

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TITLES AND DEEDS
NY-WASHINGTON ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR THE 2017-2018 CONFERENCE YEAR

With the assistance of the Presiding Elders of the NY-Washington Annual Conference, this Committee has received information on 40 of the 64 churches in this Annual Conference. Reporting is as follows: Washington/Virginia District: 21/27 bldgs, or 77% compliance (noting 3 churches do not have buildings); Philadelphia District: 7/14 churches, or 50% compliance, and NY/NE District: 12/20 churches for a 60% compliance rate. Given the amount of time invested in attempting to collect these deeds, and the provisions of ¶602§5 regarding the status of church properties in the absence of a Trust Clause, it seems prudent to concentrate efforts on the next step, which is making changes to these Deeds so they are consistent with the Discipline.

We have compiled an index of churches with the status of all deeds received to date, and all information has been digitized. A preliminary letter was emailed earlier this month to those Pastors with properties in their charges that were not titled in accordance with the Discipline. The email laid out the appropriate trust clauses based on the use of the property, and advised them to seek legal counsel to begin the process. They were asked to respond by July 13, 2018. As of this writing, no responses have been received.

While the assistance of the Presiding Elders and the legal consultant, Cheri Hamilton, Esq, has been invaluable, the next steps will likely be more effective if undertaken by committees. As stated last previously, we have identified the specific changes needed in the deeds. The process for inserting the Trust Clause varies by state. The lack of response from Pastors noted above is quite understandable; this is a complex legal matter. Therefore, with the Bishop's approval, the goal for next year is to meet with the members of the Committee and task a subcommittee in each District with contacting Pastors and Boards of Trustees, assisting and empowering them to make the necessary changes (we are Methodists; this is simply an application of Wesley's small groups). It would be desirable to have an attorney on each subcommittee; in addition to the intended use of the properties, the incorporated status of each Church will be one of the determining factors in the Trust Clause wording. These specifics are best left to attorneys. I am happy to share a proposed timetable with the subcommittees; if they could then make quarterly reports on their progress, perhaps we could keep the momentum going and begin to effect the necessary changes.

Last year it was reported that the Committee would expand, but that expansion has not properly taken place. It is a necessary prerequisite to the continued viability of the Committee and therefore will be its first priority.

As always, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Cassandra G. Perry
Chair, Committee on Titles and Deeds
July 13, 2018