



Steps Advancing Transparency (SAT)

At the end of 2012, North United Methodist Church approved a Long-Range Plan to guide and inspire the church in its choices for the next 3-5 years. Included in it are many important goals, including:

Action item 5: Provide support, visibility and gratitude for our leaders

Description: An essential part of developing lay ministry and leadership is tangible signs of support. To this end, one of the essential tasks of the Lay Leadership Committee will be to organize ways to express our thanks to our leaders and volunteers and provide them with the necessary support and visibility in the congregation which will expand our efforts to engage members in ministry.

One of the reasons this goal exists is to promote transparency between the leadership of the church and the congregation. The leadership of NUMC has worked on this process through making the “leaders” more visible, but making the “leading” more visible as well would help.

OBJECTIVE:

1. Make access to the activities of the church leadership readily available.
2. Allow more congregants to feel involved in the workings of the church.
3. Promote transparency.

PROPOSAL:

Create a PDF library or libraries of the minutes of the Board of Directors and the Ministries Council on the northchurchindy.com website and make it readily available to the congregation. In addition, announce upcoming Board meetings in the church’s publications.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS OF THE PROPOSAL:

1. Create a PDF library for both the Board of Directors, the Ministries Council, and the Board of Trustee Minutes and Agendas on the current website or create a separate library for each. This should be something an average computer user can find and use. A minimum of 13 months of minutes will be maintained there,

after which although a copy should be maintained for archiving, it is no longer necessary to keep it on the web site. This does NOT need to be 13 months on the first day the library is created (not retroactive) but should accumulate 13 months of minutes going forward before any are removed.

2. Agendas will be made available no less than 1 week before the groups scheduled meeting, but may be adjusted closer to meeting time as needed.
3. When the PDF store is up and running, promote its availability in the publications of the church, including but not limited to Happenings, the e-newsletter, and Northnet. This will include the availability of those minutes on the web and at the front desk.
4. Weekend receptionists will be taught how to get a copy of the minutes and print them out in case there is a request.
5. During the first month of availability, a sign will be placed on the Hospitality Desk no less than on Sunday stating that minutes of the most recent BoD and MC meetings can be printed upon request. The receptionist at the Hospitality Desk should encourage people to download them on their own, but will offer to make a printed copy if necessary. To this end, it might be wise to print small pieces of paper telling people how to get them on their own to assist the weekend receptionist in encouraging this behavior.
6. A reminder of the availability of these PDFs will be repeated in the church's publications no less than every six (6) months.
7. Previous to each upcoming Board of Directors meeting starting from the date of approval of this proposal, a statement announcing the upcoming meeting will appear in the publications of the church, including but not limited to Happenings, the e-newsletter, and Northnet. This statement will also include contact information for anyone interested in finding out more. A suggestion is that this contact information could be for the BoD recorder although it could be for the chair or another designated member of the board. For Example:

“The Board of Directors will meet on March 27, 2013 in the Parlor of North Church. Any questions in advance of the meeting should be directed to Mark Grove, (317) 291-8759 or mgrove@iupui.edu.”
8. Jim Thieman (or the current Church Business Administrator) would be responsible for overseeing the process of getting these tasks done and reporting to the Board of Directors the progress on the above tasks.

HOW DOES IT FIT WITH UNITED METHODIST TRADITION?

¶ 722. Restrictions on Closed Meetings—In the spirit of openness and accountability, all meetings of councils, boards, agencies, commissions, and committees of the Church at all levels of the church, including subunit meetings and teleconferences, shall be open. Regardless of local laws or customs, all participants shall be notified at the beginning of any meeting, including telephone or video conference calls, if the meeting is being recorded electronically and of the intended use of such recording. Portions of a meeting may be closed for consideration of specific subjects if such a closed session is authorized by an affirmative public vote of at least three-fourths of the voting members present. The vote shall be taken in public session and recorded in the minutes. Documents distributed in open meetings shall be considered public

Great restraint should be used in closing meetings; closed sessions should be used as seldom as possible. Subjects that may be considered in closed session are limited to real estate matters; negotiations, when general knowledge could be harmful to the negotiation process; personnel matters; issues related to the accreditation or approval of institutions; discussions relating to pending or potential litigation or collective bargaining; communications with attorneys or accountants; deployment of security personnel or devices and negotiations involving confidential third-party information. Meetings of the committee on pastor-parish or staff-parish relations are to be closed meetings pursuant to ¶ 258.2e. While it is expected that the General Conference, the Judicial Council, and the Council of Bishops will live by the spirit of this paragraph, each of these constitutional bodies is governed by its own rules of procedure. A report on the results of a closed session shall be made immediately upon its conclusion or as soon thereafter as is practicable.

Source: The Book of Discipline, 2012

WHEN:

Implementation of this project would commence in the week after its approval by the Board of Directors.

BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS:

Some office staff time would be used updating the web site, but after the initial creation, the on-going maintenance should be insignificant.

Some printing cost could be created if several members of the congregation asked at the desk for printed copies but this would be discouraged by reminding them they can download their own copies and providing them written instructions to do such. However, this part of the proposal remains important to keep those without electronic means connected to the church.

BENEFITS

1. Raise Visibility of the actions of the church leadership.
2. Give people a chance to get involved, not feeling decisions are made in secret..

CLOSING

In that it is publicly stated that all Board meetings are “open” unless otherwise stated, the information from those meetings should be open too. The easiest way to make this happen is to take the already existing minutes of the meetings and provide easy access to them for the membership of the church. As this is consistent with statements in the Discipline, the guidebook to the United Methodist Church, it should be an easy step for increasing the transparency experienced by congregants at North United Methodist Church.