to the fabric of the denomination. Likewise, licensing local pastors for sacramental authority is one more measure of graciousness of the denomination. Limits to the access that the rural, poor and small congregations have to communion are not in keeping with our expansive grace and smack of an elitism that is unbecoming of the United Methodism.”

“Didn’t Jesus say ‘do this in remembrance of me?’ and NOT add that it had to be ordained, authorized, licensed, or even clergy for that matter! Didn’t early Christians meet in homes and serve communion to each other? Are we getting to caught up in the ‘business’ of the church, and forgetting the basics?”

Summary of Recommendation 1

Across measures, Elders agreement was more positive for the Itinerant Elder classification than either of the other two classifications. On average, Elders gave ratings greater than Neutral up to Agree except for whether the Associate or Local classification would strengthen the connection. There the average rating was less than neutral. Elders agree that both the Associate and Local Elder classifications would complicate roles of ministry.

Deacons on the other hand, did not agree that any of the classifications would strengthen the connection offering a less than neutral rating to all three. They were less likely to agree that the Associate classification clarifies sacramental authority than either of the other classifications. But, Deacons agree with the Itinerant and Associate classification generally and were slightly agree with the Local Elder classification. Overall, Deacons did not see the three classifications as highly complicating of ministry roles.

None of the three classifications received an average rating of agreement from Local Pastors. The Elder and Associate classification ratings were closer to agreement than was the rating of Local Elder. In other words, there was little support from local pastors for any of the classifications, particularly the Local Elder classification. Further, Local Pastors agree that all three classifications would complicate roles of ministry and would not clarify sacramental authority. Finally, the Local Pastors did not think any of the classifications would strengthen the connection

The Other group agrees with all classifications, though they agree on average with the associate classification less than the itinerant and local elder classifications. Overall, the Other group rated all factors more positively than any other respondent groups. The Laity generally agreed with all three classifications. Laity response was closer to neutral than any other group on agreement that the classification will strengthen the connection. The average was slightly above neutral for clarifying sacramental authority on all classifications. Again, the Associate classification enjoyed less average agreement than either the Itinerant or Local elder classifications.

While only around a quarter of the respondents wrote comments about the itinerant elder classification, they were verbose. Concerns raised were about the purpose of adding “itinerate” to the elder title, the advisability of creating an obvious tier or class system, the anticipated confusion, the additional demands of the circuit model, the role of education and the role of elders in various situations, particularly extension ministries.

Fewer respondents commented to the Associate Elder classification, those who did illustrated the vast confusion surrounding this recommendation, the purpose, roles and position of those in this classification. Other concerns were around the role of education and the pastor in charge.

The local elder classification received comments from close to a third of the respondents. Concerns raised were about the consequences for small churches, the

frequency of sacrament particularly communion, educational requirements and there many expressed distrust and fear about the underlying agenda.

A few themes are apparent from the comments regarding these classifications. There may be some level of support for the recommendations but generally believe that developing a classification system will be problematic to institute. Often respondents argued that these classifications do not represent a substantial change other than increasing the complexity and division. Many respondents indicated that explaining the reason and purpose for the system would be confusing as would implementation by the ministry.

Another theme found across the classifications is the concern for itinerancy. Respondents argued that these classifications allowed some out of the covenant of itinerancy. And, as can be expected some supported that while others opposed the “loophole.” For some of the respondents it is unclear whether they supported itinerancy or they simply didn’t want some to be allowed to locate while others are not.

The role of education is an important theme found in responses. How much value is placed on education verses experience or service? Should there be minimum requirements for the ministry? Should higher levels of education provide different opportunities than lower education levels? These questions are important to consider as the commission makes assessments of the current status of ministry. To what extent is the church moving toward or away from professionalization of the ministry? Related to these questions are the many concerns raised about the value of the elder. Can someone with less or no education do the same job as someone with a degree? If so, why get the degree? If not, how will the church support those seeking to obtain a degree?

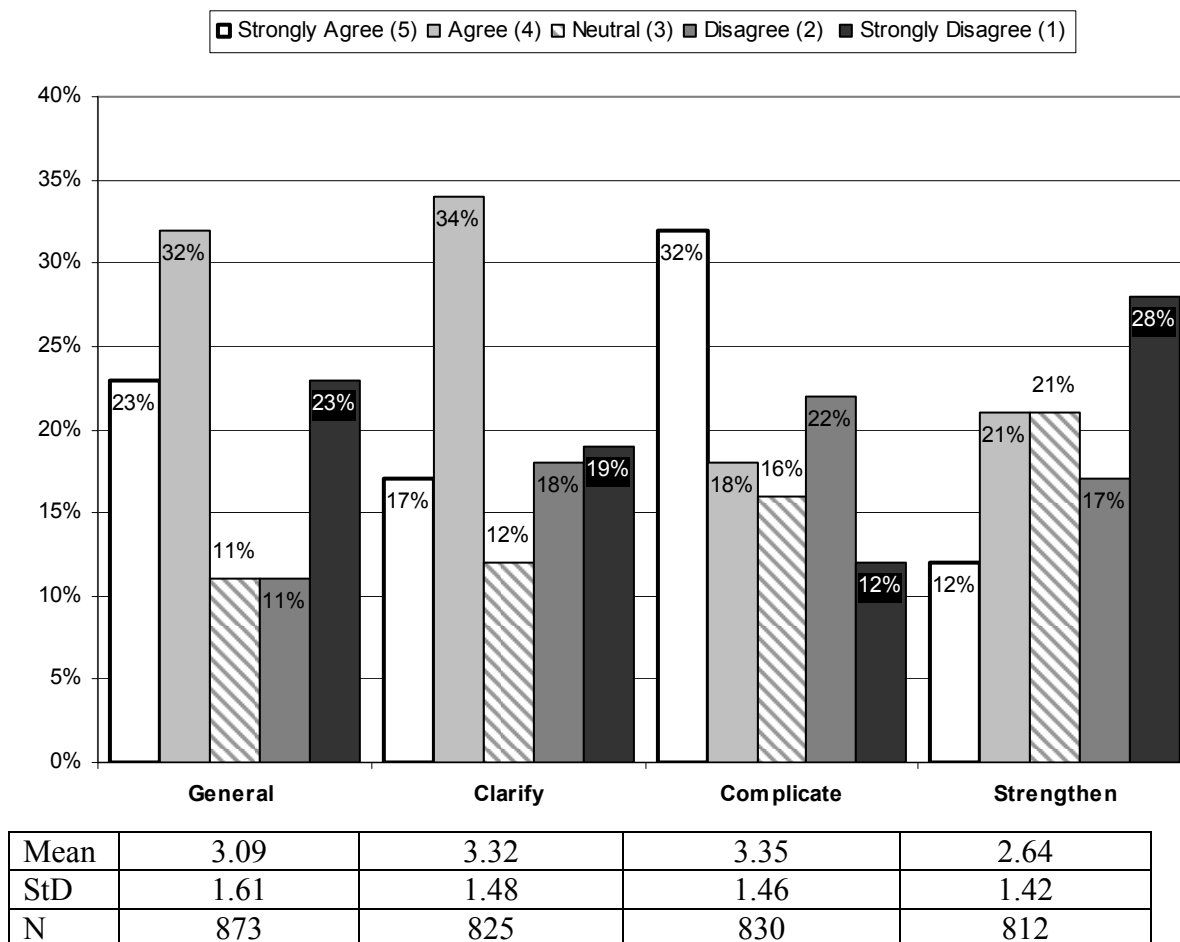
The theme of roles and positions was recurrent. This theme most often occurred in the form of a question to the Commission about how a particular position in the church ministry will be affected by the recommendation. Basically, clarification on who does what, when. Finally, the issues surrounding administration of the sacraments; who has authority and the frequency of communion.

Recommendation 2: Licensed Lay Pastor

“All persons appointed as pastors-in-charge who are not ordained as local, associate, or itinerant elders shall be licensed lay pastors. This standing incorporates all Certified Lay Ministers, student local pastors, part-time local pastors, and full-time local pastors who have not completed either the Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree.”

Again, equal percentages strongly agreed (23%, 201) as strongly disagreed (23%, 202) to the recommendation for the licensed lay pastor (Figure 5). However, almost one third agreed with the recommendation meaning that over half (55%, 481) agreed or strongly agreed with this recommendation while one-third (34%, 299) disagree to strongly disagree (11%, 97 neutral).

Figure 5. Licensed Lay Pastors: Agreement Rating



The equal percentages at the extreme response categories (Strongly) pull the mean toward neutral. So, the mean is directly in the middle (3.09) for this recommendation, neither agree nor disagree with this recommendation. Slightly greater than neutral mean ratings are given to clarification of sacramental authority and complicating roles of ministry. As has been seen for other items, respondents do not believe the licensed lay pastor recommendation will strengthen the connection.

The divergence of responses becomes clear in Table 14. Elders (73%, 244) and Deacons (70%, 38) both agree with the recommendation for licensed lay pastor, but local pastors do not, only one-third (34%, 101) agree. Over half of the Local Pastors (56%, 101) disagree with this recommendation. An extremely low percentage of Deacons disagree (7%, 4), but a large percentage (22%, 12) rate neutral on this recommendation.

Table 14. Licensed Lay Pastor rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	73% (244)	70% (38)	34% (101)	67% (39)	50% (47)
Neutral	10% (32)	22% (12)	9% (27)	3% (2)	17% (16)
Disagree	17% (57)	7% (4)	56% (101)	29% (17)	33% (31)
Total	100% (333)	100% (54)	100% (301)	100% (58)	100% (94)

A greater percentage of Elders (64%, 210) than most others agree that this recommendation will clarify sacramental authority (Table 15). About half of the elders disagree that it will complicate roles (47%, 152) but nearly half (45%, 147) believe it will strengthen the connection. Local pastors, by comparison, disagree (55% 151) that this recommendation will clarify sacramental authority. They agree that it will complicate roles (68%, 198) and a much lesser percentage think that it will strengthen the connection than others do (21%, 58 compared to Elders at 45%, 147 agree). Deacon agreement is pretty divided across items. Nearly half think it will clarify (47%, 25) but 40% (21) rate neutral toward the statement of strengthening the connection.

Table 15. Licensed Lay Pastor:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	64% (210)	47% (25)	36% (99)	36% (117)	31% (16)	68% (194)	45% (147)	36% (19)	21% (58)
Neutral	12% (38)	21% (11)	9% (26)	17% (53)	29% (15)	13% (37)	25% (82)	40% (21)	11% (31)
Disagree	24% (80)	32% (17)	55% (151)	47% (152)	40% (21)	19% (53)	29% (95)	25% (13)	68% (187)
Total	100% (328)	100% (53)	100% (276)	100% (322)	100% (52)	100% (284)	100% (324)	100% (53)	100% (276)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	65% (35)	37% (33)	40% (22)	51% (46)	42% (23)	25% (23)
Neutral	7% (4)	15% (13)	18% (10)	14% (13)	26% (14)	25% (82)
Disagree	28% (15)	37% (33)	42% (23)	34% (31)	33% (18)	47% (43)
Total	100% (54)	100% (89)	100% (55)	100% (90)	100% (55)	100% (91)

Summary Measure: Recommendation 2

The four item mean indicates that Local Pastors (9.18) disagree to strongly disagree overall with this recommendation (Table 16). The mean is much lower than any of the other groups, the next lowest is laity at 11.50 (disagree to neutral). Elders overall agree with this recommendation as do Deacons and the Other. Deacon mean rates varied little, the mean of recommendation 2 generally is 3.78 with .98 standard deviation; other rates varied by at least one standard deviation.

Table 16. Licensed Lay Pastor: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

	General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items¹¹	
Elder	M StD N	3.81 (1.28) 333	3.54 (1.30) 328	2.94 (1.36) 322	3.17 (1.28) 324	13.56 (4.54) 314
Deacon		3.78 (.98) 54	3.25 (1.22) 53	2.96 (1.12) 52	3.15 (.97) 53	13.17 (3.63) 52
Local Pastor		2.45 (1.48) 301	2.55 (1.40) 276	3.90 (1.36) 284	2.12 (1.33) 276	9.18 (4.50) 265
Other		3.53 (1.49) 58	3.56 (1.37) 54	2.98 (1.47) 55	3.13 (1.44) 55	13.34 (4.73) 53
Laity		3.15 (1.38) 94	3.08 (1.33) 89	3.37 (1.42) 90	2.58 (1.30) 91	11.50 (4.71) 86
TOTAL		3.23 (1.49) 840	3.13 (1.40) 800	3.33 (1.42) 803	2.74 (1.38) 799	11.78 (4.91) 770

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 2

Just over a quarter (27%, 270) wrote a comment or concern for recommendation two. The greatest percentage of comments were written by Local Pastors (42%, 111), one third by Elders (34% 88), Deacons 5% (13), Laity 10% (25) and Other/In Process (10%, 25).

Several respondents offered concerns about this recommendation, but none were as grave as the following: “This decision will kill the denomination. Someone is about to post a 95-point thesis on the door of the office in Nashville. Ministry is not about Clergy Rites (*sp*), Authority, or Entitlement.”

¹¹ Of the 1020 respondents, 793 responded to all four Local Elder items. Of those 770 also provided their conference relationship.

Although the recommendation text does not specifically address administration of the sacraments, the implication from the perspective of respondents is plain. Many respondents wrote about concerns related to sacraments. One common concern was the removal of previous sacramental authority “how can you tell a congregation the pastor who has baptized/administered sacraments/married/etc. that their pastor is no longer able to do so...” Several argued that removing sacramental authority suggests that the pastor is “not a real pastor,” that the pastor is “second class” or that the church is not worthy of a full pastor. “How can I face my people and tell that that I am no longer good enough to give them the bread and wine nor worthy to baptize them.”

Several state that removal of administration of the sacraments will diminish the authority of the pastor in the eyes of the church. In addition, provision of sacraments by an outside elder would be a hardship for the elder, for the elder’s church, as well as problematic to the church they are visiting. One person wrote, “expecting elders to travel around from church to church after taking care of their own appointments is patently ridiculous.” Similarly, an elder stated “My local church would not react well—I don’t think—to me being away on Sunday’s so that I can preside over the sacraments at another congregation. I can’t imagine it does a whole lot for the authority of the local pastor who can’t preside over the sacraments at his/her church.” Finally, several argued that students learn the role of the sacraments through necessary practice which would no longer be available under this recommendation.

Several expressed concern that there are currently too few who can administer sacraments and that this recommendation would exacerbate that problem rather than improve it. For example, “this will only further the decline of the people called to be a part of the United Methodist Church. This will only reduce the current number of pastors.” Another wrote “There are simply not enough elders to provide the sacraments of The Lord’s Supper and baptism to the many churches served by Local Pastors who are licensed and on schedule in the Course of Study!” This respondent continued “Many of us Part Time Local Pastors will spend ten to twelve years completing the Course of Study because with full time jobs made necessary by the low financial support from the church we must work full time secular jobs and therefore can only complete one semester per year of the course of study.”

As the comment above illustrates, issues surrounding education was of concern to several. Some believe that the educational requirements should be greater while others argue that current requirements are too great. For example, “academic requirements should be strengthened for this office to ensure strong and knowledgeable leadership” and another wrote “I am convinced that it isn’t a seminary degree that gives a pastor the ability to provide outstanding pastoral care.” Another commented “I believe the days of seminary education being a plus are going away.” From a different perspective, an elder wrote “why, if I have the same status as a lay person who’s attended a 2-day preaching class, would I invest in course of study or seminary?”

Several commented about the difficulty of achieving an education particularly when employment is necessary. As was previously discussed, respondents expressed

concern about the part time pastor, compensation and the affect on small churches. “I believe that this would create chaos in the small churches. Where would money come from to pay the Presiding Elders that provide the sacraments? Ministry is expensive! Would ‘Lay Pastors’ have deep enough pockets to continue in ministry?” And similarly, “none of this documentation takes into consideration how impossible seminaries make it for anyone who does not have some undergraduate hours to be accepted into ACOS- regardless of how well that person may have done in basic COS. Discipline does not- and should not- make undergraduate education a requirement for admission to ACOS, but try telling that to the seminaries.”

Just as was found in recommendation one responses to the elder classifications, several viewed the Licensed Lay Pastor as adding to the class, caste, and divided system of ministry. Some respondents viewed this designation as a “step down” for them. They were viewed as clergy but would lose that designation and become laity. “A full time local pastor is not a layperson. It is an insult to the local Church, the local pastor and the connection to call them laity.” Similarly, “the term ‘lay’ is not appropriate. I believe local pastors are clergy.” Another suggested “there should be ordained and licensed lay pastors. Either you are lay or clergy. Our prayerful decision is; can those with MDiv and Course of Study both be ordained?”

Many disagreed with this recommendation because there would be too many different kinds of ministry all lumped together. “How does this strengthen the connection by clumping people of various levels of service and qualifications and calling into a single category without distinction of either the service level or the process.” Several argued that the Local Pastor and Certified Lay Speakers are significantly different and should not be in the same group. For example, “My understanding of the Discipline is that Licensed Local Pastors are those who are continuing their education and have been authorized to administer the Sacraments in their charge, to be administrators, preachers, etc. in that charge. Lay Pastors are those who can only preach and fill in when no pastor is available or who are hired directly (which is against our connectionalism) by the church to preach and take care of administration. They do not have authority to administer the sacraments.” Similarly, “If they are a pastor give them the authority to be a pastor or don’t make them a pastor at all.” And another respondent argued “If the person appointed to a charge does not have the authority to serve the people as pastor then that person should not be appointed. Our congregations need pastors, not just preachers. Why make it more difficult for a person to become what God created them to be?” Some exhorted, “either make it easier to move from local pastor to local elder, or leave it alone.”

Interestingly, while many exhorted that this recommendation would create chaos or at the least add confusion, others stated “This is a needed simplification!” Those who commented favorably generally approve if it reduced the number of unlicensed in the pulpit “this proposal is good if it will discontinue the use of non-licensed, non-certified United Methodists as ‘TBS’ (to be supplied) appointments.” Another wrote “the designation ‘lay pastor’ will clarify that they are non-ordained people; thus they are not ordained to a ministry of Sacrament.” A similar argument was made regarding sacrament

administration “Even in ‘special’ circumstances, the Bishop should NOT authorize ‘licensed lay pastors’ to administer the sacraments. Elders may be used to offer the sacraments as needed. This does not ‘rob’ the ‘lay pastor’ of standing with his/her congregation. Rather, using elders in this way reinforces our United Methodist understanding of ‘connection/covenant’ which this study strongly emphasized early in the study report.” Another suggested that this sort of mentoring role would have been helpful to their early ministry and reduced their development of a “destructive ‘lone ranger’ role.”

Finally, one respondent made an interesting suggestion: “why not create circuits or cooperatives of a numbers of small churches with one elder appointed to administer the sacraments and several other assistants to help in the areas of preaching and pastoral duties if needed.”

Summary of Recommendation 2

Respondent comments suggest that the purpose of recommendation two, to limit the roles of those who are not ordained, is clear to the respondents. That elders and deacons agree while local pastors disagree with the recommendation is not surprising as the local pastors are most affected by the recommendation.

Of primary concern is the affect of removing local pastors from their current roles and positions within the church. The local pastor may have committed considerable time and energy toward building their relationship with the congregation. From the perspective of respondents, this relationship appears to be discounted. The implication of the recommendation, from respondent’s perspective, is that churches will receive the message that their current pastor is not real. As was found in recommendation one, respondents viewed this recommendation as suggestive of the value (negative) the Church places upon their local pastors. And by extension, the low value placed upon the congregation is implied, particularly the small churches who are unable to afford a full time elder.

It appears that some respondents would agree with the recommendation but for the difficulty encountered in obtaining appropriate education. These challenges are especially problematic for the current pastor and second career pastors, completing education and working is a difficult endeavor. On the other hand, some respondents believe that the educational requirements should be more rigorous.

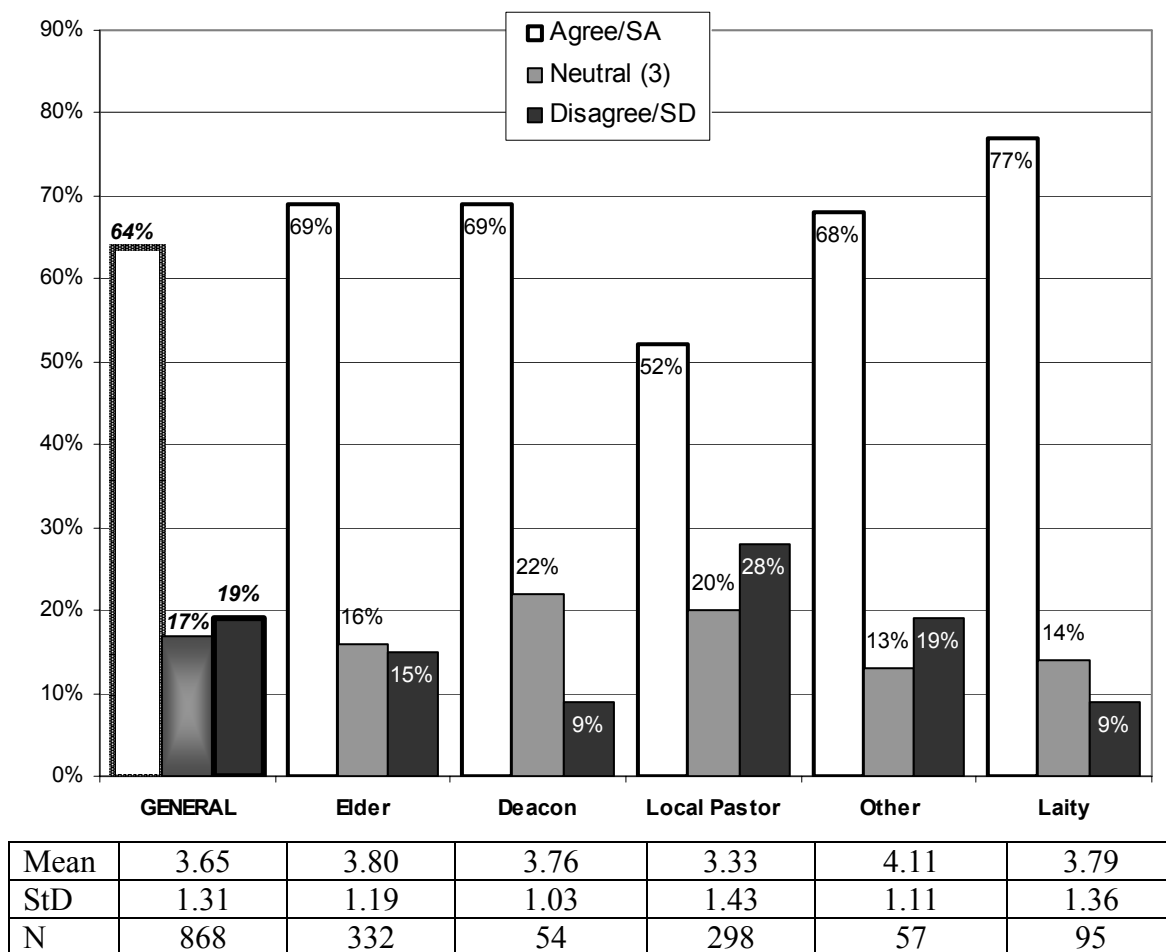
Recommendation 3: Blessing and Liturgy

“Every licensed lay pastor shall be authorized, blessed, and sent out annually for his or her appointment through a liturgy to be conducted at annual or district conference each year. We call upon the church to create a liturgy and ritual act through which the church communally seeks the blessing of the Spirit on the ministries of licensed lay pastors.”

Agreement with this recommendation is measured only by the first general rating question. Overall, most agree (64%, 555) with this recommendation and the mean (3.65) rating is high, toward Agree (Figure 6). The percentage in agreement with this

recommendation is remarkably high across all groups except local pastors. The greatest mean rating is from Other at 4.11 which is slightly greater than agree toward strongly agree. The lowest rating is local pastors at 3.33, nearer to neutral than to agree. Local pastors more often disagree with this recommendation than any other group. Only half of the local pastors (52%156) agree or strongly agree with this recommendation. So, while most groups similarly agree with the recommendation, local pastors do not.

Figure 6. Liturgy and Ritual for Licensed Lay Pastor



Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 3

Only 21% (210) made comments to the third recommendation. Similar percentages of the comments were made by Elders (40%, 82) and Local Pastors (42%, 86). Fewer comments were written by Deacons 5% (10), Other/In Process 7% (15) and laity 7% (14).

The fewer number of comments may be indicative of the general agreement with this recommendation. Where most comments are generally written in the form of a concern, here several respondents wrote in support of the recommendation. This recommendation was viewed as providing much needed recognition for pastors “its about

time that these children of God will be recognized and empowered as part of the body of Christ.” Another wrote “There is no reason I would not agree with this recommendation. It is, in fact, the recommendation I am most passionately looking forward to seeing become a reality in the life of our connection!!”

Respondents often reiterated their disagreement with the term Licensed Lay Pastor or with the implications of that classification. Several simply stated that it “seems unnecessary.” Others, however, do think “it would be nice to have heard one’s name called as part of a liturgy, like the elders and deacons.” But, many argued that this ritual blessing is meaningless, artificial and some suggested that it is even insincere. “I do not feel that a joint blessing of Local Pastors at one time during Annual or District Conference as endearing or satisfying? It feels like we would be pacifying those we have just demoted.” A feeling shared by many, that their role is being removed and this liturgy is simply an act. For example, “By removing sacramental authority from our local pastors and renaming them lay pastors, this proposal seems more like a ‘dismissal’ than a ‘blessing’.”

Many stated is a waste of time; takes time away from ministry, increases time, or wastes valuable time at Annual Conference. Some suggested the blessing occur at the district rather than the annual conference, while others argued just the opposite that it should be done at annual conference not at the district level. Several identified attendance at Annual Conference as difficult or impossible “This is just another example of the Church not understanding some of the unique problems that face a person who is not ordained. Many local pastors (current designation) must use secular vacation time to attend Course of Study, conduct funerals, etc. It is often impossible to attend Annual Conference as well.” Similarly, others argue that having the local church create the liturgy is problematic as a lay person wrote: “having local churches to create a liturgy and ritual act would be like asking a duck to write about what a deer does.”

Others argued that performing this blessing annually is the problem, particularly for those who are not changing appointments/charges: “Maybe a liturgy for first-time appointments is OK, but annually? This is a waste big waste of time in the annual conference.” Another wrote “to do this every year for all licensed pastors is a little silly. Especially if they are not changing pastoral charges.” Others believe that the ritual should be done for all, not just one group “do it for all pastors or for none.” Another queried “why limit this new service to merely licensed lay pastors, rather than a service to renew the awareness of the spiritual basis for the ministry of ALL clergy each year.”

A few remarked that this recommendation misses the point or is not the real problem but these respondents did not define the “real” problem. Several questioned the purpose “blessed to do what?” another wrote “To do what? Be a class leader, a lay leader or somehow pretend to be a pastor.” Similar to those who argued that the designation licensed lay pastor is incorrect, this person queried “how can licensed lay pastors be appointed?”

Finally, the following extended quote expressed deep frustration with this recommendation:

“This is the commissioning service that we desired at 2004 session of GC. This is where the debate got out of hand and we threw everything into the study from there on out. It led to the demise of the AM classification and reduced PM’s to a commission rather than a deacon’s ordination. What a mess. Wish we could have done this in 2004 and saved much of the headaches! Having worked very hard on this piece of legislation-I resent the study group trying to take claim of this and use it as a carrot now to schmooze local pastors who still will lose a great deal from these proposals! You need to make provisions for those currently in the process or you still have created a justice nightmare. How would elders like it if we decided no more guaranteed appointments for anyone???”

Summary of Recommendation 3

The majority of all respondents agree with this recommendation, at least with the act of creating a ritual liturgy. Just half of the Local pastors, however, agree. Since many disagreed with the creation of the licensed lay pastor, that they disagree with the creation of a ritual for that group is expected. On the other hand, those that agree with the creation of the licensed lay pastor may be more likely to agree that those pastors should receive some sort of recognition before being sent forth. The problem for many is the frequency that this ritual will be performed. Performance of the ritual once a year may be acceptable but respondents disagree with performing the ritual annually for the same pastors.

Recommendation 4: Sacrament Administration

“The UMC must sustain the traditional Wesleyan understanding that the authority to celebrate the sacraments derives from ordination as an elder by the presiding bishop upon election by an annual conference. Therefore licensed lay pastors shall not administer Baptism or Holy Communion in the charges to which they are appointed.”

“Itinerant elders designated as presiding elders shall be assigned by the Cabinet to circuits of local churches served by licensed lay pastors to administer the sacraments on a regular, rotating basis. Presiding elders shall carry out this sacramental ministry in addition to their full-time appointments in local churches or extension ministries.”

“The bishop may grant the authority to administer the sacraments to certain licensed lay pastors under exceptional circumstances, in order to advance the mission of the church in a particular place. The authority so granted is provisional and valid only in the charge to which the licensed lay pastor is appointed.”

“Deacons are ordained to ministries of Word and Service in church and world, and to assist in sacramental ministry. They are not ordained to administer the sacraments, but to assist in their administration and to lead the congregation in extending the table of Holy Communion as specified in ¶1117.9.”

For this proposed recommendation, each paragraph relates to a separate classification. Agreement is measured on each portion of the recommendation separately: Licensed Lay Pastor, Presiding Elder, Bishop and Deacon (Figure 7).

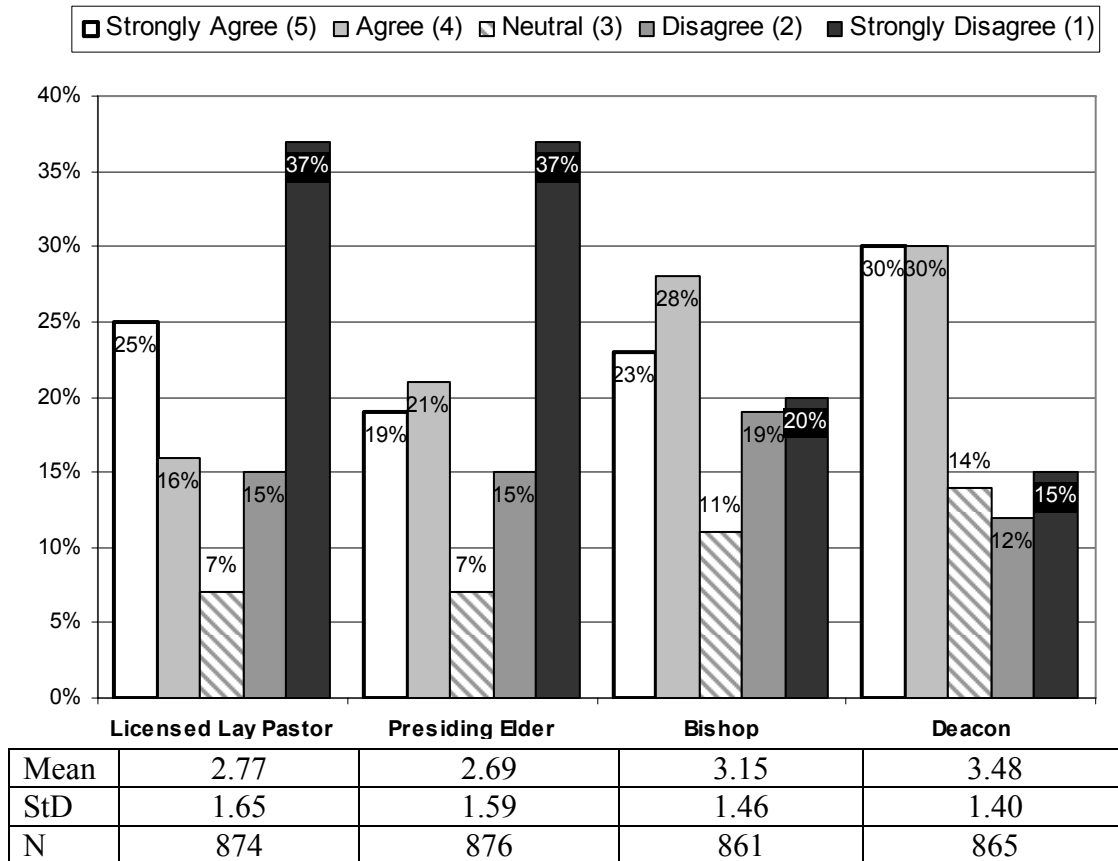
Respondents received only the first question about general agreement levels with the recommendation.

The licensed lay pastor and the Presiding elder agreement ratings are nearly identical. Over half of the respondents disagree with the recommendation as it relates to the Licensed Lay Pastor (LLP) (52%, 455) and the Presiding Elder (PE) (53%, 461). In fact, more than one-third (37%) of the respondents each strongly disagree with the LLP and PE portions of the recommendation. Few (7%) respondents were in the middle (neutral) toward LLP and PE portions of the recommendation but a greater percentage rated neutral toward Bishop and Deacon. The mean agreement level is less than neutral, toward disagree for both LLP (2.77) and PE (2.69).

Agreement with the recommendation for Bishop’s administration is greater than agreement for either the LLP or PE administration. Just half (51%, 437) agree with this portion of the recommendation, but 38% (330) disagree or strongly disagree making the mean just greater than neutral (3.15).

While respondents disagree with the LLP and PE, they generally agree with the Deacon portion of the recommendation. Here, more than half (59%, 514) agree or strongly agree with the recommendation. It is interesting, however, that a larger percentage of respondents rated neutral (14%, 118) to this recommendation than rated neutral on the LLP, PE or Bishop portions.

Figure 7. Recommendation for Sacramental Authority and Administration



Some clarity is provided by examining which groups disagree with the recommendation. Many of the Elders, Deacons and Others agree with denial of sacramental administration by licensed lay pastors (Table 17). On the other hand, the vast majority of Local Pastors disagree (78%, 234) with this recommendation; only 16% (49) of the Local pastors agree that licensed lay pastors should not administer the sacraments. Similarly, over half of the laity (57%, 54) disagrees with this portion of the recommendation.

Table 17. Licensed Lay Pastor Sacrament Administration

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	63% (212)	58% (32)	16% (49)	55% (32)	35% (33)
Neutral	7% (23)	9% (5)	6% (19)	7% (4)	8% (8)
Disagree	30% (100)	33% (18)	78% (234)	38% (22)	57% (54)
Total	100% (335)	100% (55)	100% (302)	100% (58)	100% (95)

Many elders agree with the recommendation for administration by presiding elders, but again local pastors disagree (Table 18). Just over half of deacons agree (51%, 28). And, over half of the laity disagree (55%, 53) with this recommendation- the same percentage of laity who disagree with the LLP portion.

Table 18. Presiding Elder Sacrament Administration

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	61% (205)	51% (28)	17% (50)	55% (32)	33% (32)
Neutral	6% (21)	13% (7)	7% (21)	7% (5)	12% (11)
Disagree	33% (110)	36% (20)	76% (230)	38% (22)	55% (53)
Total	100% (336)	100% (55)	100% (301)	100% (58)	100% (96)

The portion of the recommendation for the Bishop's administration of sacraments received mixed responses (Table 19). Equal percentages of Deacons agreed (46%, 25) as disagreed (46%, 25). Almost half of the Elders agreed (48%, 161) but 40% (134) disagreed. A fairly large percentage of both the Elders and Others rated neutral to this recommendation. More local pastors, laity, and Others were in agreement with this recommendation than disagreed but only slightly greater than half. Responses across groups are dichotomized.

Table 19. Bishop Sacrament Administration

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	48% (161)	46% (25)	52% (154)	58% (33)	55% (52)
Neutral	11% (38)	9% (5)	10% (30)	11% (6)	11% (10)
Disagree	40% (134)	46% (25)	37% (110)	32% (18)	35% (33)
Total	100% (333)	100% (55)	100% (294)	100% (57)	100% (95)

The final portion of this recommendation does not extend administration of sacraments to deacons (Table 20). Overwhelmingly, Elders agree (80%, 266) with this portion of the recommendation while over half of the Deacons disagree (55%, 31). Local pastors are divided; nearly equal percentages agree (40%, 119) as disagree (39%, 117) and nearing one quarter (21%, 62) rate neutral.

Table 20. Deacon Sacrament Administration

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	80% (266)	39% (22)	40% (119)	68% (39)	61% (58)
Neutral	8% (27)	5% (3)	21% (62)	14% (8)	16% (15)
Disagree	12% (40)	55% (31)	39% (117)	18% (10)	23% (22)
Total	100% (333)	100% (56)	100% (298)	100% (57)	100% (95)

Shown in Table 21 are the mean ratings of each group for each of the four portions of this recommendation. The highest mean agreement rating is by Elders for the Deacon portion of the recommendation; the mean is solidly in agreement (4.07). The next largest mean agreement rating is also from Elders toward the LLP portion (3.61) also close to agreement. Local Pastors disagree to strongly disagree with most of this recommendation. In fact, the mean rating of Local Pastors for the Licensed Lay and the Presiding elder are the lowest ratings found in the survey (1.82 and 1.85 respectively). The greatest mean rating given by Local Pastors is just neutral and given to the provision for Bishops. Deacon's highest mean rating is 3.42 and given to the LLP provision. Interestingly, deacons rated the deacon provision lower than they rated any other provision and also rated lower than any other group rated the deacon provision.

Table 21. Mean rating of Sacramental Administration

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Licensed Lay Pastor	3.61 (1.50)	3.42 (1.50)	1.82 (1.27)	3.24 (1.64)	2.59 (1.65)
Presiding Elder	3.41 (1.51)	3.24 (1.45)	1.85 (1.28)	3.14 (1.58)	2.54 (1.51)
Bishop	3.10 (1.42)	2.98 (1.37)	3.12 (1.52)	3.42 (1.48)	3.38 (1.45)
Deacon	4.07 (1.11)	2.70 (1.62)	2.94 (1.37)	3.81 (1.33)	3.58 (1.33)

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 4

Recommendation four addresses sacramental authority and elicited the greatest number of comments; 43% (438) wrote a comment or concern to this recommendation. This may be due to the design as the recommendation has four different proposals contained within but only one comment/concern question. This design also makes it difficult to identify which proposal portion respondents offered comments. While the One third (141) of the comments were written by Elders, 38% (164) by Local Pastors, 13% (54) Laity, 10% (41) Deacons and 6% (27) Other/In Process.

Often respondents challenged the theology behind this recommendation stating that they find no biblical basis or authority for this recommendation. Furthermore, respondents questioned the underlying message of authority: “The sacrament is God’s act, not humans.” Another wrote “Did I miss the part where Jesus said you have to be an ordained elder to give communion?” Similarly, “when will the Reformation be completed? When will we truly have a priesthood of all believers? When will we stop following the ‘traditions of men’-that is having sacramental police-as if it is the person who blesses the elements and not God.” Several charged that these recommendations overlook the real power over sacraments, and that “Men and women are called by God to share the gospel—NOT BY MAN.” Many also charged that this recommendation is not consistent with Wesley’s teaching. One extended example:

“Our founder took it upon himself to ordain, he was never made Bishop, he was not in the line of Apostolic succession. Wesley broke with ecclesiastical process in the desire to allow a movement of the Spirit in a time in history in which creative energy was needed. We need to day to find a way for that movement of the Spirit to change the declining church in which we find ourselves. Creating these partial ministers, ranking of clergy, and other obsessive ways of protecting those who have arrived, is less that God would bless and I am sure the UMC as we know it will not long last.”

A similar comment questions the underlying message that Elders are the “only ones truly called by God” and the elder’s perspective, “have the elders become so arrogant that they believe this will not be noticed as a ploy on their part to have them (as usual) show the local pastors that they are inferior to them? Is it just a coincidence that they have made this survey not so easy to find?”

Many argued that requiring elders to administer sacraments in multiple churches is impractical for a variety of reasons including the act of being in two places at the same time on Sunday morning, and that too few elders exist in some localities to cover all churches. Two examples: “I do not understand how a presiding elder will be able to serve full-time in their own church while still ‘riding the circuit’ to administer the Sacraments in other locations. My concern is that we are overloading pastors who are already taxed. This may contribute to clergy burnout if we are not cautious.” And, “My District has 73 churches in 49 charges served by 24 Elders (under your new terms). We would have to be extraordinarily creative to develop a system that would allow all 49 charges to receive Communion even on a Quarterly basis while also serving our own churches as well.”

A common concern is that requiring elders to administer in several locations would necessarily reduce the frequency of communion a church may receive, a situation, respondents argue is not in line with “This Holy Mystery.” However, the following respondent commented “this is a super work, ties nicely to both the BEM and ‘This Holy Mystery’. Super Work.” A recurrent question was posed regarding consecrating the elements separately from administration. For example, could the elder consecrate and then the pastor administer, could they be consecrated from afar, such as over the phone, how long would the consecration last—“what’s the shelf life”?

Another concern regarding elder’s circuit administration is financial: how is the elder to be compensated for their salary, the cost of travel, and where do funds come from are among the concerns. The frequency and financial concerns are viewed as particularly problematic for the small, rural churches and those served by part time pastors.

The Bishop’s ability to grant authority to licensed lay pastors to administer the sacraments “under exceptional circumstances” was highly problematic for many. Respondents requested a definition of, or clarity about, what is considered “exceptional” and which circumstances and situations are exceptional? Some feared that this recommendation was too broad and would allow too many exceptions, thereby the situation would not be improved “we would be right back where we started in regards to giving sacramental authority to unordained folks.” Another argued that the “Bishop with a large population of local pastors can and will use this provision, de facto everything remains the same. So why bring so much confusion and divisive categories if the church will be able to operate as status quo.” Respondents also pointed out an inconsistency, in their view, of granting Licensed Lay Pastors authority to administer sacraments but not to deacons who are educated and ordained. One person made the observation that the study’s recommendation, “leave the Deacons as the only station within the church that cannot provide the sacrament.”

Several argued that *only* the ordained should administer sacraments, no one else. One person wrote simply “Those who feel strongly called to sacramental ministry should follow the elder track.” Several affirmed the recommendation that Deacons should not be allowed to administer sacraments “As an ordained Deacon, I strongly agree that local lay pastors and deacons should NOT be given the authority to administer the sacraments. Both should be allowed/encouraged to assist.” Additionally, a few pointed out that

“deacons not administering the sacraments-they know this from the onset to be in order with their calling.”

On the other hand, many believe that Deacons should be allowed to administer sacraments. A variety of arguments were posed including the argument that Deacons are Ordained and often have the same or greater education than Elders. Others argued that “any person appointed to a charge by Annual Conference should be given the right to administer the Sacraments to that charge.” In other words, those who are ordained and those appointed to a charge should be allowed to administer the sacraments. Some suggested that administration be granted within the charge. Others suggested that Deacons be granted authority under certain (exceptional) circumstances and especially in appointments beyond the local church/extension ministries. For example, “If sacramental authority is vested in ordination that seems contradictory to not allow ordained deacons to preside. If deacons, as you suggest, should be more active outside than inside the local church, perhaps ‘presiding deacons’ have more of the flexibility to travel around than the ‘presiding elders.’”

Great concern was expressed about removing sacrament administration from those who currently serve sacraments. For example, “Once again, I think it is a ‘slap in the face’, after all these years to be told that I am not qualified to serve the Lord’s Sacraments or baptize my current congregation, what on earth do you think you are implying to them” and another wrote “I have been serving the sacraments for five years. I have four years of seminary before I am eligible to be an associate elder. If I were to suddenly lose my sacrament authority I would leave the church and take my gifts and graces elsewhere.’

Several suggested separating Communion from Baptism, that the sacrament of communion should be administered by ordained but that Baptism is more urgent and could be conducted by lay. Other suggestions for improving this recommendation are to use retired elders to administer sacraments and to create circuits. One person commented “Itinerant elders would need local elders to help cover their primary appointment. (do-able with that assistance).” Finally, one person suggested using District superintendents in order to make this recommendation manageable:

“I have concerns about an itinerant elder being given ADDITIONAL duties of administering sacraments on a circuit. Why is this duty not assigned to district superintendents? Why is the role of district superintendent not modified from ‘administrative’ to *pastoral*? Why make a distinction; what is so essential about the administrative that it should not include pastoral relationships?- If sacraments are to be administered by a circuit elder, the role should be a cooperative ministry, NOT a duty to an already full-time ministry”

Summary of Recommendation 4

Knowing which group responded is important in examination of recommendation four. Overall, elders are in favor of each of the proposals in this recommendation. Deacons agreed as it related to other conference relationships but as it related to the Deacon’s, they disagreed more than they agreed. In other words, many Deacons believe

that Deacons should administer the sacraments. Similarly, Local Pastors disagreed with the provision as it relates to LLP and PE which are portions of the recommendation that denies the Local pastor sacramental administration however, Bishops may grant in exceptional circumstances to which local pastors more often agree.

Primary concerns regarding this recommendation were about the authority to make decisions on who can administer the sacraments. Several thought the authority should rest with God, not man (or the commission). Furthermore, that denying the sacraments to those in ministry or to certain churches is inappropriate. The presiding elder administration in multiple churches is similarly problematic in that it will reduce the frequency of communion but also was perceived by many to be overly burdensome on the limited number of elders available in the United Methodist Church.

There are several who argue that only the ordained should administer. Some further argue that as they are ordained, Deacons should administer sacraments. On the other hand, there are others who disagree-deacons are not ordained to administer sacraments, only elders. Finally, as was found in other recommendations, many felt that this recommendation devalued their role in the ministry. Particularly for those who currently administer sacraments but will no longer if the recommendation is approved.

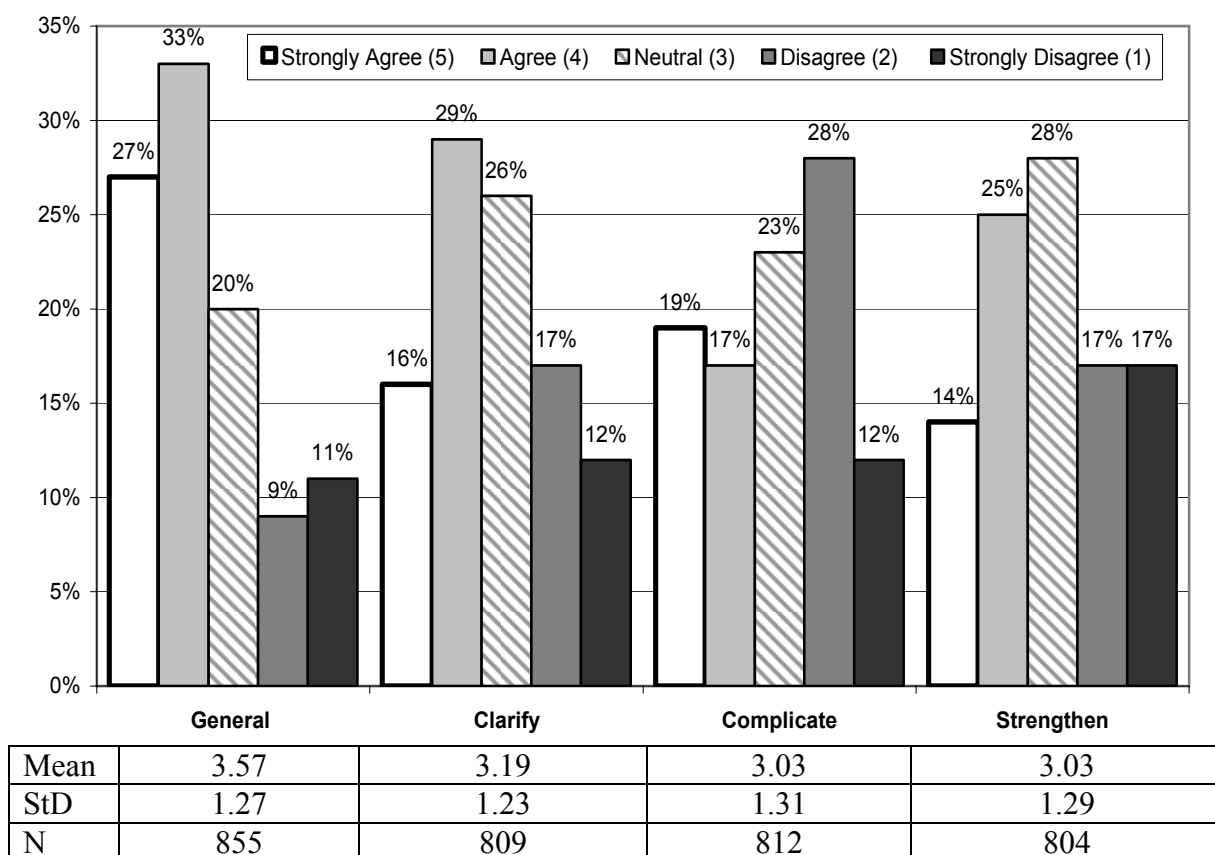
Recommendation 5: Remove Commissioning Terminology

“Deacons and itinerant elders shall be ordained upon completion of the requirements of ¶324, with the amendment that candidates for ordination and probationary membership shall have completed the Master of Divinity or other master's degree and basic graduate theological studies. All terminology of 'commissioning' (¶325) shall be deleted from the probationary process for clergy. Upon their ordination, deacons or itinerant elders shall begin service as probationary members of annual conference, following the requirements of ¶¶326 and 327 (except that the language of commissioning or commissioned ministers is deleted). Following three years of full-time service, they shall be evaluated and their candidacy for full membership in the annual conference voted on as specified for deacons in ¶¶328-330 and for itinerant elders in ¶335 and 336.”

Most (60%, 517) agree with recommendation five, but 20% rated neutral. Similarly, very large percentages, from 20-28% of respondents, rated neutral on each of the items for this recommendation. The large percentage rating neutral may mean that respondents do not have an opinion either way, commissioning could be removed, or not, either way appears to be agreeable to these respondents.

More respondents rated strengthen the connection neutral (28% 222) than rated neutral to any other item. Yet, 34% (270) disagree while 39% (296) agree that the recommendation will strengthen the connection. There is no clear agreement on whether the recommendation will strengthen the connection. Nearly half (45%, 371) agree that the recommendation will clarify sacramental authority, another 26% (211) rated neutral. And, 40% (296) disagree that the recommendation will complicate roles, the mean is neutral (3.03).

Figure 8. Removal of Commissioning: Agreement Rating



By conference relationship, similar, low percentages disagree with this recommendation (Table 22). Equal percentages of elders (21%, 70) and Local pastors (21%, 61) disagreed. The difference, however, is that fully 70% (233) of elders agree with this recommendation while only 44% (131) of local pastors agree. More than one-third of the local pastors (35%, 103) gave a neutral rate to this recommendation. The percentage of neutral local pastors is twice that of the next highest percentage of neutral rates. Overall this recommendation received a fairly strong positive approval rating by everyone but the local pastors.

Table 22. Removal of Commissioning: Rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	70% (233)	75% (42)	44% (131)	78% (45)	62% (58)
Neutral	10% (32)	9% (5)	35% (103)	7% (4)	17% (16)
Disagree	21% (70)	16% (9)	21% (61)	16% (9)	20% (19)
Total	100% (355)	100% (56)	100% (295)	100% (58)	100% (93)

The three item ratings for this recommendation were quite varied (Table 23). Over half (57%, 184) of the elders thought this recommendation clarified sacramental authority. But, Deacons and Local Pastors were split between agree, disagree and neutral about whether this recommendation clarifies sacramental authority. Over half of Elders (51%, 166) as well as Deacons (51%) disagree that the recommendation will complicate roles of ministry, but nearly half (48%, 134) of Local pastors agree - nearly opposite patterns. Similarly, equal percentages of Elders and Deacons agree that it will strengthen the connection while a similar percentage of Local Pastors disagrees. Elders and Deacons agree with this recommendation more often than local pastors but all groups have a high percentage of neutral rates.

Table 23. Remove Commissioning:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	57% (184)	33% (17)	30% (82)	31% (101)	24% (12)	48% (134)	46% (151)	44% (23)	23% (63)
Neutral	19% (61)	35% (18)	34% (95)	17% (56)	26% (13)	31% (88)	27% (88)	27% (14)	32% (87)
Disagree	25% (80)	31% (16)	36% (100)	51% (166)	51% (26)	21% (59)	27% (88)	29% (15)	45% (121)
Total	100% (325)	100% (51)	100% (277)	100% (323)	100% (51)	100% (281)	100% (327)	100% (52)	100% (271)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	61% (34)	48% (43)	24% (13)	34% (30)	55% (29)	48% (43)
Neutral	13% (7)	29% (26)	24% (13)	18% (16)	25% (13)	20% (18)
Disagree	27% (15)	23% (21)	52% (28)	48% (43)	21% (11)	32% (29)
Total	100% (56)	100% (90)	100% (54)	100% (89)	100% (53)	100% (90)

Summary Measure: Recommendation 5

Across groups, the mean agreement level was near agreement for all groups except local pastors which is nearer neutral (3.20). The four item mean is neutral (12.79) overall, less than neutral toward disagree for local pastors (11.16) and above neutral for the other groups. The high percentage of those rating in the middle (neutral) combined with the opposite rating patterns between groups (discussed above) pull the mean toward the center, indicating no strong positive or negative agreement with this recommendation.

Table 24. Removal of Commissioning: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

		General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items¹²
Elder	M	3.77	3.44	2.81	3.26	13.60
	StD	(1.32)	(1.24)	(1.33)	(1.25)	(4.48)
	N	335	325	323	327	316
Deacon		3.86	3.00	2.80	3.17	13.42
		(1.20)	(1.10)	(1.20)	(1.22)	(3.80)
		56	51	51	52	48
Local Pastor		3.20	2.84	3.47	2.59	11.16
		(1.16)	(1.18)	(1.18)	(1.25)	(4.04)
		295	277	281	271	259
Other		3.97	3.49	2.65	3.40	14.15
		(1.17)	(1.28)	(1.25)	(1.21)	(4.24)
		58	56	54	53	53
Laity		3.68	3.37	2.81	3.24	13.52
		(1.32)	(1.19)	(1.37)	(1.30)	(4.50)
		93	90	89	90	87
TOTAL		3.58	3.20	3.03	3.03	12.79
		(1.28)	(1.24)	(1.31)	(1.29)	(4.43)
		837	799	798	793	763

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 5

Comments were written to recommendation five by 21% (211) of respondents. Local pastors wrote 42% (267), Elders 36% (231), Deacons 6% (38), Laity 12% (78) and Other 4% (28). While the local pastors most often disagree with this recommendation and wrote the highest percentage of comments, there were a large number of written comments affirming the proposal. Over and over respondents wrote about not having understood commissioning in the first place, that commissioning doesn't make sense and that it was "a bad idea" that they are happy to have removed.

Those with concerns often requested clarification of the processes and procedures of ordination, about the 3 year timeframe, and about equating education with ordination. One respondent generally agrees but argues that the recommendation still does not adequately address language issues "it removes 'commissioned elder' BUT the terms 'on trial' and 'probation' remain. I realize this is not the purpose of the recommendation-but those terms ARE STILL OFFENSIVE in our culture.

A whole host of concerns were expressed around Ordination before confirmation. For example, "Giving someone ordination status before confirmation of gifts and calling by the body of Christ promotes distrust of the connection's ability to discern gifts and begs lack of accountability." Another wrote emphatically: "It is imperative that ordination be conferred only after a "test of Ministry' be experienced."

¹² Of the 1020 respondents, 773 responded to all four items of recommendation 5. Of those, 763 also provided their conference relationship.

Many requested clarification of the procedures when someone who is ordained is denied confirmation or full conference membership. A very common concern is expressed in this comment “If a pastor doesn't pass probation, what happens - are they unordained? Deordained?” And another respondent offers an analogy to express the problem with the removal of commissioning:

“If this were adopted, what would be the status of ordination of someone who was discontinued in regard to conference membership? Is not ordination for life and only legal action can result in the loss of orders? This proposal is like getting married before and then going through the process of engagement to discern whether we want to live together. Then when 'the engagement' fails the UMC and the ordained but discontinued person remain 'married,' and if still married then the UMC continues to have some sort of liability for the behavior of the one it has ordained.”

As did others, this respondent also questioned the reasons for only requiring this of itinerant elders “Why link ordination for itinerant elders with their education when you don't do it for the other two groups? Can you revoke someone's ordination after the probationary period if that person doesn't measure up?” And, of course, respondents questioned how this will affect their own ministry: “As a Year One Resident in Ministry, will this affect me at all? I've been pastoring for three years already with a seminary degree. Under this new system, I would be ready for ordination at this point, correct?” Others wondered how experience is considered:

“What about the probationary requirements that are currently spread over three years? Do they still continue or is there only a single evaluation at the end of three years probation? Is probation necessary if an MDIV graduate has been serving as pastor-in-charge as a lay minister or in common language today, a local pastor? What is the difference of what they will learn through mentoring during their MDIV program and that which occurs during probation?”

Many respondents thought the probationary time of three years was too long “perhaps shortening the length of the probationary membership” and another person wrote “I strongly disagree with ordaining and then leaving them hanging for another three years.” One suggestion was that probation be conducted while in seminary. A few compared the time frame to other professions and judged the UM probation to be excessive.

Some argued against education leading directly to ordination. “If ordination is to have meaning it has to be more than what one does at the end of a degree. It should only come after proper review and probation.” More directly, “Does completing educational requirements provide assurance that one is ready to be ordained or become a full member of a conference. What standards are used to insure competent people skills?” Meanwhile, others argue against the specific educational requirements. For example, one respondent wrote:

“While I don't like our current process of moving to the ordained relationship, I don't like your recommendation either. For one thing, it requires a seminary education; I believe that the course of study process can be just as good a

method for training pastors than seminary - maybe better. By the way, don't forget that neither Francis Asbury nor any other pastor ordained at the Christmas Conference had been to seminary or been through a Board of Ordained Ministry.”

Several saw the educational requirements and the probationary time period as detrimental to leading young people to ministry in the United Methodist Church. On the other hand, in this powerful statement, the opposite is argued:

“I imagine that this change will create a much greater sense among new itinerant clergy that they are trusted, empowered, and wanted by the church. This is critical for affirming young clergy, in particular. Our process is long and difficult; ordination at the commencement of pastoral work lends a spirit of trust and encouragement that will serve our clergy covenant community.”

Summary of Recommendation 5

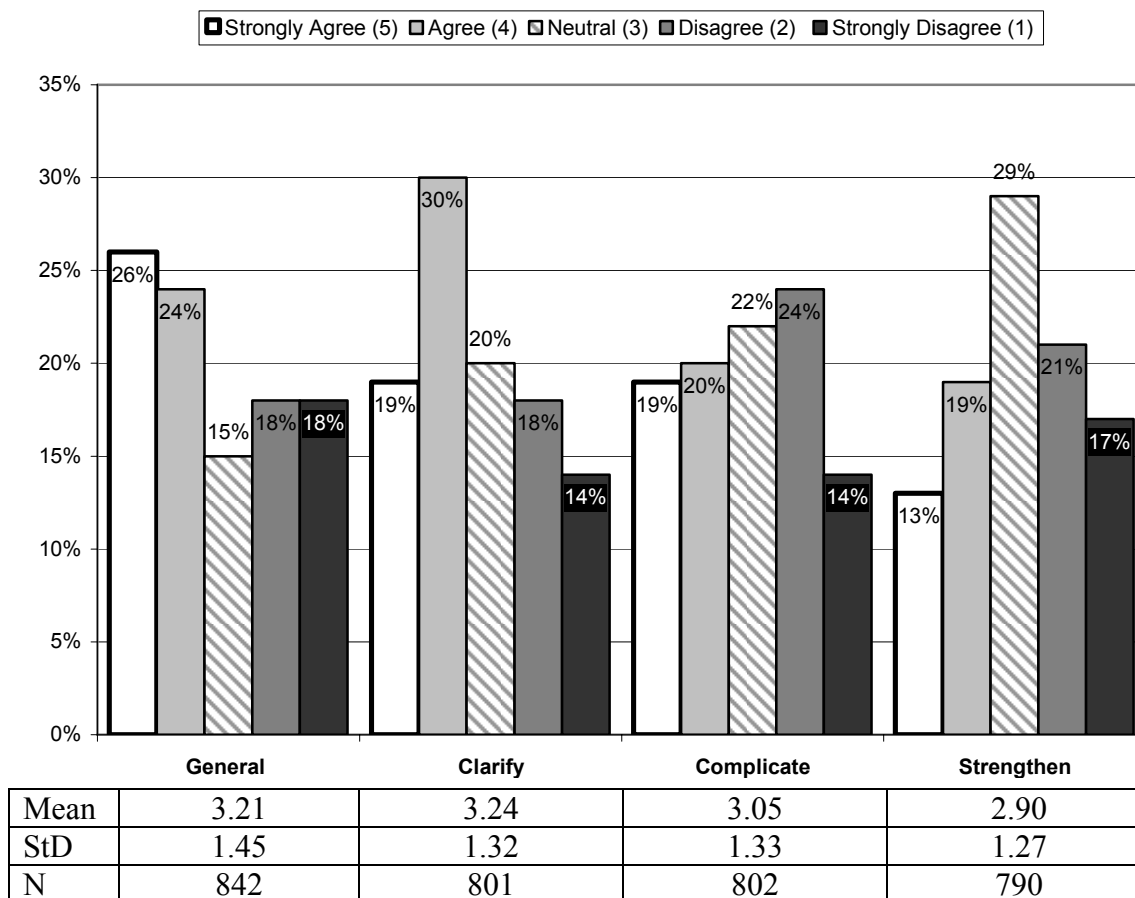
Few strongly objected or supported this recommendation for removing commissioning language. Many were in the middle, offering no opinion either way. In comments, respondents remarked on their confusion as to the purpose in the first place. Removing the language is appropriate then, however, several expressed concern about how this affects the process toward ordination. Especially how this changes the probationary period and whether those that are ordained but do not receive final approval are handled querying whether they are then de ordained. Similarly, respondents queried how education fit into the plan, and whether education and ordination are then synonymous.

Recommendation 6: Remove “Service”

“Elders shall be ordained to Word, Sacrament, and Order. Deacons shall be ordained to Word and Service.”

Half agree (50%, 414) with the recommendation for removal of service, but over one third (36%, 301) disagree resulting in a mean agreement (3.21) just above neutral (Figure 9). Almost 50% (391) believe this recommendation will clarify sacramental authority but again, nearly one third disagree (32%, 251). Equal percentages agree (39%, 313) as disagree (39%, 311) that this recommendation will complicate roles of ministry and nearly one fourth rated neutral. A large percentage (29%, 232) gave a neutral rating on whether the recommendation would strengthen the connection and the mean is less than neutral (2.90).

Figure 9. Remove Service: Agreement Rating



The only group that generally agrees with this recommendation are the Elders; 67% (221) agree or strongly agree (Table 25). Meanwhile, almost half of the local pastors disagree (48% 140) and half of the Deacons (51%, 28) disagree.

Table 25. Removal of Service: Rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	67% (221)	40% (22)	34% (98)	47% (26)	47% (45)
Neutral	13% (42)	9% (5)	19% (54)	16% (9)	16% (15)
Disagree	21% (69)	51% (28)	48% (140)	36% (20)	37% (35)
Total	100% (332)	100% (55)	100% (292)	100% (55)	100% (95)

More than 40% of Local Pastors (42%, 115) and of Deacons (43%, 23) disagree that the recommendation will clarify sacramental authority (Table 26). At the same time, one-third of both groups agree. On the other hand, a high percentage (65%, 211) of elders agrees that the recommendation will clarify sacramental authority.

Elders and Local Pastors are completely opposite on whether this recommendation will complicate ministry roles; over half of elders (54%, 173) disagree (will not complicate) while over half of local pastors (54%, 149) agree. The same is true with whether this recommendation will strengthen the connection. Elders agree (44%, 141) while Local Pastors (51%, 136) and Deacons (45%, 23) disagree.

Table 26. Remove Service:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	65% (211)	32% (17)	35% (95)	25% (78)	38% (21)	54% (149)	44% (141)	31% (16)	21% (55)
Neutral	14% (45)	25% (13)	23% (62)	21% (67)	20% (11)	23% (63)	31% (100)	24% (12)	29% (77)
Disagree	22% (70)	43% (23)	42% (115)	54% (173)	42% (23)	23% (64)	25% (82)	45% (23)	51% (136)
Total	100% (326)	100% (53)	100% (272)	100% (318)	100% (55)	100% (276)	100% (323)	100% (51)	100% (271)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	49% (26)	47% (42)	39% (20)	40% (36)	37% (19)	28% (25)
Neutral	26% (14)	25% (22)	25% (13)	26% (23)	33% (17)	28% (25)
Disagree	25% (13)	28% (25)	37% (19)	34% (31)	29% (15)	43% (38)
Total	100% (53)	100% (89)	100% (52)	100% (90)	100% (51)	100% (88)

Summary Measure: Recommendation 6

Overall, Elders rated all aspects of this recommendation higher than any other group (Table 27). Both individual and group item means by elders are greater than any other group. Local Pastors, on the other hand disagree overall. The four item mean for local pastors is 10.49, directly between disagree and neutral. No other group rated this recommendation as low as the local pastors did and no other group outside of Elders rated much higher than neutral.

Table 27. Removal of Commissioning: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

		General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items ¹³
Elder	M	3.77	3.66	2.58	3.30	14.18
	StD	(1.36)	(1.26)	(1.27)	(1.21)	(4.43)
	N	332	326	318	323	309
Deacon		2.85	2.91	2.96	2.80	11.63
		(1.50)	(1.23)	(1.26)	(1.23)	(4.67)
		55	53	55	51	51
Local Pastor		2.73	2.80	3.52	2.49	10.49
		(1.35)	(1.29)	(1.25)	(1.22)	(4.52)
		292	272	276	268	257
Other		3.18	3.38	3.00	3.12	12.60
		(1.43)	(1.21)	(1.24)	(1.18)	(4.33)
		55	53	52	51	50
Laity		3.15	3.21	3.12	2.763	11.92
		(1.41)	(1.21)	(1.30)	(1.25)	(4.42)
		95	89	90	88	86
TOTAL		3.23	3.25	3.03	2.92	12.38
		(1.45)	(1.31)	(1.33)	(1.26)	(4.74)
		829	793	791	781	753

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 6

Out of all recommendations, this recommendation received the fewest comments, 19% (192). Local Pastors wrote 40% (261) of the comments, Elders 39% (255), Deacons 5% (33), Laity 11% (70) and Other/In Process 6% (42).

Most of those who chose to write a comment, addressed the meaning of service. Several responded that the recommendation is meaningless and there is no valid reason to remove service. Those who disagreed with the removal of service often wrote that service is a necessary component of ministry and should not be removed.

Many explained that service is an essential part of history, Methodism, Christianity and/or ministry “are not all called to service?” Therefore, service could not, or should not, be removed. “Service should be a basic response to God’s grace from all and demonstrated and expected from those clergy given full conference membership.” One pastor explained the importance and centrality of being a servant “As a pastor, I am the Church’s agent into the world in a unique sense. I believe we serve the whole community and the world... and saying so is a high priority for me.” Still others remarked ‘Servant Leadership’ has been a part of Methodism since Wesley. Why remove it now?” Specifically addressing elders, “Service is the core of what an Elder does. It must remain” and another wrote “All elders also ordained to serve, therefore, ‘service’ could not be removed from elder’s ordination.”

¹³ Of the 1020 respondents, 760 responded to all four items. Of those 753 also provided their conference relationship.

Similarly, respondents often pointed to the service of Jesus as a model. As this respondent explained, “If Jesus is our primary example of how to pastor, then his example of foot washing is our primary example of how to provide effective pastoral care.” Another respondent, clearly upset by this recommendation wrote “I find it incomprehensible that this would even be considered given the example of service provided by Christ.” Another questioned the role of ministry if not to serve: “If we all aren't to 'serve', then what in the world are we to do? If elders aren't ordained to serve then how can they preach it? How can they 'serve' when it comes to administering the Sacraments? Jesus came to serve; elders can do no less.” Commonly, respondents stated that elders must also lead by example; “If we don't lead by example, we become sayers of the Word instead of Doers” and “If I expect others to serve (laity), I must model it as well.”

Those who disagreed were also concerned that removing the word service indicates that elders would no longer participate in service. One respondent queried “Why give an excuse to an elder not to serve?” Similarly, one respondent wrote “Deacons are already often being used to carry out the functions that the elders don't want to do. This gives the elders authority to NOT participate in acts of service, no matter how foundational it is meant to be.” Others expressed concern about the perceived underlying message “To remove service from elders ordinations implies that they are not to serve, but be served by deacons, less-than-elder second-class pastors, and lay persons.”

Those who agreed with the recommendation and provided a comment often described this recommendation as clarifying the roles of elders, and specifically the roles of Deacons. For example, “Reading the document has helped me to better understand the role of Deacon versus the role of Elder.” And another wrote, “The labels attempt to define the distinctive ministries of elder and deacon, and should be used as such rather than to attempt to identify their common ministry.” This respondent suggested using different language to further clarify roles: “by giving both responsibility for 'word,' while recognizing that for each it is significantly different, confuses me. I wonder if Elders are ordained to 'word' and Deacons to 'modeling' or some other such bit of vocabulary. Something to demonstrate the acknowledged difference.” Finally, “It serves to give more distinction of the office of Deacon, and doesn't take away from the responsibilities of Elder, as 'servant ministry' must always be the calling, and 'service' is clearly implied in such.”

Both those who agree as well as those who disagree with this recommendation requested a clear definition of service: “I suppose it might be helpful to further define service. For elders are expected to offer a lifetime of service in the church. What will change if service is removed?” Some respondents argued for a broader definition of service:

“Service' is a biblical understanding of diakonia, I know. But you've not defined it broadly enough. 'Serving sacrament' means more to me than lifting up bread and wine with fancy words. It's about justice, liberation, forgiveness, reconciliation- in life- not just in the ritual used to point to it. In this respect, we

have some 'deacons' doing a lot more 'sacrament' than most elders. What happened to the justice language related to diaconal ordination?"

Many respondents expressed more concern that the Deacon's role as listed did not include Sacrament than about the removal of service from the Elder's role. This comment clearly illustrates the concern: "The real problem is that there is one ordination to sacramental authority and one ordination that excludes sacramental authority." These respondents question why Deacons would be excluded from sacraments "How can you strengthen the connection if you limit the role of pastors in their own appointments? Church members don't want mail order elders coming to baptize their babies. They want someone familiar with their family. Someone they have come to trust and respect."

Some believe that Ordination should mean sacramental authority: "If you are ordained as a servant of the church, thereby a servant committed to God, what is the problem with serving the Eucharist?" Another commented: "I am an ordained elder. I resent this artificial placing of names in titles and I strongly disagree with deacons not being given sacramental privilege. We serve, they serve. And we should all be serving with sacramental privilege."

The consequences of limiting sacrament to Elders was a concern to some "Excluding deacons from sacraments will... strongly hinder the church's efforts to develop new forms of ministry and new faith communities in the 21st century." This respondent gave examples of those who have become elder, though not called, to be able to serve sacraments. Further, "Sacramental authority is not a function of the senior pastorate, as the document argues (Q 65). If sacraments and pastoral roles were locked together, then elders should give up sacramental authority (and ordination?) when they become teachers, chaplains, etc." Others also expressed similar concern about the Bishop's role: "How does this impact the Bishop's authority to ordain deacons to authority they themselves have not been ordained to? The report does not seem to address this concern directly."

Finally, some pointed to "Word" as the issue and not "service": "It's not the removal of service...it's more the inclusion of 'Word' for the Deacon that is the problem here...adding more confusion to the distinction between the orders. Deacons are ordained to service, with word/speaking secondary, at least in the sense of the elder." And still others are concerned about Order "I believe 'Service' is appropriate for Elders. I believe 'Order' belongs with both deacons and elders. While recognizing that we have not designated so, I believe 'Word' to be the defining element between choosing deacon or elder." The following comment summarizes the many questions elicited by this recommendation. "When an elder takes on a service role, should the elder also be ordained deacon? Does the one replace the other? Or as one ordained deacon in 1964 and elder in 1967, do I get to claim the service word as well? Should I wear a deacon's stole rather than an elder's when I participate in services in a deacon's capacity...?"

Summary of Recommendation 6

A great deal of dichotomy exists in agreement on this recommendation. While removal of the word “service” was the focus of the survey, respondents addressed the removal of service from elders and that sacrament is not included in Deacon’s ordination. A few others addressed the implications of both being ordained to Word or that Deacon’s are not ordained to Order.

The concerns about the recommendation to remove service revolve around the releasing elders from their duty to serve. Some perceived this recommendation as allowing elders to not serve. While others anticipated that elders would understand the recommendation to release them from this duty, that only deacons would serve. These perceptions cause much consternation among respondents. Respondents pointed toward the role of Jesus as a servant and to their understanding of ministry as a servant role. Respondents just could not align the ministry with the removal of service.

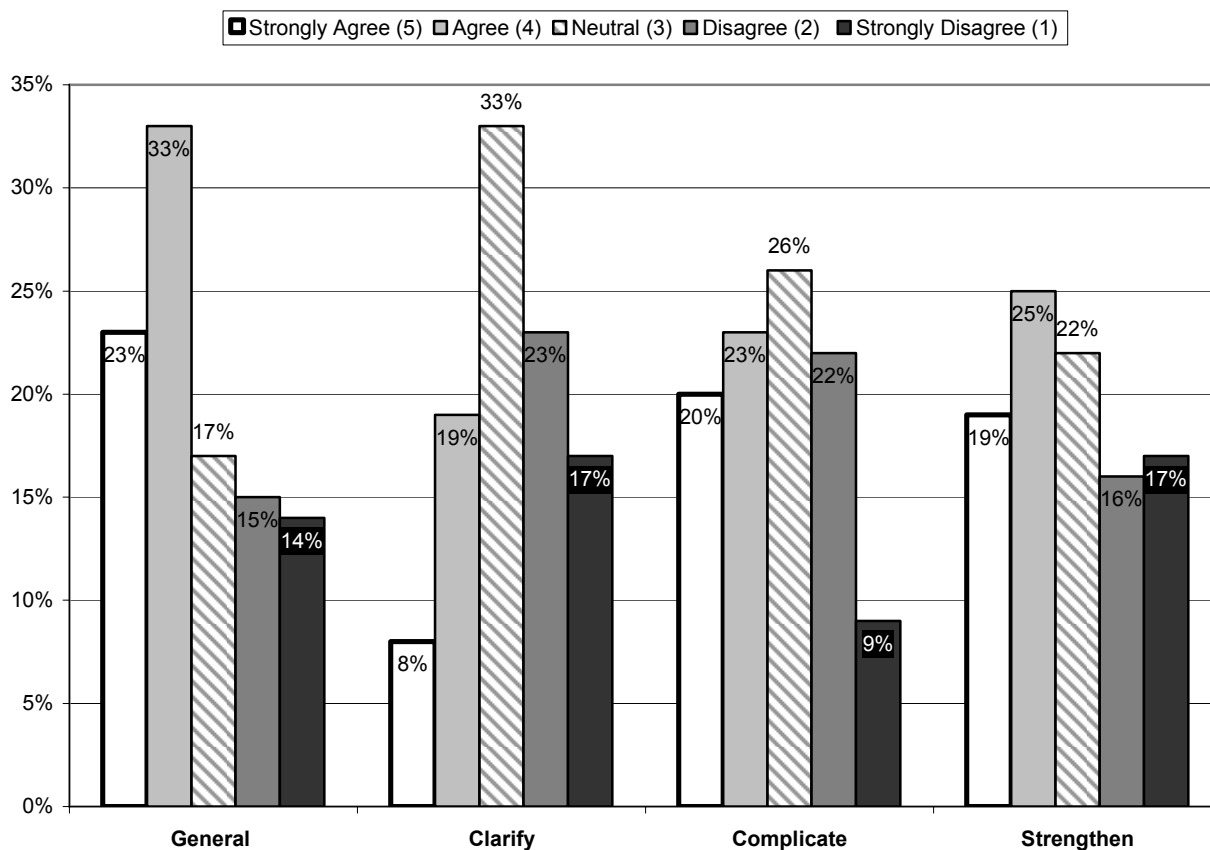
The second common topic addressed in comments was for sacramental administration by Deacons. Many argued that sacrament should be included in deacon’s ordination. One argument is that those who are ordained should administer the sacraments.

Recommendation 7: Peer Review

“All deacons and itinerant elders shall be reviewed by a group of peers selected from within their respective annual conference orders in every fifth year under appointment. This review shall be included among the responsibilities of an elder in full connection as stated in ¶334.2, and among the responsibilities of a deacon in full connection as stated in ¶329.”

More than half (56%, 461) agree with this recommendation, but 29% (238) disagree (Figure 10). The statement regarding whether the recommendation clarifies sacramental authority is not particularly applicable to this recommendation. So, the low agreement rating can be expected, as can the third who rated neutral although it is unclear why only 6% (56) selected Not Applicable. Many thought this recommendation would complicate roles of ministry (43%, 336) and a large percentage rated neutral. It is encouraging that a large percentage, 44% (355) thought this recommendation for peer review would strengthen the connection.

Figure 10. Peer Review: Agreement Rating



More than half of each group agreed with the recommendation for peer review except elders (Table 28). More than one third (37%, 124) of the elders disagree with this recommendation.

Table 28. Peer Review: Rating by Conference Relationship

	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Other	Laity
Agree	48% (159)	59% (32)	61% (177)	64% (35)	57% (54)
Neutral	15% (50)	13% (7)	17% (50)	18% (10)	21% (20)
Disagree	37% (124)	28% (15)	22% (65)	18% (10)	21% (20)
Total	100% (333)	100% (54)	100% (292)	100% (55)	100% (94)

Across groups, most were neutral or disagreed that this recommendation will clarify sacramental authority (Table 29). Almost half of the deacons (48%, 23) disagree that peer review will complicate roles of ministry, but similar percentages of elders (47%, 149) and Local Pastors (43%, 117) agree. Over half of Deacons (56%, 29) believe the peer review recommendation will strengthen the connection; finally a recommendation that is viewed by some as strengthening the connection.

Table 29. Peer Review:
Agreement Levels by Conference Relationship on three items

	Clarify			Complicate			Strengthen		
	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor	Elder	Deacon	Local Pastor
Agree	27% (81)	26% (11)	28% (72)	47% (149)	35% (17)	43% (117)	43% (142)	56% (29)	39% (105)
Neutral	30% (91)	30% (13)	33% (87)	23% (73)	17% (8)	30% (81)	21% (69)	15% (8)	36% (70)
Disagree	44% (134)	44% (19)	39% (102)	30% (97)	48% (23)	28% (75)	36% (116)	29% (15)	35% (96)
Total	100% (306)	100% (43)	100% (261)	100% (319)	100% (48)	100% (281)	100% (327)	100% (52)	100% (271)

	Clarify		Complicate		Strengthen	
	Other	Laity	Other	Laity	Other	Laity
Agree	33% (17)	24% (18)	43% (22)	33% (28)	64% (33)	52% (46)
Neutral	37% (19)	42% (31)	24% (12)	33% (28)	15% (8)	24% (21)
Disagree	29% (15)	34% (25)	33% (17)	34% (29)	21% (11)	24% (21)
Total	100% (51)	100% (90)	100% (51)	100% (85)	100% (52)	100% (88)

Summary Measure: Recommendation 7

Overall, agreement is neutral (12.01) for this recommendation. The Local pastor's general agreement with the recommendation is greater than that of Deacon's or Elder's. Taking all items together, though, Deacons rated this recommendation more positively than local pastors. The greatest group mean is 13.52 from Other and lowest from Elder (11.61) which is less than neutral rate. Interestingly, laity are in favor of this recommendation much more than any in the ministry. And, elders do not want to have a peer review.

Table 30. Peer Review: Mean Rating by Conference Relationship

		General	Clarify	Complicate	Strengthen	4 Items¹⁴
Elder	M	3.11	2.72	3.29	3.08	11.61
	StD	(1.16)	(1.22)	(1.29)	(1.40)	(4.62)
	N	333	306	319	327	300
Deacon		3.44	2.72	2.94	3.35	12.49
		(1.28)	(1.10)	(1.08)	(1.25)	(4.22)
		54	43	48	52	43
Local Pastor		3.50	2.79	3.29	3.00	11.93
		(1.26)	(1.18)	(1.23)	(1.33)	(4.22)
		292	261	273	271	248
Other		3.71	3.14	3.16	3.63	13.52
		(1.24)	(1.13)	(1.24)	(1.34)	(4.03)
		55	51	51	52	48
Laity		3.55	2.84	3.04	3.40	12.64
		(1.23)	(1.05)	(1.24)	(1.31)	(3.83)
		94	74	85	88	73
TOTAL		3.36	2.78	3.23	3.14	12.01
		(1.34)	(1.18)	(1.25)	(1.36)	(4.37)
		828	735	776	790	712

Comments and Concerns about Recommendation 7

Of the total respondents, 31% (311) made a comment about recommendation seven. Over half, 52% (161) were made by Elders, 24% (73) Local Pastors, 8% (24) Deacons, 9% (26) Laity and 8% (23) Other/In Process.

With few exceptions respondents who made comments about this recommendation did not view “peer review” as an opportunity to improve their own ministry. Respondents called for a process to respond to the problems they see with other clergy, not as a way to improve their own ministry. Often, respondent concerns illustrated a great deal of fear and mistrust. The following are some of the descriptors written about the peer review process: scrutiny, good ol’ boys, witch hunt, competition, power, political, inquisition, jealousy, and kangaroo court are among many negative descriptors.

Many saw this as another unnecessary layer or level of evaluation and review in addition to those already being conducted by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the District Superintendent. Even while acknowledging the opposite intent of the commission, respondents often equated the peer review with performance evaluation. A very common response is to call for a method of “getting rid of” or “dealing with” what respondents call “ineffective clergy”. Several argued that the peer review process would not work because it does not have “teeth,” these respondents want consequences to a “peer” review.” For example, “I would be more in favor of giving teeth to the District

¹⁴ Of the 1020 respondents, 716 responded to all four items. Of those 712 also provided their conference relationship.

Superintendents and Boards of Ministry for removing chronically ineffective pastors.” The following extended quote is illustrative:

“This is dumb. Come on. Really? If you want an eval, then do one. If not, don't play games. Don't do an end run around not having an actual evaluation process. If you want one, grow up and fight for one. Given thought, an actual evaluation process with teeth might do good (after all, for all the added hoops in candidacy, it does nothing to prevent pastors from flipping out 10 years after ordination). But come on, this is ridiculous.”

On the opposite spectrum, some see legislating or mandating the review as problematic. These respondents believe the review should be voluntary, optional or simply suggested. Many suggested that a better method of review would be through developing covenant groups. Much concern was expressed around the makeup and confidentiality of the review committee. Some were concerned about the powers granted to those involved and how the review will relate to appointments. Some called for inclusion of laity while others thought the committee should only be made up of those in the same Order. Clearly defined methods were requested for developing the review team which takes into account such differences as rural/urban and conservative/liberal: “would any conservative Elder want to be evaluated by liberal peers every five years?”

Many respondents wrote of their concern about the amount of time that would be required of elders to complete such a review. A fairly common concern suggested the review would take inordinate amounts of time from ministry. For example, “the description offered in this study could easily take 40 to 60 hours of work of one being reviewed.” Similarly, another area of contention is the time frame for conducting the review. Suggestions ranged from an annual review to a review every 10 years and suggestions for any number of years in between.

While some positive comments existed, those like the following were rare:

“This is one of the most exciting suggestions of this commission. As an elder, I would appreciate the review of peers and their suggestions. I appreciate that this is not a performance review but a way of improving my effectiveness in ministry. I wish we could implement this recommendation tomorrow!”

Summary of Recommendation 7

Some agreement with this recommendation is given by about half of the respondents. Less than half of Elders agree with the recommendation. Great concern was expressed about the authority and power of the reviewer. Fear of misuse of the peer review was widespread as well as the opposite concern that the peer review process would not be powerful enough. Respondents argued that there are currently too many levels of review while others argued that those reviews do not make a difference in the problem of “ineffective clergy.”

Other Issues and Concerns

The survey was written to solicit comments and feedback on the Commission's recommendations. Therefore, questions were proposed for each specific recommendation as written. "Minute's of Several Conversations" (MOSC) written by the Commission contained a plethora of information about the development of the recommendation and the commission's interpretation of topics and issues. Several respondents expressed frustration at the lack of opportunity provided in the survey to respond to statements contained in the MOSC document. In particular, several respondents wanted to address the issues of homosexuality. These respondents argued that the voice for inclusion of homosexuals ("those pushing that agenda") is heard but that their dissenting voice has not been heard.

Some believe that the Commission left out other important issues in the document altogether. Many would like the commission to address the issue of guaranteed appointments especially in light of the proposals, the utility of guaranteed appointment and the development of a "provision for an 'exit strategy' for ineffective, disillusioned, or just plain lazy pastors." Another important topic left untouched from the perspective of many is the issue of conference vote within the new configurations. Finally, many would like to see the commission specifically address the 1992 Associate Member Deacon, and how that relationship will be integrated into any new ordering of ministry.

SUMMARY

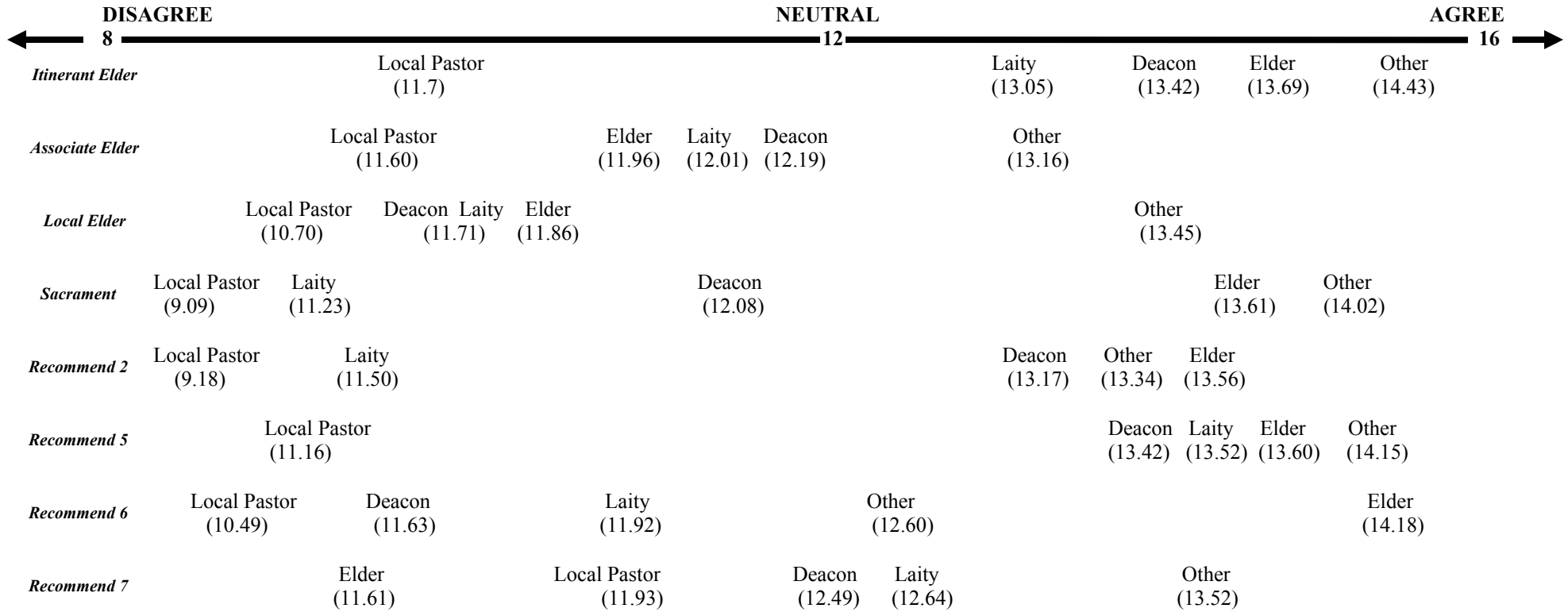
These are complex issues the Commission is examining and for this reason, the lack of widespread agreement could be expected. Examination of the agreement levels by conference relationship illuminates the variety of ways that changes filter through the ministry. The four item group mean shows that overall the average ratings by all groups tends toward the middle or neutral range. This does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in the recommendation, on the contrary. As was illustrated above, the neutral mean often indicates polarity. Respondents react strongly in opposite directions of agreement. Many times, but not always, that difference is between respondent conference relationship groups (local pastors disagree while elders agree for example). Other times, particularly for the Deacons, nearly equal percentages agree as disagree or rate neutral which also results in a neutral mean. Those findings are interesting as they indicate a lack of clear consensus even within a particular order.

Four question statements were posed for each recommendation except recommendations three and four. As a summary measure for each recommendation, the agreement value ratings summed to form summary value by respondent for the total recommendation. The minimum value possible is 4, the respondent strongly disagrees with all four of the measurement statements. A value of 8 indicates disagreement, 12 indicates the mid point (neutral), 16 indicates agreement and 20 indicates strongly agree and is the maximum possible. The mean is calculated for comparison between recommendations.

The four item mean suggests some agreement with the Itinerant Elder classification (12.99) less agreement with the Associate Elder (11.94) classification, and Local Elder classification (11.56). There is less than neutral agreement on sacramental administration for these classifications (11.73). The mean for Recommendation 2 (11.28) is also suggestive of disagreement with the Licensed Lay Pastor proposal. Recommendations 5 and 6 received positive neutral ratings, meaning that agreement is slightly higher than neutral. Respondents generally agree (12.79) with Recommendation 5 to remove commissioning language and while also positive, agreement with Recommendation 6 (12.38) to remove service is nearer neutral than to agreement. The mean for recommendation 7 (12.01) is precisely in the middle (neutral). While some disagreed with this recommendation, the average rating is due to the great number of respondents rating neutral rather than due to polarization of the issue. Respondents appeared to simply be unsure about this recommendation and what the recommendation would mean to them. Recommendation three and four were measured only with the general agreement question. Therefore, agreement ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Respondents generally agree (3.65) with recommendation three. Recommendation four, however, respondents generally disagree (2.77) but near neutral.

To illustrate the differences in average agreement levels by conference relationship group, all four item means by group are placed onto a continuum (Figure 11). The scale ranges from disagree on the left, to agree on the right. While the possible extremes are 4 and 20, the actual values ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 14. This figure graphically illustrates the tendency of the mean responses to cluster toward the center (neutral). Consistently, Local pastors mean rating for each recommendation is toward the disagreement end of the spectrum and the Other group is consistently toward the agreement end. The lowest mean rating found is 9.09 from local pastors on the sacramental administration of the three classifications of elder (recommendation 1). The greatest mean agreement is 14.43 from Other in response to the itinerant elder classification.

Figure 11. Continuum of Four Item Mean agreement levels by Conference Relationship



DISCUSSION

Researchers often struggle with the tendency of respondents to avoid the extreme ratings when completing surveys, a bias that was not apparent in this survey. Most often respondents made a choice between agree and disagree. However, for some questions more than one quarter and up to one third chose Neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Respondents may have declined to provide (dis)agreement on recommendation not directly affecting their work. Alternatively, respondents may not have had adequate information to make an informed decision or, simply did not believe strongly either way.

The findings from this study are illustrative of the wide variety of perspectives in the United Methodist Church and aptly show that no clear and simple answers exist. Survey responses indicate the importance of these questions that the Church must continue to grapple. The volume of responses received in over a short time period, and the large numbers who also wrote a comment are indicative of the passion and concern of United Methodists on issues affecting the ministry. It should come as no shock that much of the struggle from the inherent tension which exists between the traditional and the new. Respondents may point to tradition and history as the primary reason for maintaining current practice while others point to tradition and history as reasons for changing current practice to return to tradition. A challenge faced in all aspects of life, but may produce additional anxiety when changing a long standing institution as the church.

The opportunity provided by this survey to “voice” concerns and to have those concerns “heard” by the commission will likely be a step forward. Legislation, while useful to change behavior, is not likely to improve relationships, evidenced by the very few who viewed any of the recommendations as useful to strengthen the connection. Values are often in evidence in the hierarchy, rules, and regulations of organizations. The proposed recommendations would change the structure of ministry, but would do little to address the interactions between and among clergy and laity. Utilizing the ship analogy referred to by several respondents: if the captain (pastor/minister) of the ship is not valued or respected by the officers (other clergy) or passengers (laity), changing the captain’s title to Admiral does little to change the perceived worth of the person or position. In order to make a difference in the United Methodist Church, focused steps must be taken to build trust, improve relationships, and strengthen the connection activities which can, and are, being done. There are however, structural issues which also must be addressed. This is where the Study of Ministry Commission enters the conversation and where inevitably, there will be tension.

Across the survey comments were characterized by fear and mistrust. Respondents believed there to be unspoken, hidden agendas underlying the recommendations. These respondents are wary of the outcomes of the proposed systemic changes and suggest that the negative outcomes are, in fact, intended. A clear example of this is the response to the recommendation for Peer Review. Although some praised the value and worth of peer review, often it was not viewed as a method for improving one’s

own leadership and ministry. The level of fear and anger present in these responses is evidence of the need for a model that combines both support and accountability. Implementation of a model such as the one proposed by Purushotham (2007) offers a feedback model of peer review to improve one's ministry. In addition, it provides a much gentler treatment of the issue of "ineffective pastors," an issue survey respondents demanded be addressed.

It may be significant that those outside of ministry (laity) are more often in agreement with this recommendation for peer review. Those very groups that are most likely to benefit from peer review appear to be less open to the opportunity. Perhaps the concept of peer review is currently beyond the experience of the ministry. Comments indicated previous negative experience with evaluation and review, a state they do not wish to reinforce.

A whole host of procedural questions were posed, particularly in response to the three classifications. These questions cover the gamut of possibilities in relation to the classifications and are suggestive of the need for clarification. From the perspective of respondents, adequate information about the implementation of the recommendations was missing. In addition, respondents sought assurance that space would continue to be available for their ministry and that their roles had not been overlooked. Not only is additional attention and information necessary to explain the reason and justification for the change, but of utmost importance to the respondents, how those changes will be implemented. Some respondent fears may be allayed with adequate information concerning the implementation of the change. Answering the following questions may be helpful: when will the changes occur? Will the change be immediate and sudden or slow and incremental? How will the change be implemented? Who will have the authority to make the change happen and who will make the decisions? Who will/will not be affected and how? Will "grandfathering" in of a previous status be considered?

Consistently, local pastors were more likely to disagree with the recommendations than were other groups. While there were some exceptions, most of the Local pastors who responded to the survey did not view these recommendations as improvements upon their current position in the church. In fact, many viewed the recommendations as a not so subtle attempt to "put them in their place." Local pastors expressed the most concern about the potential harm to churches and to church membership should these recommendations proceed. That so many are concerned about the small, rural churches should come as no surprise. There are more pastors in charge of small churches than there are large churches, we may expect to learn about issues affecting those numerous churches. What is significant is that consistently, respondents argue that requiring full time appointments will be detrimental to the church.

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APPENDIX A

Proposed Recommendation Text from *Minutes of Several Conversations (January 2007)*

RECOMMENDATION 1

Itinerant Elder

“Itinerant elders in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop and shall be faithful to the lifetime covenant of the order of elders. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed to places of ministry. They shall complete the probationary process as specified in ¶¶324-327, 335-336 in order to become members in full connection of the annual conference. They shall be held to the standards of responsibility, personal and professional growth, and mutual accountability specified in ¶¶333, 334, 350, and 351. Itinerant elders shall constitute the order of elders in an annual conference, and together with deacons, they shall have vote on all matters that come before the annual conference.”

Associate Elder

“Associate elders in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop and are available to serve as appointed. They shall be appointed only to full-time ministry as pastors-in-charge and shall be faithful to the duties and responsibilities of ministry in the place to which they are appointed. Associate elders must meet the requirements of associate membership in the annual conference as specified in ¶¶321 and 322 as well as the standards of personal and professional growth specified in ¶¶350 and 351. All persons currently serving as associate members of an annual conference shall be ordained as associate elders. Their relationship to the annual conference continues to be governed by ¶321.”

Local Elder

“Local elders in good standing may receive an appointment for one year at the discretion of the bishop and cabinet. They shall be appointed only to full-time ministry as pastors-in-charge and shall be faithful to the duties and responsibilities of ministry in the place to which they are appointed. Local elders are elders who: (1) have completed the 5-year Course of Study for local pastors as well as the requirements of ¶324.1-2, 7-14, and have been ordained as local elder, or (2) previously served as itinerant elders but now desire to be appointed to a local ministry and have resigned from the covenant of itineracy. Local elders are expected to continue their education through Advanced Course of Study, basic graduate theological studies, or other means that fulfill the requirements of ¶¶350 and 351. Their relationship to the annual conference continues to be governed by ¶316.”

Sacramental Administration

“Elders-itinerant, associate, and local-alone are authorized by the community of faith through election by the clergy session of the annual conference and ordination and appointment by the bishop to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Associate and local elders may administer the sacraments only in the charge to which they are appointed.”

RECOMENDATION 2

Licensed Lay Pastor

“All persons appointed as pastors-in-charge who are not ordained as local, associate, or itinerant elders shall be licensed lay pastors. This standing incorporates all Certified Lay Ministers, student local pastors, part-time local pastors, and full-time local pastors who have not completed either the Course of Study or a Master of Divinity degree.”

RECOMMENDATION 3Blessing

“Every licensed lay pastor shall be authorized, blessed, and sent out annually for his or her appointment through a liturgy to be conducted at annual or district conference each year. We call upon the church to create a liturgy and ritual act through which the church communally seeks the blessing of the Spirit on the ministries of licensed lay pastors.”

RECOMMENDATION 4Sacramental Authority

“The UMC must sustain the traditional Wesleyan understanding that the authority to celebrate the sacraments derives from ordination as an elder by the presiding bishop upon election by an annual conference. Therefore licensed lay pastors shall not administer Baptism or Holy Communion in the charges to which they are appointed.”

“Itinerant elders designated as presiding elders shall be assigned by the Cabinet to circuits of local churches served by licensed lay pastors to administer the sacraments on a regular, rotating basis. Presiding elders shall carry out this sacramental ministry in addition to their full-time appointments in local churches or extension ministries.”

“The bishop may grant the authority to administer the sacraments to certain licensed lay pastors under exceptional circumstances, in order to advance the mission of the church in a particular place. The authority so granted is provisional and valid only in the charge to which the licensed lay pastor is appointed.”

“Deacons are ordained to ministries of Word and Service in church and world, and to assist in sacramental ministry. They are not ordained to administer the sacraments, but to assist in their administration and to lead the congregation in extending the table of Holy Communion as specified in ¶1117.9.”

RECOMMENDATION 5Remove “Commissioning”

“Deacons and itinerant elders shall be ordained upon completion of the requirements of ¶324, with the amendment that candidates for ordination and probationary membership shall have completed the Master of Divinity or other master's degree and basic graduate theological studies. All terminology of 'commissioning' (¶325) shall be deleted from the probationary process for clergy. Upon their ordination, deacons or itinerant elders shall begin service as probationary members of annual conference, following the requirements of ¶¶326 and 327 (except that the language of commissioning or commissioned ministers is deleted). Following three years of full-time service, they shall be evaluated and their candidacy for full membership in the annual conference voted on as specified for deacons in ¶¶328-330 and for itinerant elders in ¶335 and 336.”

RECOMMENDATION 6Remove “Service”

“Elders shall be ordained to Word, Sacrament, and Order. Deacons shall be ordained to Word and Service.”

RECOMMENDATION 7Peer Review

“All deacons and itinerant elders shall be reviewed by a group of peers selected from within their respective annual conference orders in every fifth year under appointment. This review shall be included among the responsibilities of an elder in full connection as stated in ¶334.2, and among the responsibilities of a deacon in full connection as stated in ¶329.”

APPENDIX B

Coding Decisions

Respondents accessed the survey via the GBHEM website. At the end of data collection, all responses were downloaded from the Survey Monkey website into a zip file. The zip file was saved into Microsoft Excel and then uploaded into SPSS for coding and analysis. Most questions were closed ended choice questions, so coding was straightforward. Age, Conference relationship and annual conference were text fields, allowing respondents to write in a response; coding decisions for those variables follow.

Age

Of those who answered the question, most provided a specific age. For the person who wrote “50’s” and another who wrote “50-60,” the age of 55 is used. Similarly, the person wrote “60’s,” was given an age of 65. Two people entered an age but added the “+” symbol. The numerical age written is used for analysis. Most who did not want to answer simply skipped this question, but two made refusal comments.

Conference Relationship

Respondents were given 8 choices to identify their conference relationship including “other” followed by space to write in their relationship. The eight choices and the written responses were recoded into five categories: Elder, Deacon, Local Pastor, Laity and Other/In Process. Included in the Local Pastor are Associate Member Deacons (9) and Associate Members (14). Included in the Laity are Seminary students, Student Local Pastors, Certified, Certified Candidates, Certified Lay Speakers and Diaconal Ministers. The Other group includes those in other forms of ministry and those somewhere along the process of ministry including Certified in Specialized Ministry, Retired, Bishops, Clergy from another denomination, Probationer, Probationary Elder, Probationary Deacon and Commissioned.

APPENDIX C Missing Data

Many people chose not to respond to every question in the survey. Twenty-one people did not respond to the first question but 152 skipped the next question. Some questions received fewer responses than others and the number missing was much greater toward the end of the survey. For some questions more than 200 people did not respond.

Variable	Valid N	% Missing
Sex	850	16.7% (170)
Age	822	19.4% (198)
Race	815	20.1% (205)
Conference Relationship	851	16.6% (169)
Appointment	758	25.7% (262)
Jurisdiction	744	27.1% (276)

Age refused = 2, Race refused=8