

THE PASTORAL ROLE IN THE PROXY SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

In light of the adoption of the new Assembly Business Policies and Procedures concerning representation and proxies that will be implemented in coming Assemblies, pastors will be challenged in how to educate their Church on the process and how to also help their people come into a harmonious spirit where they can express their decisions. Therefore, we humbly offer the following counsel to aid pastors in this important process.

- The pastor's role in the new Assembly Business Policies and Procedures is paramount to the success of this process. From the release of a new study document, it relies heavily on the pastor to read and study the issue being introduced to the church. Therefore, immediately following an Assembly where a new document is introduced for a two-year study, the pastor will need to begin thinking of the entire process and the role required of him/her to help the local church be as involved as possible in the Assembly. Great care should be taken by the pastor not to alienate or judge those who do not have the same convictions on the issue; rather he/she should seek to be a counselor and peacemaker.
- After reading and study of the documents under consideration, the pastor should schedule a series of meetings in his/her church to dialogue about the issues. It is suggested that at least four sessions be held to complete this task. The first session would be to read the document in its entirety and to allow only questions pertaining to understanding what it is saying or to clarify any point that may require further explanation. This meeting should be announced in advance and the congregation encouraged to pray for this series of meetings and the issues that will be discussed. At the close of the first meeting, people should be encouraged only to pray and to refrain from further discussions until after the second session a week later. We must all allow time for the Holy Spirit to guide us!
- At the second session, discussion should be invited by all present, with an encouragement that issues be discussed for content only and not to judge one another. The pastor will want to maintain a godly order and not give his/her own input into the dialogue until others have expressed their thoughts. The pastor then should introduce a good biblical exegesis concerning his/her views on the subject a hand. At the end of the second session, prayer should be made by the entire group for God's direction. No final decision should be made after this second session, but prayer would continue for another week.
- In the third session, the Church will begin to seek for a unified expression on the issue they have been discussing. During this meeting, it may be necessary to intersperse times of prayer or worship to allow the Holy Spirit to bring the entire group into unity and submission to God and one another. Perhaps during this four week period, messages during the Sunday services by the pastor or other ministers chosen by him/her would help the church by bringing to their attention themes on Biblical Submission, Holy Spirit-leading, prayer and fasting, and Unity in the Body. These messages should not include "pro/cons" for or against the issues in the documents under consideration. At the end of the third session, hopefully a "one accord" decision can be reached; if not, an additional session to dialogue could be added before the final one.
- The final or fourth session would involve choosing an official representative who will attend the Assembly to be the "voice" for them. This person should either be the pastor,

District Overseer, State or Regional Overseer, or the General Presbyter of their respective area. It would seem the pastor would be the best representative if he/she were attending the General Assembly. If the pastor has convictions that would hinder him/her serving as the “voice” for the Church’s proxy, then another representative as outlined in the Proxy Procedures should be chosen. Regardless, the pastor should share from God’s Word on the need of supporting whatever God leads the Church to do in that coming Assembly.

- After the four sessions or when the Church has made their final decision, the Church Clerk will complete the proxy or proxies, along with the pastor, and send them to be registered at the General Overseer’s office by the Proxy Clerk. If the Church desires that their proxy be taken to the Assembly by their “official representative,” then the proxy must be physically turned into the Proxy Clerk at the Assembly 48 hours prior to the Assembly Business Session. No exceptions will be allowed to this guideline! After this is done, the pastor should bring the church into periodic seasons of prayer until the Assembly so that they can prepare to submit to the final decision that will be guided by the Holy Spirit. Pastors and churches should be reminded that it might be necessary for the local church to choose on their Proxy to “Abstain or Submit” if they cannot come into “one accord.”