



**Summary of Delegate discussions of “A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership”
For Executive Board
Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann
August 19, 2015**

The following is a summary of reports from table groups of delegates at the Kansas City Convention following the presentation of the polity handbook, “A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership.” For those who have history with it, the document serves a valuable service. To most people who are not in church leadership there was usually little awareness of the document. There was a general voice from those who did not know much about this work or the previous document that they needed to have more time to look at it.

It is apparent that many of the table groups did not respond as a group but with individual voices which were recorded in list form. To use the table group reports as a form of tally to measure “for and against” was impossible because some groups did respond as a table and others recorded notes from each person saying they could not agree. For nearly all tables there were opposed perspectives as to whether it is wise and helpful to keep page 70 as part of the document.

Some delegates voiced a need for greater awareness of this document, moving it from being just a document for conference ministers and pastors in transitions to something that lay leaders are aware of and familiar with. Comments suggested we would do well to find ways to highlight the document and have teaching sessions for conference and congregational leaders to become more familiar with it. A teaching outline for congregational leadership teams that could accompany the booklet, included as an appendix. We can encourage conference ministers to introduce it with all search committees they work with.

There seemed to be frustration that this was introduced when it was, before knowing what happened with Membership Guidelines resolution. Beyond that, a number of table groups pointed out that there needs to be added clarification regarding the relationship of the forbearance resolution to this document.

A sample of the comments concerning page 70

- Until we have it worked out in the broader body, it shouldn't be in there.
- It is where we are at right now, so fine with it there.
- If it belongs anywhere it belongs here.
- But we don't agree as a group about whether it should be here.
- Is Page 70 helpful and necessary? No; not helpful because we just agreed to forbear and let conferences and congregations decide. Not necessary.
- Yes and yes; if they want the pastors to say this is what we stand for it should be there.
- Not sure it should be there/not sure it is needed.
- Yes, it's part of who we are and needs to be there.
- No and No; if we are going to start with the resolution we passed on forbearance they need to be fully in.

- How important is it to have Shared Understandings if congregations and conference can choose to make their own guidelines?
- Forbearance should be the lens by which this document is viewed.

Many comments wondered about the relationship this document has with the resolutions which were passed. Overall there was much affirmation for the importance of “A Shared understanding of Church Leadership” with a couple of suggestions. One table suggested more commentary is needed on the issue of the abuse of power. The document is important and needed for dealing with new pastors and retired pastors, for setting accountability, boundaries, and ethics and in some conflict situations.