

SHARED WITH PERMISSION

Hi Chris.

I hope that you and your family is staying safe and healthy during this time of quarantine. There are some trends that you may find helpful for your data base as to what is happening "on the ground" with local churches across the United States since the delay of the General Conference. You can do what you wish with this information, but I think you should be aware of the following:

- The trend that I see now in light of the General Conference being pushed to next year is conferences taking aggressive actions to close "whales." These are local churches that have no debt, valuable land, large bank accounts and low membership with an elderly congregation and a pastor near retirement – wherein the conference comes in and tells the church that they will be closed immediately or within a few months. These are also local churches who, for the most part, have told their District Superintendent that they will be leaving to become independent or join a conservative denomination once the 2021 General Conference occurs. This happened in Missouri – in a case that I am currently litigating – and in both southern and northern California. It has also occurred in Delaware, Florida and West Virginia.
- Let me know if you wish to have a copy of the Missouri case. It was filed yesterday
- There is a perception within the WCA that that the annual conferences are playing fair and being gracious to the Churches that they do not see eye-to-eye with. That simply is not true. The annual conferences are more aggressive than ever in closing and taking property.
- We continue to work with many local churches across the United States in departure cases. Yet there is no pattern to the settlements - every church closing is a case by case evaluation and negotiation. We have had success negotiating with annual conferences for local churches to leave the denomination and keep their property in Ohio, Iowa, North Carolina, Louisiana, Missouri and West Virginia.
- The initial case we worked on in Mead, Washington ended. The Church ran out of cash to pay for legal expenses about three years ago and thought that another Church would step in and pay for their expenses. I carried the fees and expenses for the past three years, the agreement with the other nondenominational church never materialized and I could no longer afford to carry the fees to litigate the case. Therefore, the lawsuit was dropped and the Pacific Northwest Conference now owns the property.

The message that I am sending is that a local church must be vigilant and take steps NOW to protect their assets. They do not need to actually leave the denomination at this moment in

time – unless circumstances occur as noted above – but they should not wait for the General Conference or sit on their hands thinking that the annual conference will be nice and fair to them. The annual conferences are bleeding cash and taking as much property as they can at this moment in time. Now is the time to take the steps to preserve assets.

Please consider addressing this issue in your next article. I think that every local church would truly appreciate it.

Grace & Peace,

Dan

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