2018 CHURCH CONFERENCE FAQ's

The church conference FAQ's have been greatly improved this year!

We have listened to your feedback and worked hard to streamline the church conference process. The biggest improvements you will notice are the accessibility to more detailed explanations and instructions and an improved overall user experience. The FAQ's in particular will answer many common questions we received last year.

Below are links to different sections of these FAQ's. It is highly recommended that you review all of the available sections. Please reach out to your Regional Administrator if you have a question not answered below.

CHURCH CONFERENCE PAPERWORK TRAINING WORKSHOP

1. **Who should attend the Church Conference Paperwork Training, and do we really need to?**
   Each church should send at least one person to this training in addition to their pastor. The trainings are best suited to the individual(s) who will be responsible for monitoring and supporting the completion of all church conference forms for your church. Please contact your Regional Administrator for more information.

2. **What will we learn at this training?**
   This training will explain the overall process of completing the church conference forms and will clarify what is expected of each church and pastor during this season. You will hear suggestions about how to gather all of this information, how and when to submit all of the forms, and you will be guided through an overview of each individual report. Most importantly, this training is your main opportunity to ask any questions you may have. New pastors are highly encouraged to attend.

3. **Is there anything I should review before this training to be better prepared?**
   Yes! It would be helpful to do the following:
   - Review the Church Conference Paperwork Checklist (explains which forms are due and who completes them)
   - Log into Arena, make sure your username and password works, and review the layout of the forms
   - Read the Clergy Compensation Report Instructions - new and improved this year!
   - Complete a preliminary Clergy Compensation Report for your pastor and see if you have any questions

4. **When is my district/regional paperwork training?**
   Please contact your Regional Administrator to learn about training opportunities.

5. **If I cannot make the training in my district or region, can I attend a different district's training?**
   Of course!

CHURCH CONFERENCES – GENERAL

6. **Why do we have annual church conferences?**
   "The Charge Conference shall be the connecting link between the local church and the general church (¶ 247)… The primary responsibilities of the Charge Conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of the United Methodist Church (¶ 247.3)."

7. **When is my church conference? When are my forms due?**
   To see your district's conference schedule and forms deadline, please click here.

8. **What reports is a church required to complete? Where do I submit them? Who is responsible for completing each report?**
   A checklist of all required reports, where to submit each one, and the recommended committee or person responsible for each report can be found here.

9. **What is the purpose of the reports we are asked to submit?**
   To better understand the purpose church conferences and of each report, please click here.

10. **Why do we have to submit our church conference forms before our conference?**
    We ask for forms to be submitted ahead of time so the Regional Administrator and the District Superintendent can review the forms for any glaring mistakes. Additionally, each Regional Administrator is responsible for preparing the church conference forms of up to 180 churches in just under one month. Preparing the reports for all of these churches takes time. That is why we ask you to submit your reports in full and on time.

11. **What is the pastor's responsibility when it comes to the church conference forms?**
    The pastor is the administrative officer of the local church (¶ 340) and is the sole person ultimately responsible for ensuring the completion of all church conference forms. However, it is best if the appropriate committee or person complete each of their respective reports as this ensures accuracy in reporting.

12. **What should we bring to our church conference?**
    A church needs to bring enough printed copies of their church conference forms for all their members attending and a copy for their presiding elder.

13. **Who do I contact if I am having trouble or have a general church conference question?**
    Please email your Regional Administrator. They will be happy to help you.

14. **Do we need to submit a church conference booklet to our District Superintendent?**
    No, please do not submit a booklet to your DS. All the forms are accessible for the superintendents through the regional office. A paper copy is redundant. Please save the trees!

CHURCH CONFERENCES – REPORTS

15. **What is a Nominations Report? Why should our church submit this when we already submitted the Directory of Officials report?**
    A Nominations Report lists positions that are not requested on the Directory of Officials as well as committees not represented in full. For example, the Directory only asks a church to name its Finance Chair and not all the members on the Finance Committee. The entire committee would then be represented in full on the Nominations Report.

16. **How do we make a Nominations Report? What exactly should be included?**
    For helpful instructions on creating this report, please click here.

17. **Should every pastor complete the Report of the Pastor?**
    This report is only completed by the Senior Pastor of each church.

18. **Why should we complete the advisory section in its entirety on both the Pastor Profile and Church Profile?**
    These profiles are completed or updated annually by each pastor and SPRC and serve as the primary documents of consultation between the pastor, church, and the Cabinet for appointment purposes. The Advisory Section of these profiles inform the Cabinet of the pastor and church's thoughts around the continuation or change of the current appointment. It is vital that the Advisory Section be completed in its entirety each year.

19. **Why is it important to provide us with a 100-word description of your church on the Church Profile?**
    The 100-word description is used for online publications such as posting appointments and other communications where there is a need for a synopsis of the church's ministries and the community it serves. This description should be written in full sentences and should include the church's setting and location, current ministries both inside and outside of the church, number of services and style of each worship, ethnic makeup of the congregation, and something the church is known for in the community.

20. **Does my church still have to complete the Parsonage Evaluation even if we do not have a parsonage?**
    Yes, but barely! Please log into the Parsonage Evaluation and click "no" at the top of the form to show you do not have a parsonage. Then, scroll to the bottom and hit Save/Submit. That's all!

21. **What should we do if our church has multiple parsonages?**
    This report must be completed annually for **ALL** parsonages following a walk-through by a member of the Trustees, an SPRC member, and the pastoral family. Please email Jessica Storer at jstorer@gnjumc.org to receive access to additional Parsonage Evaluation forms.

22. **What if our pastor does not live in our parsonage? Do we still need to complete a Parsonage Evaluation?**
    A parsonage that is rented, used by someone other than the pastor, or used for another purpose altogether (e.g. thrift shop, food pantry, office space, etc.) should still have an annual walk-through and this evaluation report completed.

23. **Do you have a printable parsonage walk-through worksheet available that can be used while inspecting the parsonage?**
    Yes, this worksheet can be found here.

24. **Where does a church complete the Congregational Appraisal? Who should complete it?**
    The appraisal has been added into Arena this year to make completing this easier for the churches. This places the report in a more convenient location than last year. This report should be completed by the Church Council Chair.

25. **What exactly should be included in the Treasurer's Report? What length of time should it cover?**
    The Treasurer's Report should include all church expenses and revenue (surplus and deficit) and is the same report that is generated for your church leadership. This report should cover the previous completed year as well as the current calendar fiscal year up to and including the month prior to submitting this report. For example, if your

church conference forms are due in October 2018, the Treasurer's Report should fully cover year 2017 as well as January to September of the current year 2018.

26. **I am a Lay Servant. What forms do I need to complete?**
    If you are a lay servant/speaker, you will need to complete the Certified Lay Servant/Lay Speaker Report which can be accessed through Arena. All Certified Lay Ministers are required to complete the Certified Lay Minister Report which can also be accessed through Arena. If you are unsure of your login information, please email Jessica Storer at jstorer@gnjumc.org for assistance.

27. **What is a Pastor's Discretionary Account? Is there a max amount a pastor can have?**
    A Pastor's Discretionary Account is a designated fund made available to the Senior Pastor to distribute funds for emergency financial aid at his/her discretion. The congregation should establish a policy statement as a guideline on how this account is to be funded and disbursed. This account is authorized by the congegation's Church Council. The recommended maximum per disbursement for this account is $175, and the recommended account amount to be established is $4,000. However, these amounts are at the discretion of the local church. To see a sample policy statement, please click here.

28. **What is a perpetual care fund?**
    This is a fund meant to pay for the upkeep of a church cemetery in perpetuity. This fund typically offsets annual maintenance costs which helps to ensure the long-term care of a cemetery. It is recommended that each church with a cemetery establish a perpetual care fund that maintains a minimum balance of $50,000.

29. **What if my church does not have a Safe Sanctuary Policy?**
    Safe Sanctuary policies are mandated by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. Please click here for more information on how to become a compliant church.

30. **How do I access Mission Insite?**
    To access Mission Insite, please click here.

ARENA

31. What is Arena?
Arena is the online church reporting system where GNJ churches are able to easily complete their church conference forms. Arena stores the forms you completed last year and allows you to annually update the information in the forms instead of having to complete each form from the beginning.

32. Where do I log into Arena?
To access Arena, please click here.

33. Who in my church will receive a login for Arena?
Your leadership role in the church determines the type of login you will use.

- **The church will receive a new login this year.** It will be emailed to the following people: the senior pastor, church council chair, trustees president, lay leader, and the church email address. This login will give the church access to complete the following reports: Directory of Officials, Report of the Trustees, Parsonage Evaluation, and Congregational Appraisal.
- **Each SPRC Chair will receive a new login this year.** This unique username and password will be emailed directly to the chair. This will be different from the church's login and will be used solely to complete the Church Profile report. In order to streamline completing this report, SPRC chairs will no longer need a separate link as they have in the past.
- **Pastors, Lay Servants/Speakers, and Certified Lay Ministers are to continue using the logins they used last year.** If you have forgotten your login, please select Forgot Login ID/Password and follow the prompts to reset your password.

34. When will the SPRC chair and church leadership receive an email with their logins?
An email with your login information will be sent to you on July 2. Please check your spam and junk folders for this email if you do not see it. If you are still unsure of your login, please email your Regional Administrator.

35. How do SPRC Chairs access and complete the Church Profile report?
Each SPRC Chair will be emailed their own unique username and password this year. This will be different from the church's login and will be used solely to complete the Church Profile report. In order to streamline completing this report, SPRC chairs will no longer need a separate link to complete this report as they have in the past. If your SPRC Chair does not have an email address, please identify another SPRC member to whom the login information should be sent. Please send this contact information to your Regional Administrator.

36. Which internet browser works best with Arena?
Arena works best with Chrome and also with Safari and Internet Explorer. Please do not use Firefox as it is often not compatible with Arena.

37. Can I save my work on a church conference form and then come back later to complete and submit it?
Yes, absolutely! The button at the bottom labeled "Save/Submit" functions as a save button. Even after clicking this, you are still able to log back into the form at a later time and add to or update the information contained therein. Please click this button as often as possible while completing the forms to make sure you are not timed out and lose any work.

38. How do I submit the forms on Arena?
At the bottom of each report, you will see a checkbox marked "Check here to verify that this form has been updated for 2018." When the form has been reviewed, updated, and you are ready to submit it, check this box and click the "Save/Submit" button. This will let us know that you have completed the form for this year.

39. How do I print the forms from Arena?
A print button has been added this year. You will be able to print a form once you have submitted it.

40. How do I upload documents to the Report of the Trustees?

The Report of the Trustees asks you to upload copies of the documents listed below if you have not recently provided these to the regional office. Under each question requesting a document you will see the word "Change" written in blue. Click "Change" and a dialogue box will appear. Follow the instructions to drag and drop or to browse for the file.

- Church incorporation documents
- GNJAC Certified Safe Sanctuary Policy
- List of income producing and permanent funds (if not listed on the Fund Balance Report)

CLERGY COMPENSATION REPORT & BENEFITS

41. **How does the Clergy Compensation Report work?**
    This report exists in Excel in order to make completing this form easier for the local churches. Upon entering figures in the appropriate boxes, other salary and benefit information will automatically calculate depending on the information you entered. In order for these amounts to calculate correctly, please only complete this report in Excel. Handwritten forms cannot be accepted. Please click here to view the new Clergy Compensation Report Instructions.

    Do not delete any of the numbers that automatically calculate in this report. Doing this may delete the formulas, and your final product may be incorrect. If you know you made a mistake on a particular figure, simply delete that figure where you entered it and reenter the correct amount; the rest of the form will fix itself. If you have made a mistake and are not sure if the overall numbers are correct, delete the form you have, download a blank one from the website, and start over. Every compensation report that is submitted is reviewed for correctness. We will let you know if we spot an error. If you are still unsure on how to complete this report, please contact your Regional Administrator.

42. **Where can I download the Clergy Compensation Report?**
    To download this report, click here.

43. **What is different about this year's Clergy Compensation Report?**
    A number of improvements have been made to this year's Clergy Compensation Report. The report has been streamlined in order to make it easier to understand and complete. Also, hyperlinks have been added throughout the report to provide easy access to pertinent benefits information. For more detailed information, please refer to the Clergy Compensation Report Instructions found here.

44. **Why should I read the Clergy Compensation Report Instructions?**
    This year's instructions have been completely redone to include much more information regarding how to properly and easily complete the Clergy Compensation Report. The instructions now better answer many common questions that we have heard from the local churches. **It is highly recommend to read these instructions in full before completing this report.** These instructions can be found here.

45. **Who and how should we complete and submit the Clergy Compensation Report?**
    This report is completed by the SPRC and then brought to the Church Council for approval and signature prior to submission to the regional office. This report should then be submitted via email to your Regional Administrator by the same deadline date as all your other church conference forms. The recommendation becomes final after action by the Charge Conference and the signature of the District Superintendent.

46. **Why should we sign the Clergy Compensation Report ahead of time?**
    It is recommended to get signatures before sending this report to the regional office. Signatures indicate that the salary package has been approved by the appropriate body. Final approval is contingent upon a vote by the Charge Conference and the signature of the District Superintendent. Getting signatures ahead of time will prevent you being contacted for signatures after your church conference if everyone that needs to sign the report was not present.

47. **What is the difference between a Housing Allowance and a Housing Exclusion (Line 5 and Line 11 on the Clergy Compensation Report)?**
    There is an important difference between these two lines. Please refer to the Clergy Compensation Report Instructions for a detailed explanation found here.

48. **Where is the Housing Exclusion Resolution Form? I cannot find it.**
    In order to make completing the Housing Exclusion Resolution easier which is required from all clergy (IRS requirement), this form has now been added as a third page into the Clergy Compensation Report. Page 3 of this report will automatically be completed for you upon entering amounts on pages 1 and 2. Only the pastor's home

address will need to be manually entered on page 3. This will save time by not having to download and complete an additional form.

49. Why does a pastor need to complete a Housing Exclusion Resolution Form even if he/she is not taking one?
This form is needed to meet IRS requirements that allows a clergy person to exclude a portion of his/her salary spent on maintaining or furnishing a home (either in a parsonage or in his/her own home) from taxable income. It may not be done retroactively, and only that amount that is actually spent and can be accounted for can be claimed. Any amount set aside and not spent must be added into the taxable amount by the clergy person.

50. How do we calculate our pastor's minimum salary?
The Minimum Equitable Salary Guide is used to determine a pastor's required minimum salary according to his/her status and years of full time service. As approved by the Annual Conference, only full time years of service are used to calculate the minimum salary (part time equivalents are not eligible). Pastors receiving their first full time appointment will move to level one on January 1st after having been appointed for a complete appointment year. For example, a pastor receiving his/her first full time appointment on July 1, 2018 would move to level one on January 1, 2020. Please check with your pastor to determine their number of full time years under appointment. Please click here to download the minimum salary guide.

51. What parts of the Clergy Compensation Report are up to the pastor's discretion?
Each pastor has certain decisions to make regarding the salary and benefits he/she receives. On the Clergy Compensation Report, the following are left up to the pastor's discretion:

- Will he/she contribute into UMPIP? If so, will it be designated on Line 7 (tax-sheltered) or Line 13 (taxable in the current year)?
- Will he/she designate a Flexible Spending Account Contribution (Line 10)?
- Will he/she designate a Housing Exclusion amount (Line 11)?
- If he/she is full time and receiving health insurance, will he/she's 2% salary contribution be placed on Line 9 (tax-sheltered) or Line 14 (taxable in the current year)?

52. What do we do differently on this report if our pastor is part of a clergy couple?
If serving full time as part of a clergy couple, please enter the health insurance premium agreed upon by each church on Line 21 which is most commonly an even split of the premium amount. Line 9 must also manually be changed to represent a 1% salary contribution by each spouse.

53. What do Lines 24-27 represent on the Clergy Compensation Report?
These lines represent various benefits that clergy are potentially eligible to receive depending on their conference relationship and appointment status.

- **Line 24: Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) –** CRSP is a retirement program providing lifetime income for those who serve as clergy in The United Methodist Church.
- **Line 25: Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) –** CPP provides death benefits, long-term disability income replacement, and certain other survivor benefits for eligible clergy of The United Methodist Church and their families.
- **Line 26: UM Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) –** This line represents the church's contribution to UMPIP which is a retirement plan administered by Wespath Benefits and Investments. This benefit is only available to pastors serving ¼ time that are no longer eligible to receive CRSP.
- **Line 27: UMLife Options -** This is long-term disability and life insurance coverage offered to eligible United Methodist clergy and lay employees.

54. What is UMPIP (Line 7 or Line 13 on the Clergy Compensation Report)?
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is a retirement plan administered by Wespath Benefits and Investments. A pastor may choose to have this amount withheld from his/her salary and sent to Wespath for investment in their Personal Investment Plan on either a tax-deferred or an after-tax basis. Contribution to UMPIP is strongly recommended and is the option of the pastor. **Per 2012 General Conference changes, pastors contributing at least 1% of Plan Compensation into UMPIP will gain an additional 1% match into CRSP.**

Pastors must complete a Contribution Election Form if this is a new appointment or a new election. This form is to be filed at the local church. This form and more information on UMPIP can be found here.

55. How do I enroll in UMPIP?

Newly appointed pastors or currently appointed pastors that are transferring to another church or making a new election that wish to enroll or remain enrolled in UMPIP, must complete a new Contribution Election Form. Entering a UMPIP amount on the Clergy Compensation Report does not automatically enroll you in the plan.

Churches are the plan sponsor for the purposes of personal contributions for clergy and are responsible to complete “Part 7” of the Contribution Election Form prior to submitting to Wespath Benefits and Investments. The local church will receive a bill from Wespath each month for the pastor’s contributions. Because this is an agreement between the local church and the pastor, local churches must keep a copy of the Contribution Election Form on file. This form can be found here.

56. How do I determine which of the benefits listed above our pastor is eligible to receive?

A guide is available to all local churches that explains which benefits a pastor is eligible to receive depending on his/her conference relationship and appointment status. To download this guide, please click here.

I AM A PRESIDING ELDER

57. **I am a presiding elder. What should I expect?**
    Thank you very much for presiding! Now here's what to expect: you will receive an email from your Regional Administrator with all of a church's completed paperwork no less than three days prior to a church conference. It is expected that you will read and review these documents. There is no need for you to print any of these reports.

58. **What is the process on the day of a church conference?**
    When you arrive, please first visit the registration table. The Regional Administrator will check you in and hand you all of the envelopes for the church conferences over which you are presiding. Each envelope will also have an agenda and a sign-in sheet. Please make sure to have passed around the sign-in sheet and to have acquired all of the necessary signatures on the Clergy Compensation Report. Once the conference is over, please return each envelope with all the contents to the Regional Administrator.

59. **Do I need to print the reports for the conference over which I am presiding?**
    No, you do not.

60. **Is there an agenda to follow when I preside?**
    Absolutely! A printed copy will be provided to you the day of the conference. A copy of this agenda can be found here.

61. **What do I do if I run into a problem during the conference?**
    If this happens, please text or call the District Superintendent to visit the room.

62. **Can a church add additional resolutions to the conference?**
    Yes, but only with the prior approval of the District Superintendent. If this has happened, it should already be on the agenda you receive under the "motion to receive any resolutions" section.

AFTER MY CHURCH CONFERENCE

63. What do we need to do after we have had our church conference?

A copy of the minutes from your church conference should be sent to your Regional Administrator as soon as possible (¶ 247.4). Doing this will also prevent you from having to submit these minutes during the next conference season.

64. Anything else of which we should be aware?

Yes! Please respond quickly if you are contacted by either your Regional Administrator or the Benefits Department. This could be for multiple reasons: more signatures are needed on the Clergy Compensation Report, you need to complete a new Contribution Election Form for UMPIP, or the benefits department needs to clarify something regarding a pastor's salary and benefits. Additionally, please email your final 2019 church budget to your Regional Administrator by December 31 if you have not already provided a final copy of it.