

FAQs Regarding the Annual Charge Conference Forms

... in plain English

1. Why do you ask the church to evaluate the pastor twice a year?

- We don't. We ask the SPRC or equivalent to assess the pastor in the spring (Clergy Assessment and Action Form). In the fall, we ask the pastors to reflect on various aspects of their ministry prior to consultation with the district superintendent (CPA). We also ask the SPRC or equivalent to assess the church's ministry in the fall (LCPA). We ask the SPRC or equivalent to do so because they are the primary body within the local church which relates to the district superintendent.

2. Why don't you evaluate the church as well as the pastor?

- We do, on the LCPA. See the question above.

3. Why is all that stuff included on those forms?

- Most of what is included on the *omnibus* is required by the *Book of Discipline*. No, seriously. If you don't like it, you need to petition General Conference to change it. Until that happens, even our smallest churches are required to complete it in order to remain constituted as churches. Believe it or not, the omnibus is actually an effort to reduce the number of forms you have to fill out! As you work through either filling it out or proceeding through the business of charge conference, you might try asking yourself, "Why does General Conference think it's important for the church to get this report every year?" Most items are probably on there either to assess how well the church is fulfilling its mission, or for reasons of responsible stewardship for the sake of the church's mission.
- *The CPA and LCPA* are designed to promote reflection on the past year of ministry, first internally by either the pastor or SPRC or equivalent body, and then in conversation with the district superintendent. If you find yourselves stretching to connect your church's activities to the mission, or not having anything to say that's not a stretch, it's time for a serious conversation about the direction of your church.

4. Nobody actually reads everything on the omnibus, do they?

- Actually, several somebodies use different information reported on the forms. Your district office uses it to generate a profile of your church which is used by the whole cabinet. Some items, such as college student info or lay servant renewal, are passed on to other people for missional reasons. The Conference Council on Ministry staff uses the information in a variety of ways to direct their work supporting local churches.
- It will help everyone if you are able to complete your reports on a computer and email them to the district office rather than hand writing them.

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5. What's the point of ...the pastor and lay leader reports, ...inspecting the parsonage annually, ...the annual audit, etc.?

Well, most of the things we ask for are required by the Book of Discipline. But since you asked, let's be a little more specific.

- **The pastor and/or lay leader report** should be sort of a 'state of the church' report. What did the church do for Jesus in the last year? What does the church plan to do to fulfill its mission in the coming year? What are the celebrations? What are the challenges? Church members are expected to devote their time, talents, financial and other resources to the church—it's only fair to tell them how you used those gifts. This is also a chance to cast vision and invite them to join you for the future.
 - You might do this at another time, if you have some kind of 'State-of-the-Church' summit or dinner, or a council evaluation and goal-setting. Great! Go ahead and submit that report!
 - If you don't think many people will attend the charge conference, include your report in a newsletter or with the year-end giving statement.
 - Yes, you submit goals on the LCPA, but that is intended as a shared document between the pastor, SPRC, and DS; not for broad distribution. So go ahead and use your LCPA answers as the basis for your 'state of the church' report.
- **The parsonage inspection** is required annually because the church needs to invest in it annually. Also, should the church have concerns with the way the pastor uses the parsonage, it is better to address it within a year, rather than allowing the situation to continue for 8 years, possibly resulting in a large repair or renovation bill when the pastor moves. [P.S. Did you know that there is a *Covenant of Parsonage and Property* available for your use?]
 - No, the room size doesn't change annually. Harness the magic of computers by filling out the dimensions, paint color, etc. on the electronic form and saving it on a computer so you can print out the previous year's report as your starting point for the current year.
 - If the district inspected the parsonage in the spring due to pastoral transition, and the pastor and church are satisfied with that report and the parsonage's condition, that report may be submitted in the fall.
- **The annual audit** is required by the Book of Discipline for several good reasons. Sadly, we uncover church embezzlement cases annually. If the church wants people to support it financially, the church should be able to report that it has both cared for and used the money wisely for the glory of God. When churches are having cash flow issues, sometimes the audit documents are helpful in providing data to address the problem(s).