

# **UMC study proposes ending 'guaranteed' clergy jobs: A culture of mediocrity**

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United Methodist clergy have long had the guarantee of paid assignments in a pulpit or other ministries, but an interim study is recommending that the denomination's 2012 General Conference end the practice, which one study commission member said has led to "a culture of mediocrity" among ministers.

The report, presented to the United Methodist Council of Bishops at its recent spring meeting, recommends that bishops retain their right to appoint clergy to different posts. The Commission to Study the Ministry will not release its final report until sometime next year.

The current understanding for the UMC clergy, called elders, is that they always have a job while they are in good standing—a practice comparable to that of the Catholic Church.

One commission member, Seattle Area bishop Grant Hagiya, quoted May 19 by United Methodist News Service, said that guaranteeing clergy jobs produces "a culture of mediocrity. It allows people to coast rather than to continue to strive and grow."

Commission members said the present system crimps the flexibility of bishops to appoint the most effective person to each congregation. Some said the practice might have a dampening effect on pastoral freedom in the pulpit, though Hagiya said he thought most of his colleagues "have a great sensitivity to prophetic pulpits."

For future clergy without appointments, the commission recommends establishing funds "to establish new career directions" and possibly temporary health benefits and pension coverage.