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Native American people are present in the UMC. We come from many places and speak different languages. We may be small in numbers, but we are here and we celebrate that we are training more Native American pastors and laity for the work of the church. We celebrate that more Native churches are able to pay apportionments in full. Progress is occurring. We are very thankful to have financial support that makes training and developing Native American leadership possible. The only sad part about that is these new, well-qualified and trained pastors/leaders then move to cross cultural appointments, and Native Churches don't get to enjoy the fruits of our labor. (They get trained to go elsewhere.)

There is disappointment that programs are being cut or reduced because of budget cuts. The elimination of the National United Methodist Center is one example. This organization has been of tremendous benefit to our Native people.

The Native people are discouraged because we do not have a voice at the table. We have qualified and capable people and pray for the day when we will have a Native American Bishop.

Measuring Success in Ministry

I feel the church bases ministry success on the wrong criteria. There is more to successful ministry than how many professions of faith are made. This is only part of the equation. Sometimes success is healing relationships and teaching people what it means to live and work together in a God-honoring way.

Teaching Role of the Church

People do not turn to the church or may not trust the church for teaching. We miss many opportunities to shape people in the Christian faith. We have to be willing to change/adapt our methods to fit the culture. We can't wait for them to come in and be like us. We have to be willing to be flexible.

People Not Connected Today

In days past, people really had connectedness and ownership in their communities and churches. That is not the case in many places today. People move frequently, do not connect with the church, do not connect with neighbors, etc. People are reluctant to establish lasting relationships. (It is "safer" that way.) People are not willing to commit to a church. Some fear being stuck with another responsibility or having fingers pointed at them. People are hesitant to let others get to know them. People are afraid of connection yet they are desperately crying out for it.

People today tend to have a consumer way of thinking when it comes to the church. They just want to get what they can get out of it. Come, put an offering in the plate, go home and maybe come next week if it fits into the schedule.

The Appointment Process

How can we do a better job of placing pastors with the necessary gifts at the churches with those needs? Struggling churches need someone with experience and knowledge, not someone starting from scratch.

How can we reward pastors in other ways besides moving up a ladder to a bigger church? Longer appointments and dedication to our current appointments is what is important, not moving up the ladder of success and skipping over the difficult appointments. *How can we have more equitable pay?*

Churches Forget or Do Not Know Who the Church Is

Some churches make everything revolve around the pastor. They want the pastor to decide everything and do everything while they supervise. The church is the people and the pastor working together. No matter who the pastor is, it is up to the church to be the church. The pastor is there to help equip the people in doing the ministry, not to just be the hired hand. This needs to be taught more effectively to the laity.

Sometimes Energy Is Focused on the Wrong Things

It is very easy for the church to become consumed with addressing this issue or that issue and we forget what we are here for—to make disciples.