

DRAFT BOOK OF DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE FOR A NEW METHODIST CHURCH

Version 1.0 (Released November 8, 2019)

Preface

At its 2018 meeting, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) Global Legislative Assembly authorized the formation of the Next Steps Working Group to envision a revitalized Methodist movement within or, or if necessary, outside The United Methodist Church. The Next Steps Working Group prepared a draft of a “Book of Doctrines and Discipline” (D&D) in response to this charge. The WCA Council has reviewed portions of the draft and it now delivers its draft to the 2019 WCA Global Legislative Assembly. This document contains the following sections:

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Other portions of the D&D prepared by the Next Steps Working Group are currently being reviewed by the Council and will be released as review is completed. The portions which are still under review include the following:

¶¶ 501-517 -- Credentialing & Ordination	
Part Seven -- Conferences	
Part Eight – Connectional Organization	
Part Nine – Property	
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The document which follows is a work in progress; in no way should it be regarded as final. The WCA seeks to serve those who desire to become part of a new Methodist church that upholds the doctrine and ethical teachings of an historic, Wesleyan expression of the Christian faith while reclaiming the qualities of our earlier movement. The WCA anticipates that the formation of such a new Methodist church will be an outcome of the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The formation of such a new Methodist church will occur as the result of a convening conference, which will adopt its structure and polity. The WCA offers this document, including subsequent versions, as a basis for the work of such a convening conference. The D&D addresses essential elements for the formation of a new church, however, it readily acknowledges it will be subject to further amendment and editing.

Therefore, the WCA releases this document for review and comment by those who would be interested in shaping and being part of such a new Methodist church to enhance the development and sharing of ideas in advance of a convening conference. If you have comments on the draft, please email them to doctrines-and-discipline@wesleyancovenant.org.

A name for the new Methodist church has not been proposed in what follows as that name will be selected by the new Methodist church's convening conference.

As the D&D is revised in light of comments received and considered, the WCA Council will publicly share revised versions of it. Each new release will be designated with a version number and release date. This is D&D version 1.0, released on November 8, 2019.

DRAFT

PART ONE

DOCTRINES AND DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

¶ 101. OUR HERITAGE OF FAITH

As a Wesleyan expression of Christianity, the _____ Church professes the Christian faith, established on the confession of Jesus as messiah, the Son of God, and resurrected Lord of heaven and earth. This confession, expressed by Simon Peter in Matthew 16:16 and Acts 2:32, is foundational. It implies not merely that Jesus is the unique incarnate Word of God, but that He lives, calling all to receive Him as savior, and as the one to whom all authority has been given.

This faith has been tested and proved since its proclamation by Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the resurrection. It was defended by the women and men of the early church, many of whom gave their lives as testimony. Their labor, enabled and inspired by the Holy Spirit, resulted in the canon of scripture as the sufficient rule both for faith and practice (*kanon* in Greek means rule). It formulated creeds such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian definition, as accurate expressions of this faith.

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers preserved this testimony, insisting on the primacy of Scripture, the necessity of grace and faith, and the priesthood of all believers. Their doctrinal summations, the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Schleitheim Confession*, the *Articles of Religion*, and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, bore witness to this faith.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Pietists in all traditions sought to emphasize the experiential nature of this faith, as direct encounter with the risen Lord. They worked to develop the fruit of this faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in individual and communal life. These pietistic movements influenced many in the reformation traditions, including two Anglican brothers, John and Charles Wesley.

Through the organizing and publishing of these brothers, a distinctly Methodist articulation of Christian faith and life, of "practical divinity," emerged. Methodism placed particular emphasis on the universal work of grace, the new birth, and the fullness of salvation, entire sanctification or perfection. Methodists created structures and communities alongside the established church to facilitate the mission "to reform the nation, especially the church, and spread scriptural holiness over the land."

As ordinary Methodists moved to America, they brought this expression of faith with them. Although Methodism in England remained loyal to the established church until after John Wesley's death, the American revolution dictated the formation of a new church, independent

of the Church of England. Accordingly, in 1784, while gathered in Baltimore for the “Christmas Conference,” the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally constituted.

This new church adopted John Wesley’s revision of the Anglican Articles of Religion, the Methodist General Rules, a liturgy, and ordained the first Methodist clergy. Two other sources of authority were identified: the *Forty-Four Standard Sermons of John Wesley* and his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. When a constitution was adopted in 1808, the Restrictive Rules protected the Articles and General Rules from revocation or change.

Other Methodist expressions of “primitive Christianity” and “the scripture way of salvation” emerged. German-speaking Americans from pietistic Reformed, Anabaptist, and Lutheran traditions, created organizations with doctrine and discipline nearly identical to the English-speaking Methodist Episcopal Church. The work of Phillip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Jacob Albright, established the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association. A number of African American Methodists, including Richard Allen, Jarena Lee, and James Varick, helped establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion to better address racial discrimination and the injustices of slavery, while preserving doctrine and discipline.

Through separations and mergers Methodist Christians have preserved testimony to the risen and reigning Christ by holding themselves accountable to standards of doctrine and discipline. When the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, with the merger of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, both the Methodist Articles of Religion and the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith were accepted as doctrinal standards and deemed “congruent” articulations of this faith. The _____ Church preserves this heritage.

¶ 102. THE WESLEYAN WAY OF SALVATION

The gift of grace is available to all persons. Our Father in Heaven is not willing that any should be lost (Matthew 18:14), but that all may come to “the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). With St. Paul, thus, we affirm the proclamation found in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Grace is the manifestation of God’s love toward fallen creatures, to be freely received and freely given. This undeserved gift works to liberate humanity from both the guilt and power of sin, and live as children of God, freed for joyful obedience. In the classic Wesleyan expression, grace works in numerous ways throughout our lives, beginning with the general providence of God toward all.

God’s *preventing grace* refers to “the first dawning of grace in the soul,” mitigating the effects of original sin, even before we are aware of our need for God. It prevents the full consequences of humanity’s alienation from God and awakens conscience, giving an initial sense of God and

the first inclinations toward life. Received prior to our ability to respond, preventing grace enables genuine response to the continuing work of God's grace.

God's convincing grace leads us to what the Bible terms "repentance," awakening in us a desire to "flee the wrath to come" and enabling us to begin to "fear God and work righteousness."

God's justifying grace works by faith to bring reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, what God does for us. It is pardon for sin and ordinarily results in assurance, "God's Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God."

God's sanctifying grace begins with God's work of regeneration, sometimes referred to as "being born again." It is God's work in us as we continually turn to Him and seek to be perfected in His love. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit works to replace sin with the fruit of the Spirit. With Wesley, we believe that a life of holiness or "entire sanctification" should be the goal of each individual's journey with God.

Our ultimate hope and promise in Christ is glorification, where our souls and bodies are perfectly restored.

¶ 103. PRINCIPLES OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER

Wesley said, "there is no holiness but social." By referring to "social holiness," Wesley meant that the road to holiness was one that we could not travel by ourselves, but rather involved the community of faith at every step along the way.

Our longing and hope is that our church may:

1. Remain rooted and grounded in the scriptures and in the historic teachings of the Christian church as defined in our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, and understood through the Wesleyan lens of faith.
2. Aspire to introduce all people, without exception, to Jesus Christ, recognizing that the mission in which we are engaged has eternal consequences. We are committed to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28 to go into all the world to make disciples of Christ, teaching and baptizing in His name.
3. Lead all those who experience new birth in Jesus to deepen and grow in their relationship with Him, inviting the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruits within their lives as they similarly manifest the gifts of that Spirit. We encourage all to participate in discipleship and accountability groups, such as Wesleyan class and band meetings, and to utilize all the other means of grace to achieve this end.
4. Model the love of God in order to respond to the summons to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. To this end we are committed to fulfill the Great Charge in John 21 of lovingly feeding and tending to the flock of God and others, worshiping God in spirit and in truth and watching over one

another in love. This the church does until, perfected in love, she experiences the fullness of God's restored Kingdom with Christ.

5. Recognize the laity as the people of God and a royal priesthood, chosen and empowered for the work of God in this world in full partnership with our clergy. We affirm the participation and leadership of those of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexes, and ages in the Body of Christ.

6. Encourage and affirm the call of God in the lives of clergy who are grounded in the authoritative witness of the Scriptures, set apart by the church, and recognized to possess the necessary gifts and graces for ministry in alignment and accountability with our settled doctrines and discipline.

7. Display a "catholic spirit" to the church universal, cherishing our place within the greater Body of Christ through mutual respect, cooperative relationships, and shared mission with others wherever possible. We envision a global church in which all work together, resourcing and learning from one another, to fulfill the tasks of the church given to her by God.

8. Provide an organization and structure that is lean yet able to accomplish its primary functions of support, with a connectional polity that can empower and multiply the gifts of all for the sake of Christ's work in the world.

¶ 103. HOLY SCRIPTURE

The canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (as specified in the Articles of Religion) are the primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured.

¶ 104. FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR OUR DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and express orthodox Christian teaching.

1. THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 He descended to the dead.
 On the third day He rose again;
 He ascended into heaven,
 Is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic** church,

the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and the life everlasting. Amen.

** universal

2. THE NICENE CREED (A.D. 381)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from
true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all
things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was
incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will
have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the
Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church. We acknowledge one
baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and
the life of the world to come. Amen.

* universal

3. THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON (A.D. 451)

Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our
Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same Person,
That He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man,
of a reasonable soul and body consisting of one substance with the Father as
regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards
His manhood, like us in all respects, apart from sin.

Begotten of His Father before the ages as regards His Godhead,

But in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the
God-bearer.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,

must be confessed to be in two natures, without confusion, without changes, without division, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, And the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

¶ 105. CONSTITUTIVE STANDARDS As is the case in many Christian communities, we recognize additional statements of faith that are consistent with the creedal tradition of the church universal but which also express our church's particular emphases and concerns, as well as our theological heritage of faith. These constitutive standards embody the "faith once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3) and serve as a bulwark against false teaching, providing the framework for the praise of God in our teaching (orthodoxy), the development of our collective theology, and the launching point for our living and service (orthopraxis.) Recognizing the complementary streams of the Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren faith communities, both the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith define the doctrinal boundaries of our church, until such time as a combined Articles of Faith may be approved by the church.

1. THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were finalized in 1571 to define the doctrine of the Church of England. When Methodism emerged as a church, independent of the Church of England two centuries later, John Wesley abbreviated the formulation to 24 Articles. An additional article dealing with the duty of Christians to civil authority was added by the Methodist Episcopal Church when it was formed in 1784. The Articles were officially adopted by the General Conference of 1808, when the first Restrictive Rule was also implemented, and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939 when three Methodist communions within America became one. The Twenty-Five Articles are as follows:

Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and good; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article II - Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile us to His Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article VI - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam,

whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII - Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Article IX - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Article XII - Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII - Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XIV - Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

Article XV - Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

Article XVI - Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

Article XVII - Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

Article XIX - Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX - Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI - Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV - Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man

may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

The following Article from the *Methodist Protestant Discipline* is placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.]

Of Sanctification (*from the Methodist Protestant Discipline*)

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth all from sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).

Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

2. THE CONFESSION OF FAITH OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

In 1809, the Evangelical Association adopted a German translation of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Articles of Religion, adding an article on the last judgement from the Augsburg Confession. These were reduced to twenty-one in 1816, omitting polemical articles against Roman Catholics and Anabaptists, and later condensed to nineteen. In 1815, the United Brethren in Christ adopted a Confession of Faith based on an 1814 Confession and 1789 *Lehre* by Philip William Otterbein. A more comprehensive Confession was composed in 1889, including an article on sanctification reflecting the influence of the Heidelberg Catechism. The 1946 conference that formed the Evangelical United Brethren Church adopted both the Articles of Religion and Confession. In 1962 a new Confession of Faith was completed, including articles on "Sanctification and Christian Perfection" (Article XI) and "The Judgement and Future State" (Article XII). This was adopted in the 1968 merger with the Methodist Church that produced the United Methodist Church.

Article I - God

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of

his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

Article II - Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.

Article III - The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

Article IV - The Holy Bible

We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.

Article V - The Church

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

Article VI - The Sacraments

We believe the Sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian's profession and of God's love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.

We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.

Article VII - Sin and Free Will

We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

Article VIII - Reconciliation Through Christ

We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.

Article IX - Justification and Regeneration

We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections. We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.

Article X - Good Works

We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.

Article XI - Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Article XII - The Judgment and the Future State

We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.

Article XIII - Public Worship

We believe divine worship is the duty and privilege of man who, in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. We believe divine worship is essential to the life of the Church, and that the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

We believe the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and *Discipline* of the Church.

Article XIV - The Lord's Day

We believe the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.

Article XV - The Christian and Property

We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church's mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.

Article XVI - Civil Government

We believe civil government derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.

¶ 106. NORMATIVE WESLEYAN STANDARDS

Representing the normative contributions and emphases of Methodism's articulation of the Christian faith, the Wesleyan Standards have, to one degree or another, been broadly shared between the spiritual descendants of the eighteenth century evangelical renewal led by John and Charles Wesley. These standards teach us what it means to be Methodist and the teachings of our communities should be consistent with them. These include the following:

1. FORTY-FOUR STANDARD SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY Intended to provide patterns of preaching and teaching for the people called Methodists, John Wesley published several editions of his sermons, beginning in 1746, to set down what he found as "the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men." The compilation of forty-four* of those sermons were intended to provide a "model deed" for what was preached from a Methodist pulpit in the ongoing life of the church. These particular sermons were regarded by Wesley as being of distinct value, and intended to serve as "standards" for teaching Christian doctrine in the church:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Salvation by Faith</i> | 2. <i>The Almost Christian</i> |
| 3. <i>Awake, Thou That sleepest</i> | 4. <i>Scriptural Christianity</i> |
| 5. <i>Justification By Faith</i> | 6. <i>The Righteousness of Faith</i> |
| 7. <i>The Way to the Kingdom</i> | 8. <i>The First-Fruits of the Spirit</i> |
| 9. <i>The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption</i> | 10. <i>The Witness of the Spirit - Discourse I</i> |
| 11. <i>The Witness of our own Spirit</i> | 12. <i>The Means of Grace</i> |
| 13. <i>The Circumcision of the Heart</i> | 14. <i>The Marks of the New Birth</i> |
| 15. <i>The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God</i> | |
| 16-28. <i>Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (13 Discourses)</i> | |
| 29. <i>The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law</i> | |
| 30-31. <i>The Law Established through Faith Discourse (2 Discourses)</i> | |
| 32. <i>The Nature of Enthusiasm</i> | 33. <i>A Caution against Bigotry</i> |
| 34. <i>Catholic Spirit</i> | 35. <i>Christian Perfection</i> |
| 36. <i>Wondering Thoughts</i> | 37. <i>Satan's Devices</i> |
| 38. <i>Original Sin</i> | 39. <i>The New Birth</i> |
| 40. <i>The Wilderness State</i> | 41. <i>Heaviness through Manifold Temptations</i> |
| 42. <i>Self-Denial</i> | 43. <i>The Cure of Evil Speaking</i> |
| 44. <i>The Use of Money</i> | |

* The larger collection of Wesley's sermons contains messages that are also instructive to believers as an expression of Wesley's "practical divinity."

2. THE EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT First published in 1755, John Wesley's New Testament text is based upon the King James Version and Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The notes were aimed at the "unlearned reader"

and provide historical context for and Wesleyan theological interpretation of the Scriptures, drawing upon work of four earlier commentaries.

¶ 107. THE GENERAL RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES

In order to make explicit the expectations upon those who are members of the Methodist societies, John Wesley first devised a set of rules in 1738, publishing it five years later. The General Rules were subsequently adopted by the American Methodist Church in 1785, one year after its formation. The General Rules provide a helpful summation of the kind of intentional discipleship which marked early Methodism, summed up in three simple rubrics: do no harm, do good to all, and stay connected to the sacramental and devotional life of the church. The Rules thus remain a part of the Constitution and are protected by the Restrictive Rules.

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

“In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities. This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called **classes**, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.
2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing;

the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:

The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence.

Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that “we are not to do good unless *our hearts be free to it.*”

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.
By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them *falsely*, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

The public worship of God.

The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.

The Supper of the Lord.

Family and private prayer.

Searching the Scriptures.

Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls."

¶ 108. LITURGICAL NORMS AND GUIDELINES Giving voice to the living faith of the Wesleyan movement, the following are suitable as guides for our corporate life of worship:

- a. The Orders of Sunday and Daily Service
- b. The Rites and Ritual of the Church, including but not limited to:
 - i. The Services of Baptismal Covenant, including rites for Membership and Confirmation
 - ii. The Services of Holy Communion
 - iii. The Service of Death and Resurrection
 - iv. The Service of Christian Marriage
 - v. The Services of Consecration & Ordination
 - vi. The Service for Covenant Renewal
- c. Recommended collections of Hymns and Songs

¶ 109. OUR THEOLOGICAL TASK – *(This section will be composed by a doctrinal task force when the _____ Church is organized.)*

PART TWO THE CONSTITUTION

¶ 201. From its earliest days, the christian church has been marked as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These four qualities, inseparably joined with one another, bear witness to the origin, nature, and mission of the church as the Body of Christ called to reflect Christ's Lordship. As those who have experienced the redeeming love of God, the church exists to reflect God's holy and perfect love to all, to boldly proclaim God's Word, to make faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and to work for the redemption of the world.

Following in the Methodist tradition of organizing together under a common discipline, the _____ Church adopts the following Constitution to enable us to "watch over each other in love."

¶ 202 SECTION ONE—FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Article I. Name—The name of the Church shall be the _____ Church. This name may be translated freely into languages other than English as the General Conference may determine.

Article II. Doctrinal Foundation—The doctrines of the Church shall be those embraced within the historic creeds of the church, our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, and the core Wesleyan tradition as defined within the *Doctrines and Discipline*, with the Holy Scriptures understood to be our primary rule for faith and practice.

Article III. The Mission of the Church—To the glory of God, the _____ Church shall be a movement devoted to intentional discipleship and church multiplication, spreading scriptural holiness across the world by making disciples of Christ, loving and caring for all those both within and outside of our fellowship, and worshiping God in both Spirit and in Truth.

Article IV. A Church For All—All persons are of sacred worth, made in God's image. All are thus welcome within our churches to join with others in the worship of God and to participate in its programs. Upon repentance of their sin, professing faith in Jesus Christ, having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and demonstrating a sincere desire for a holy life, persons may become members in any local church within the connection.

Article V. The Church Universal—The _____ Church is a part of the greater Body of Christ and we celebrate wherever Jesus is named as Lord. We affirm the validity of other expressions of the Trinitarian Christian faith. We commit ourselves to work with Christians of other traditions for proclamation of the gospel, the work of God's kingdom, and the building up of the church.

¶ 203 SECTION TWO – ORGANIZATION

Article VI. The General Conference—In continuity with the Methodist tradition of “conferring together,” there shall be a General Conference of the _____ Church that shall initially meet once every two years during the first six years of the church’s existence, and thereafter meet once every six years at such time and in such place as shall be determined by the General Conference or by its duly authorized committees. It shall be composed of no fewer than 200 nor more than 700 delegates, one half of whom shall be clergy and one half of whom shall be lay, elected by the annual or regional conferences on a basis proportional to their membership. The General Conference may at its discretion include within that number a limited number of delegates, with or without voice and vote, from other autonomous Methodist bodies, including the Methodist Church in Great Britain. A special session of the General Conference to deal with a particular issue or need may be called by a majority vote of the Conference or of its episcopal leadership.

The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters that are distinctly connectional, including:

1. To define the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of those who serve as deacons, elders, local pastors, and other leaders within the Church.
2. To define the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of church membership, which shall be open to all who believe, irrespective of race, color, gender, or disability.
3. To define the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of the episcopacy and to provide for their selection, continuance, and discontinuance.
4. To determine the powers of annual conferences, regional conferences, and other connectional associations within the Church, providing as appropriate for each such body to adapt structures that may best maximize their mission.
5. To determine the boundaries of regional conferences, and where there are no regional conferences, to determine the boundaries of annual conferences.
6. To establish and give oversight to such general boards, program agencies, or commissions and to form ministry partnerships as shall be deemed necessary for strengthening and promoting the mission of the Church through the local church.
7. To determine a program for raising and distributing the funds that are necessary for the work of the Church.
8. To fix the ratio of representation to the General and any regional conferences, based upon the number of professing members in each annual conference and region.
9. To approve and revise the hymnals and rituals of the Church, providing for variations as shall be most helpful to particular contexts worldwide.
10. To provide a judicial system mandating uniform processes and procedures and protecting the rights of all those within the Church.
11. To act upon petitions received dealing with church organization and polity, and resolutions dealing with non-disciplinary matters. In order to effectively speak on behalf of the whole church, resolutions dealing with matters related to our social

- witness shall require the support of three-quarters of the General Conference, and shall remain in effect only until the next General Conference convenes.
12. To adopt or revise a statement of Our Social Witness, provided that such adoption or revision shall require a three-quarters vote of the General Conference.
 13. In the absence of a regional conference, to provide for the oversight and/or governance of institutions related to the church such as hospitals, schools, or other such entities.
 14. To enact other legislation it determines would be helpful to the mission of the Church, subject to the limitations and restrictions of the Constitution of the Church.

Article VII. Annual Conferences—Annual conferences shall be formed for the purpose of connecting clergy and laity for shared ministry and accountability across a geographical region. The voting membership of an annual conference shall be composed of active deacons, elders, and local pastors, and retired clergy who are serving a church or ministry at least ¼ time, as well as an equal number of lay members elected by each charge or by the district or conference. Each charge shall be entitled to as many lay members as there are appointed clergy.

In addition to coming together for edification, fellowship, and inspiration, the annual conference shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. To create a program of ministry within its area that can fulfill the mission of the church and enhance its witness.
2. To determine a program for raising and distributing funds necessary to conduct the work and mission of the Church in its region.
3. To elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference as per the number determined by the General Conference. Clergy delegates shall be members in full connection in good standing who have served a minimum of two years preceding their election. Lay delegates shall have been professing members of the _____ Church, or its predecessors, for at least two years preceding their election. Both clergy and lay delegates shall be elected by a minimum of fifty percent of votes cast plus one.
4. To vote on all constitutional amendments as approved by the General Conference and distributed to the annual conferences for ratification.
5. To approve the ordination of clergy as recommended by the annual conference board of ministry.

Article VIII. Regional Conferences—General Conference may establish regional conferences for the purposes of coordinating and conducting the mission of the Church around the world. The regional conferences shall be composed of clergy and lay delegates in equal number from the annual conferences within each regional conference, on a basis proportional to their membership. The regional conferences shall meet at least once every six years preceding the General Conference. The powers of regional conferences shall include:

1. To promote the mission of the Church in the area of the world in which it is located.
2. To recommend to the General Conference the boundaries of annual conferences within their respective areas.
3. To establish and give oversight to such boards, agencies, or commissions and to form ministry partnerships as may be helpful in the fulfillment of the church's mission in their area.
4. To provide for the oversight and/or governance of institutions related to the church such as hospitals, schools, or other such entities.

The General Conference may specify additional powers for regional conferences subject to the limitations and restrictions of the Constitution of the Church.

Article IX. The Episcopacy—The general superintendency of the _____ Church shall be entrusted to bishops who shall lead the church in all spiritual and temporal matters. Bishops shall be elected as per the procedures established by the General Conference and shall serve at its pleasure to guard the faith, order, unity, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church. Bishops shall have a fair hearing before any action to remove them from office, but shall not be entitled to an appeal. Upon removal from office, they would continue to serve as clergy, unless removed by the judicial process (Article XI).

Article X. The Judiciary—The General Conference shall create a General Council of Appeals, determining the number, terms, and qualifications of its members, as well as their method of election and the filling of any vacancies. All decisions of the Council shall be final.

The Council shall:

1. Determine the constitutionality of any action or decision of the General Conference upon an appeal of one-fifth of the members of that Conference, or upon a majority of the active episcopal leaders of the church.
2. Determine the constitutionality of any action or decision of an annual or regional conference upon an appeal of one-fifth of the members of that conference.
3. Review and affirm, modify, or reverse any decision of law made by any bishop.
4. Act upon any petition for review seeking a ruling on the legality, meaning, application, and effect of any provision in this *Doctrines and Discipline* to any action taken by the General Conference, any of its regional or annual conferences, or bodies created or authorized by the General, regional, or annual conferences.
5. Provide for its own methods of organization and procedure.
6. Fulfill such other duties and powers in the service of the Church as the General Conference may determine.

Article XI. Right of Appeal—The General Conference shall establish for the Church a judicial system that shall guarantee to our clergy and to our members a right to trial and appeal.

¶ 204 SECTION THREE – THE RESTRICTIVE RULE AND AMENDMENTS

Article XII. *The Restrictive Rule*—In continuity with the Wesleyan tradition and historic expressions of Methodism, the General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our constitutive doctrinal standards as established by the Church(¶¶ 116-118) , or institute any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to those existing standards, except by a three-fourths vote of the General Conference, followed by the ratification of three-fourths of the membership present and voting in the annual conferences world-wide. Any new or combined Articles of Faith approved by the church shall also require the same three-fourths vote and ratification.

The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon belong to the church universal. They relate to our doctrinal standards as foundational documents, and their status as such shall not be changed, nor shall the creeds be altered or removed from our *Discipline*. Any other additions, deletions, or amendments to Part One of the *Discipline* shall require a two-thirds vote by the General Conference, with no ratification.

Article XIII. *Amendments*—Amendments to the Constitution may originate in the General Conference, a regional conference, or an annual conference. Except in the case of the Restrictive Rule (Article XII) which shall require a three-fourths majority of both the General Conference and the annual conference members present and voting, amendments shall be made upon a two thirds majority of the General Conference present and voting, followed by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the annual conferences present and voting. Following its ratification, the amendment voted upon shall become effective upon the announcement of its approval. Where appropriate, the General Conference may choose to enact enabling legislation for an amendment that shall be contingent upon the ratification of the amendment by the required majority.

PART THREE

OUR SOCIAL WITNESS

¶ 301. Since God first stirred the hearts of John and Charles Wesley to feed the hungry, visit those in prison, oppose slavery, and care for those in need, Methodists have believed in joining hands and hearts in the service of God and others, following the words of James 1.27 that the religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: “to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” We are convinced that faith if it is not accompanied by action is dead (James 2.17) and that, as Jesus reminded us, when we do not do what is needed to care for the least of our sisters and brothers, we likewise have not done so for Christ either. (Matthew 25.45)

It was in that spirit that the Methodist Episcopal Church became the first denomination in the world to adopt a formal Social Creed in 1908, spurred by the Social Gospel in response to the deplorable working conditions of millions. Though reflective of its own time, the statement is still remarkably relevant even today, calling for, among other things, “equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life, principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions, abolition of child labor, the suppression of the ‘sweating system,’ a reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, a release from employment one day in seven, and for a living wage in every industry.” In turn, that prophetic witness was subsequently embraced by each of the other branches of Methodism and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and continues this day within the _____ Church. Our Social Witness represents a consensus vision of what it means to be faithful disciples in a world that remains in rebellion against its Creator, wracked by violence and unfettered greed. It is a summons to prayerfully consider how to “do good” and “do no harm” to all as we put our faith into practice. Because it is important that the church speak to these issues with a clear and united voice, and in accordance with our Constitution, Article VI (¶ 203), changes to our Social Witness may be made only by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference.

¶ 302. OUR SOCIAL WITNESS TO THE WORLD

We believe that the Christian faith calls us to recognize that all persons irrespective of their station or circumstances in life have been made in the image of God and must be treated with dignity, justice, and respect

We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who are powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn. We believe human life begins at conception and abortion ends a human life.

We believe that all should have the right to work without grinding toil, in safe conditions, and in situations in which there is no exploitation by others. We respect the right of workers to engage in collective bargaining to protect their welfare. We pray that all should be allowed to freely follow their vocations, especially those who work on the frontiers of truth and knowledge and those who may enrich the lives of others with beauty and joy.

We believe that all have been summoned to care for the earth as our common home, stewarding its resources, sharing in its bounty, and exercising responsible consumption so that there is enough for all.

We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman.

We are saddened by all expressions of sexual behavior that do not recognize the sacred worth of each individual or that seek to exploit, abuse, objectify, or degrade others, or that represent less than God's intentional design for His children. While affirming a scriptural view of sexuality and gender, we welcome all to experience the redemptive grace of Jesus and are committed to being a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for any who may have experienced brokenness in their sexual lives.

We believe that children, whether through birth or adoption, are a sacred gift to us from God, and we accept our responsibility to both protect and nurture the youngest among us, particularly against such abuses as enforced child labor, involuntary conscription, human trafficking, and other such practices in the world.

We believe that followers of God have been called to exercise self-control and holiness in their personal lives, generosity and kindness in their relations with others, and grace in all matters of life.

We believe in the rule of justice and law in society, and in the pursuit of peace both between nations and individuals, and we offer ourselves to work in order to reduce at least some of the bitterness that has overflowed God's world.

¶ 303. OUR SOCIAL PRINCIPLES – *(The convening General Conference shall determine whether to establish a task force to develop specific principles for our social witness that shall provide counsel as to how biblical principles may be applied to social and cultural contexts.)*

PART FOUR THE COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

SECTION I FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

¶ 401. THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH. The _____ Church is a branch of the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic. (On the nature of the church, see Article XIII of the Articles of Religion and Article V of the Confession of Faith). Founded upon our belief in Jesus Christ, the church is of God and will be preserved to the end of time to worship God in spirit and in truth, to - preach God's Word faithfully, and offer the sacraments. All people stand in need of the grace that God has promised to extend to others through His body, the church. While it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of individuals, ours is the task of sharing the good news of God as we respond to the summons of Christ in Matthew 28: *"As you are going, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,"* even as Christ has promised to remain with us always, *"even to the end of the age."* We are called to build up all who believe, encouraging them to grow in holiness.

Following the example of early Methodists, we believe God has raised us up in order to "spread scriptural holiness across the land," embodying that "grand *depositum*" of the faith that John Wesley believed had been entrusted to "the people called Methodists," the continued striving for entire sanctification in our lives.

As individual believers in Christ, and as those gathered together in local congregations, our calling is to connect with the communities and the world around us, extending both grace and mercy. Growing in our personal faith and effectively discipling others are both life-long expressions of loving the Lord with all of our hearts, all of our being, and all of our minds, as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves.

¶ 402. BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE CHURCH'S MISSION. While seeking to be faithful to the whole tenor of the scriptures regarding the church, we acknowledge in particular four great themes regarding its life:

1. The Great Commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mark 12.30-31)
2. The Great Commission to make disciples of all nations and ethnicities, baptizing and teaching them all that Christ has commanded us. (Matthew 28.19-20)
3. The Great Charge to feed those who Christ has called His lambs and His sheep. (John 20.15-17)
4. The Great Conferral to receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20.22 and Acts 2.1-4)

¶ 403. OUR COVENANT IN CHRIST. We believe that God has called us to live together in a faithful covenant that expresses our commitments both to God and to each other. With John Wesley, we affirm that the scriptures know of no such thing as "solitary religion," but that we

have been designed to grow in our discipleship in the company of others. As a church, we are committed to a connectional organization that is meant to encourage such sharing and accountability, with the end goal of all being partners in the gospel and in our outreach to the world. This connection is founded in both our common doctrinal understandings, as well as in our core mission of sharing the gospel with the world. Towards that end, we celebrate our unity with one another at the table of the Lord that extends across the globe, crossing all boundaries of language, culture, customs, and social and economic distinctions.

¶ 404. THE MINISTRY OF THE LAITY. All Christians are called through their baptism to be in ministry to others, both as individuals and as a part of the church, using the gifts and graces with which they have been equipped by the Holy Spirit. Every layperson bears the responsibility for carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28.18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40), but likewise each has been given the power by God to do so. For like the variety of spiritual gifts described in the scriptures, the diversity of our outreach efforts knows no limit when we serve Christ with joy and thanksgiving. With other heirs of the Protestant Reformation, we embrace the notion of "the priesthood of all believers" and we call upon both laity and clergy to work together in a partnership of servant hood. As suggested in Ephesians 4.12-13, Christ has not given to pastors the task of doing the ministry by themselves, but of equipping those in the church for such works of service, so that "the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

We believe that the sharing of the gospel has thus been entrusted to the whole church, and that it is only as each individual, whether lay or clergy, bears witness to His grace, that the world may come to know Christ and respond to His invitation to have life in abundance. As the people of God, we must either win the world to Christ, or abandon it to those forces that oppose Him. Toward that end, the full participation of all who believe is vital and cannot be evaded if the gospel is to be heard and received.

¶ 405. SERVANT LEADERSHIP. In addition to the ministry of all believers, some have experienced the calling of God to serve in roles embracing both spiritual and administrative leadership. When such callings have been confirmed by the church, following a careful process of discernment and training, such individuals may be set aside by the church for ordained or licensed ministry, though such recognition does not release them from their prior calling in baptism to love and serve God. Those who have been granted both the privilege and responsibility of servant leadership within the church are called to exercise those roles in a full "partnership in the gospel" (Philippians 1.5) with the laity.

¶ 406. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP. Membership ("Professing Members") within a local congregation is open to all who are willing to repent of their sins and be baptized, professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, freely and knowingly assuming the vows of membership, and joining together with others in fellowship, witness, and service. Those wishing to become Professing Members shall present themselves to the pastor in charge of the local congregation and after consultation and discernment, the decision to accept an individual for membership

will solely remain with the pastor. For those who are unable to speak for themselves because of a physical or mental disability, a parent or sponsor may profess the vows on their behalf. Professing Members of a local congregation shall be considered as members of the entire _____ Church across the world. Those wishing to transfer their membership from one congregation of the _____ Church to another may do so by indicating such to the receiving pastor who shall send a request for the transfer to their previous congregation. Finally, persons may also be received into membership by transfer from other denominations and churches in which the Lordship of Jesus Christ is affirmed, subject to consultation, discernment and approval of the pastor of the local congregation. There shall only be one (1) category of membership within the church for statistical purposes: Professing Members. Local congregations are encouraged to maintain programs that are tailored to their unique needs to identify, communicate and connect with individuals within various constituency groups that may be nurtured into full Professing Members.

¶ 407. VOWS OF MEMBERSHIP. In continuity with Wesleyan tradition, those wishing to become professing members of the _____ Church shall be asked the following questions before being received into the church:

1. Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?
2. Do you accept the freedom and power that God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression, in whatever forms they may present themselves?
3. Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?
4. Do you confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put your whole trust in His grace, and promise to serve Him as your Lord?
5. Will you be loyal to Christ through the _____ Church and help to uphold it by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness to Christ in this world?

¶ 408. AFFILIATE AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS. Individuals who may reside in a community at a distance from their home church may request to become affiliate members of another local _____ congregations in order to participate in its services, programs, ministries and to receive pastoral care and oversight. The individual's home congregation shall be notified of any such arrangement, and affiliate members will continue to be counted and reported as a professing member of their home congregation. Those belonging to other denominations who desire to have a connection to a local _____ Church may do so by becoming associate members of that local church, in a similar arrangement to affiliate members.

¶ 409. AFFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP. Local congregations should annually conduct reviews of membership, with the goal of encouraging the continued discipleship and involvement of all. Professing Members who have not participated in any of the congregation's programs, ministries, stewardship, or worship opportunities for more than one year should be contacted and encouraged to find their place within the active life of the church. Those who have moved

out of the community, or may be homebound for physical or other reasons, but who wish to remain as members of the church may be allowed to do so, and the congregation should search for ways in which to continue to extend its spiritual care for them. The names of those who do not indicate a desire to do so, or who failed to respond to all efforts to contact them, may be moved to an inactive roll of the church where after three such years of inactivity they may be removed from the membership roll of the congregation. Should such individuals express a desire to reactivate their membership and participation in the church, however, their names may be restored at any time by an administrative action of the pastor.

¶ 410. PREPARATORY ROLL. Children who have been baptized but not yet confirmed may be placed upon a preparatory roll and remain on such until the time of their confirmation or eighteenth birthday.

¶ 411. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM. As a sacrament of the church, baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying both an affirmation of commitment by an individual (or if an infant, by his or her parents) and a claiming of that individual by God as a part of the Body of Christ. It is thus a means of marking a person as belonging to God and God's people. We believe that through baptism God makes available the grace necessary to receive the new birth. In concert with the worldwide church, as well as with believers from the earliest centuries of the Christian faith, we believe that God has expressly given to children a place within His Kingdom that should not be denied to them. Should a child be unable to speak for him or herself, parents or sponsors may profess the vows on their behalf, accepting the responsibility to keep that child close to the ministries of the church until they grow old enough to accept God's grace for themselves after participating in a program of confirmation or other substantial spiritual consultation with a pastor.

¶ 412. THE MODE AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM. Consistent with the broader understanding of the New Testament word *baptizo*, we believe that the sacrament of baptism may be performed following various modes, including sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, so long as water is used and vows are taken seriously and the sacrament performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because baptism represents an action of God in our lives, individuals should not repeat the sacrament of baptism, as God has remained faithful even when we are not. A reaffirmation of baptismal vows, however, such as at confirmation or other spiritually significant moments, is an appropriate way to remember what God has done in our baptisms and to be thankful. For those who are unable to speak for themselves because of physical or mental disability, a parent or sponsor may profess the vows on their behalf.

¶ 413. CONFIRMATION/DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING. Both baptized and unbaptized youth and adults who seek to be saved from their sins and profess faith in Jesus Christ are encouraged to either participate in confirmation or discipleship training in which the basic tenets of the gospel, Christianity, the history of our faith, and the practical meaning of church membership are taught. It is the particular duty of pastors to ensure that the participants are properly instructed and prepared to become professing members. Congregations are similarly

encouraged to take this responsibility seriously, as they pray and care for those who are undergoing instruction in what it means to faithfully follow Christ.

¶ 414. WITHDRAWAL AND TRANSFER. Members may upon contacting the church or pastor of their local congregation choose to withdraw their membership at any time, or transfer it to another congregation either within the _____ Church or elsewhere.

SECTION II THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

¶ 415. THE LOCAL CHURCH. The local church is a particular expression of the church universal, and a primary embodiment of the visible church of Jesus Christ in a particular place and time. It is within such settings that individuals may meet and grow in their love of Jesus Christ, as the Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments are duly administered, and persons are joined together in a community of discipleship charged with the bold task of bringing Christ to the world and the world to Christ. To the local church falls as well the task of caring for those within its community in mutual accountability.

¶ 416. FUNCTIONS OF A LOCAL CHURCH. Congregations shall be empowered to carry out their mission in a manner best suited to their own setting, provided that adequate provision is made to ensure that the following functions are implemented:

1. Regular worship of God that emphasizes His holiness, glory, and grace, utilizing such styles and formats as the church may determine best meets the needs of its congregants.
2. The discipleship of those of all ages, encouraging them to grow in their love and understanding of God and of His Word, that they may live as faithful disciples.
3. Ministry to those who may be both far and near to the congregation, presenting a winsome witness to the love and grace of God that others might be won to His love.
4. Pastoral care to all those within the congregation, as well as others from within the community who may have special needs for spiritual counsel or other assistance.

¶ 417. ADMINISTRATION OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS. Each congregation or pastoral charge shall be organized so as to adequately provide for oversight of the church's program, including its budget and financial matters, care for the facilities and real assets of the congregation, supervision and support of the pastors and staff, and the regular selection of its officers and leaders. This organization shall include the following:

1. A church council which shall meet at least three times annually to give oversight to the church's temporal and spiritual affairs. One such meeting each year shall be designated as the annual church conference at which time leadership decisions for the coming twelve months are made, and the church's continued participation in the _____ Church is annually affirmed. This board, composed of a cross-section of the membership with respect to age, race, gender, and other appropriate concerns, may also function as a finance committee, if there is not any such specific body within a church's organizational structure.

3. A board of trustees, which shall function as the legal guardians of all real property, as well as provide for the upkeep and maintenance of church facilities, and any engagement which the church may have in legal or other such matters.

4. A committee on staff-parish relations (SPRC), which shall provide support and oversight for those serving as the professional spiritual leaders of a congregation. The SPR shall also function as the liaison between the local congregation and the conference and bishop.

5. A committee on leadership, charged with the recruitment of church officers and the encouragement of all members to fully participate in the ministries and life of the congregation.

6. A finance committee charged with the responsibility for oversight and management of the congregation's budget and its financial matters.

7. With the approval of the presiding elder, congregations may elect to utilize a simpler one board organizational plan, or a similar arrangement combining the functions of various committees.

8. The church conference may establish additional committees or work groups as needed.

¶418. CHURCH CONFERENCE. When required to make major decisions, such as the purchase of property, the construction of facilities, taking on an encumbrance of debt, or annual decisions such as the approval of a budget and officers, a congregation shall hold a church conference. The membership of a church conference shall consist of the governing board, the pastor or pastors serving that appointment, any retired clergy who have located their membership in that congregation, all of the professing members of the congregation, including confirmed youth and the presiding elder or his or her designate.

¶ 419. PASTORAL CHARGES. One or more local congregations may constitute a pastoral charge that shall function as the connectional body related to the wider church and denomination. Each pastoral charge shall be served by a duly appointed ordained or licensed minister or, if such is unavailable, by a qualified and trained layperson or lay supply pastor. Those serving in a pastoral role within a congregation remain responsible both to meet the spiritual needs of those within the charge and to uphold the doctrines and discipline of the wider church, faithfully interpreting their meaning for all those under their care.

¶ 420. BOARD OF TRUSTEES. Within each local congregation of the _____ Church there shall be a board of trustees consisting of not less than five nor more than nine laity, representative of the church with respect to gender, race, and age, provided that all members shall be of legal age as determined by the relevant and controlling civil law. The pastor of the congregation(s) shall be a member with voice but without vote of the board of trustees and may not be counted for the purpose of achieving a quorum or calculating a majority.

1. *Election of Trustees.* Upon the recommendation of the committee on leadership, the board of trustees of each local congregation shall be elected by the church conference to a three-year term, and shall be equally divided into three classes, with one-third elected each year. A member of the local board of trustees may be re-elected for no more than one term, and no member may serve longer than six consecutive years. When a board of trustees is

organized for the first time as a congregation of the _____ Church, the board shall be divided into thirds with one-third serving one year, one-third serving two years, and one-third serving three years. At the end of each one-, two- and three-year period, the successors of these original members shall be elected as described above.

2. *Vacancies and Removal of Trustees.* Should a trustee withdraw from the membership of the _____ Church or be excluded therefrom, trusteeship therein shall automatically cease from the date of such withdrawal or exclusion. Should a trustee of a local church or a director of an incorporated local church refuse to execute properly a legal instrument relating to any property of the church when directed so to do by the church conference, or when he or she may be unable to carry out their responsibilities, and when all legal requirements have been satisfied in reference to such execution, the said church conference may by majority vote declare the trustee's or director's membership on the board of trustees or board of directors vacated. Vacancies occurring in a board of trustees shall be filled by election for the unexpired term. Such election shall be held in the same manner as for trustees. A vacancy occurring ad interim may be filled until the next church conference by the church council.

3. *Organization.* The board of trustees shall organize as follows:

a. Within thirty days after the beginning of the ensuing calendar or conference year (whichever applies to the term of office), each board of trustees shall convene at a time and place designated by the chairperson or the vice chairperson for the purpose of electing officers of the said board for the ensuing year and transacting any other business properly brought before it.

b. The board shall elect from the membership thereof, to hold office for a term of one year or until their successors shall be elected, a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and, if need requires, a treasurer; provided, however, that the chairperson and vice chairperson shall not be members of the same class; and provided further, that the offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the same person. The church local conference may, if it is necessary to conform to the local laws, substitute the designations *president* and *vice president* for and in place of *chairperson* and *vice chairperson*.

c. Where necessary as a result of the incorporation of a local church, the corporation directors, in addition to electing officers as provided above, shall ratify and confirm by appropriate action and, if necessary, elect as officers of the corporation the treasurer or treasurers, as the case may be, elected by the church conference in accordance with the provisions of the *Doctrines and Discipline*. If more than one account is maintained in the name of the corporation in any financial institution or institutions, each such account and the treasurer thereof shall be appropriately designated.

4. *Meetings.* The board shall meet at the call of the pastor or of its chairperson at least three times per year at such times and places as shall be designated in a notice to each trustee and the pastor(s) at a reasonable time prior to the appointed time of the meeting. Waiver of notice may be used as a means to validate meetings legally where the usual notice is impracticable. A majority of the members of the board of trustees shall constitute a quorum.

5. *Powers and Limitations.* The board shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

a. Oversight, and care of all real property owned by the local church and of all property and equipment acquired directly by the local church or by any society, board, class, commission, or similar organization connected therewith. The board shall not, however, violate the rights of any local church organization elsewhere granted in the *Doctrines and Discipline*; nor prevent or interfere with the pastor in the use of any of the said property for religious services or other proper meetings or purposes recognized by the law, usages, and customs of the church.

b. The use of a local congregation's facilities or properties by an outside organization may be granted by the board of trustees after consideration of whether the purposes and programs of that organization are consistent with the values of the congregation and the _____ Church.

c. Should the congregation possess a parsonage offered to the pastor for housing, the chair of the trustees or his or her designee shall make an annual review of the home to ensure that it is properly maintained (See ¶ 422.3g.). Parsonages shall be mutually respected as the property of the congregation and the home of the pastoral family.

d. Subject to the direction of the church conference, the board of trustees shall receive and administer all bequests made to the local church; shall receive and administer all trusts; and shall invest all trust funds of the local church in conformity with laws of the country, state, or like political unit in which the local church is located. Nevertheless, upon notice to the board of trustees, the church conference may delegate the power, duty, and authority to receive, administer, and invest bequests, trusts, and trust funds to a permanent endowment committee or to a local church foundation and shall do so in the case of bequests, trusts, or trust funds for which the donor has designated the committee or the local church foundation to receive, administer, or invest the same.

e. The board shall conduct an annual accessibility audit of their buildings, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify any physical, architectural, or communication barriers exist that impede the full participation of people with disabilities and shall make plans and determine priorities for the elimination of all such barriers.

6. *Annual Report.* The board shall annually make a written report to the church conference, in which shall be included the following:

a. The legal description and the reasonable valuation of each parcel of real estate owned by the church;

b. The specific name of the grantee in each deed of conveyance of real estate to the local church;

c. An inventory and the reasonable valuation of all personal property owned by the local church;

d. The amount of income received from any income-producing property and a detailed list of expenditures in connection therewith;

e. The amount received during the year for building, rebuilding, remodeling, and improving real estate, and an itemized statement of expenditures;

f. Outstanding capital debts and how contracted;

g. A detailed statement of the insurance carried on each parcel of real estate, indicating whether restricted by co-insurance or other limiting conditions and whether adequate insurance is carried;

h. The name of the custodian of all legal papers of the local church, and where they are kept;

i. A detailed list of all trusts of which the local church is the beneficiary, specifying where and how the funds are invested

j. An evaluation of all church properties, including the chancel areas, to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities; and when applicable, a plan and timeline for the development of accessible church properties.

7. Purchase of Property. Prior to the purchase by a local church of any real estate, a resolution authorizing such action shall be passed by the church conference, with the members thereof acting in their capacity as members of the corporate body, by a majority vote of those present and voting at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, provided that not less than ten days' notice of such meeting and the proposed action shall have been given from the pulpit and in the weekly bulletin, newsletter, or electronic notice of the local church or other means if required or permitted by local law, and provided further, that written consent to such action shall be given by the pastor and the presiding elder.

8. Sale or Transfer of Church Property. Any real property owned by or in which an incorporated local church has any interest may be sold, transferred, leased for a term of thirty days or more (which shall include leases for less than thirty days if such a lease is consecutive with the same lessee), or mortgaged subject to the following procedure and conditions:

a. Notice of the proposed action and the date and time of the regular or special meeting of the members of the church conference be given at least ten days prior thereto from the pulpit of the church and in its weekly bulletin, newsletter, or electronic notice or other means if required or permitted by local law.

b. A resolution authorizing the proposed action shall be passed by a majority vote of the members of the church conference present and voting at any regular or special meetin.

c. The resolution authorizing such proposed action shall direct and authorize the corporation's board of directors to take all necessary steps to carry out the action and to cause to be executed, as hereinafter provided, any necessary contract, deed, bill of sale, mortgage, or other written instrument.

d. The board of directors/trustees at any regular or special meeting shall take such action and adopt such resolutions as may be necessary or required by the local laws.

e. Any required contract, deed, bill of sale, mortgage, or other written instrument necessary to carry out the action so authorized shall be executed in the name of the corporation (or the local church if unincorporated) by any two of its officers, and any written instrument so executed shall be binding and effective as the action of the corporation.

9. Restrictions on Proceeds of Mortgage or Sale. No real property on which a church building or parsonage is located shall be mortgaged to provide for the current budget or operating expense of a local church without the approval of sixty percent of the members and that of the presiding elder.

¶ 421. LOCAL CHURCH FOUNDATIONS. Congregations may, with the approval of a church conference, establish such foundations, permanent endowment funds, or other entities as may be beneficial to the long-term mission and ministries of the church. The responsibility for

management of the foundation may be delegated to the trustees or a separate committee may be established to manage the affairs of the foundation.

¶ 422. THE STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE. In each local congregation or charge there shall be a staff-parish relations committee or SPRC elected annually by the church conference which shall give oversight to all personnel hired by a congregation as well as serve as a liaison between the bishop, presiding elder, and conference, and the local congregation with respect to appointed clergy. The committee shall take special care to ensure that all those who are vocationally engaged on behalf of the congregation shall be encouraged to better develop and use their gifts and graces for the benefit of the church and the furtherance of its mission.

1. Membership. The committee shall consist of not fewer than five nor more than nine laity who are representative of the total parish with the following additional members: the lay leader, one or more lay members of the annual conference, and the appointed clergy (who shall have voice but no vote), wherever possible a young adult or youth (who may serve for a term lasting one year, with the possibility of re-election to one additional term for a maximum of two years. Staff members or the immediate family of a pastor or staff member shall not serve on the committee, and only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household may serve at the same time. In order to provide for continuity and experience, members shall be divided into three classes with three-year terms, with the exception of the youth or young adult member, the lay leader and lay member(s) of the annual conference. In charges where more than one congregation constitutes a single appointment, the committee shall include at least one representative and the lay leader from each local church.

2. Meetings. The committee shall meet at least quarterly, and may meet additionally as needed at the call of the bishop, presiding elder, the pastor, or the chairperson of the committee. Staff members under the oversight of the committee may also request to meet with the group by notifying the chair who shall determine an appropriate time for such a meeting. The committee shall not meet without the knowledge of the pastor or the presiding elder and the pastor shall be present at all meetings except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself. The committee may, by majority vote, choose to meet in executive session in order to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of its discussions regarding staff members. The committee may meet with the presiding elder without the pastor or appointed staff under consideration being present. However, the pastor or appointed staff under consideration shall be notified prior to such meeting with the presiding elder and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter.

3. Duties and Responsibilities. The committee shall be charged with the following:

a. To identify and promote the mission and values of the congregation as expressed through its appointed and hired staff, recommending the establishment of positions as needed, approving job descriptions, and setting priorities for the work of ministry within the parish and beyond.

b. To promote unity within the congregation by helping to communicate its ministry goals and common values, as well as maintaining a healthy flow of information between the pastors and staff and the members of the congregation.

c. To encourage and strengthen the pastors and staff members and their families in their ministries and individual lives of faith, caring for those who care for others.

d. To conduct at least an annual evaluation of the effectiveness in ministry, the use of their gifts, skills, time, and priorities of the pastors and other staff members. Consideration should also be given as to how those ministries may be encouraged and enriched for the coming year through continuing education and other professional growth opportunities.

e. To consult with the pastor and staff concerning vacation, study leaves, sabbaticals, pulpit supply, and other times away, affirming the importance of such events for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of those involved, and providing appropriate approval for such absences. The committee shall work with the pastor and other staff persons to ensure an appropriate plan is in place for covering ministry responsibilities during times of absence.

f. To recommend to the finance committee compensation levels for appointed clergy, including pension and health benefits, and housing allowances where no parsonage is provided, as well as compensation and benefits for lay staff employees.

g. Working with the board of trustees, to ensure that the parsonage where provided is maintained properly and is mutually respected as the property of the church and the personal home of the clergy family. It is recommended that the condition of the parsonage be reviewed annually by the chair of the SPRC, the chair of the trustees, and the pastor.

h. To help identify and encourage those individuals who may feel a calling to ordained ministry and, after a period of conversation and examination, recommend to the church conference such individuals as candidates for ordained ministry.

i. To serve as the transition team to work with the presiding elder and bishop in the selection and appointment of a new pastor to the congregation, provided that this function may be assigned by the church conference or church council to a committee specifically formed for this task.

¶ 423. THE COMMITTEE ON LEADERSHIP. There shall be elected annually a committee on leadership whose task shall be to identify, develop, encourage, and recommend individuals to serve as leaders and officers of the congregation. The committee shall also be charged with encouraging each of the members of the church in the use of their spiritual gifts and abilities for the greater mission of the church, as well as for growing in their own spiritual lives.

1. Membership. The committee shall be composed of five to nine persons, including the pastor, who shall serve as the chair of the committee, and the lay leader of the charge, who shall serve as the committee's vice-chair. In addition, all other clergy shall be members of this committee. The members shall be divided into three classes, each of which will serve for three years (except for the pastor, lay leader, and other clergy). Only one person from a family household may serve on the committee and retiring members of the committee shall not be eligible to succeed themselves without at least one year between their terms.

2. Duties and Responsibilities. In recommending leaders and officers to the church conference for election, the committee shall give careful consideration to identifying individuals who represent the entire congregation with respect to age, gender, race, and other pertinent criteria, so that the church's leaders may be reflective of the kingdom which Christ has opened to those of all backgrounds and stations in life.

¶ 424. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE. In order to provide careful oversight of congregational funds, a finance committee shall be organized to provide a regular review of the church's contributions and spending, or its functions assumed by the church council (¶ 417.1).

1. Membership. The committee shall be composed of a chair and vice-chair, the church treasurer, the church financial secretary, the lay leader, the lay delegate or delegates to the annual conference, the chairperson of the church council, the chair or representative of the staff-parish relations committee, the chair or representative of the board of trustees, the pastor or another designated clergy person under appointment to the congregation, and other such members as the committee on leadership may suggest. The positions of treasurer and financial secretary shall not be held by the same individual or by members of the same immediate family. The members shall be divided into three classes, each of which will serve for three years for the purpose of providing continuity on the committee. If the church treasurer or financial secretary are not members of the local church they shall be members with voice but not vote.

2. Duties and Responsibilities. Under the direction of the church conference and the church council, the finance committee shall:

a. Recommend to the church conference a realistic and faithful annual budget, based upon the consideration of pledges, other commitments, and past receipts and expenses. In order to provide for maximum transparency, churches are encouraged to make available to any of their members a detailed line-item budget for their review. After approval, budgets may be adjusted throughout the year with the consent of the church council upon recommendation of the finance committee.

b. Ensure integrity in the handling of all church funds, including division of responsibilities and providing adequate internal controls, as well as recording and honoring all donor restrictions on gifts.

c. Provide for an annual audit of the financial statements of the local church and all its organizations and accounts. A local church audit is defined as an independent evaluation of the financial reports and records and the internal controls of the local church by a qualified person or persons. The audit shall be performed by an audit committee composed of persons unrelated to any persons on the finance committee or who handles any of the church's money, or by an independent certified public accountant (CPA), accounting firm, or equivalent. The report of the audit shall be delivered to the church council and to the church conference.

d. Recommend to the church council appropriate and proper depositories for all church funds. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in the name of the local church.

e. Establish written financial policies to document the internal controls of the local church and procedures for counting offerings and disbursing funds.

f. Where there is no stewardship committee, the committee shall encourage the ongoing financial support of the church by its members, helping all to grow in their faithful stewardship of God's resources.

¶ 425. THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE. There may be a stewardship committee formed by the local church. This committee shall have the responsibility for raising the funds to support

the budget of the local church. The committee shall also encourage the ongoing financial support of the church by its members, helping all to grow in their faithful stewardship of God's resources.

¶ 426. SPECIFIC MINISTRY AND MISSION GROUPS. Each congregation of the _____ Church may form (or join with other congregations in forming) age and gender specific groups to enhance their outreach and ministry to those who share significant commonalities in their lives. The composition and governance of such groups shall be at the discretion of each congregation.

SECTION III NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES

¶ 427. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CONGREGATIONS. In accord with the historic Methodist mission of "spreading scriptural holiness across the land," the following shall govern the establishment of new faith communities within the _____ Church:

1. A new local church shall be established with the consent of the area bishop and the presiding elder within whose district the new work will be established. A new local church work may be initiated by the area bishop, the presiding elder of the District in which the new work will be established or by an existing congregation within the conference. Those given the responsibility for establishing a particular new local church shall avail themselves of existing demographic, lifestyle and ethnographic information in order to determine target populations and potential locations for the new local congregation.
2. The bishop may appoint a pastor to launch a new local church in cooperation with the presiding elder and other established churches in a geographical area.
3. Every pastor appointed to begin a new local work, without regard to who initiated the new work, is to have a mentor knowledgeable and experienced in church planting. The mentor, along with the presiding elder and when appropriate the senior Pastor of the mothering church serve to support, strengthen and provide accountability to the new church pastor and the new church leadership.
4. Sufficient financial and physical resources should be thoroughly evaluated. In addition, benchmarks for success and the effectiveness of both the church planter pastor and the new church lay leadership are to be established in collaboration with the presiding elder, mentor, and when applicable, the senior pastor of the mother church.

PART FIVE THE MINISTRY OF THE CLERGY

¶¶ 501-516. *These paragraphs will deal with the process of credentialing and ordaining clergy and are still under review by the WCA Council. These provisions will be released once that review is completed.*

¶ 517. **VALUES IN CLERGY DEPLOYMENT.** The _____ Church deploys clergy (elders, deacons, and local pastors) to local churches and other places of ministry using a collaborative model requiring consultation, collaboration, and consensus between the local church or ministry setting, the office of the bishop, and the clergy. The goal of the deployment process is to match local churches with gifted, called, and skilled clergy who are best suited for leadership and pastoral ministry in a local church's particular cultural and ministry context. The _____ Church thus embraces several key values that must be considered in the deployment of clergy:

1. All local churches and ministry settings will be open to all qualified and active clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age.
2. Clergy will have the freedom to preach and to lead the local church within the doctrinal and administrative boundaries of *The Doctrines and Discipline of the* _____ Church.
3. The presiding elder in each district shall assist local churches in the process of clergy deployment and transition planning.
4. Clergy deployment across conference lines should be encouraged as a way of creating mobility and to match the best available clergy to churches in a wide variety of ministry settings. The _____ Church will maintain an online list of available clergy and churches with pastoral openings across the connection.
5. The _____ Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of a multi-cultural church, including the encouragement of cross-racial and cross-cultural clergy placements. When such placements are made, annual conferences should provide specific training for the clergy persons so placed and their congregations.

¶ 518. **CONSULTATION AND CLERGY DEPLOYMENT.** Consultation is the process whereby the presiding elder confers regularly with the pastor and the staff-parish relations committee of the local church to evaluate the ongoing pastoral needs of the congregation. Clergy deployment should take into account the unique situation of the local church and also the unique gifts and evidence of God's grace of a particular pastor. To assist local churches, clergy, presiding elders, and bishops in the deployment process, church and clergy profiles, a clergy evaluation, and deployment advisory forms must be completed or updated annually. annual conference boards of ordained ministry may develop the appropriate forms to fit their context.

1. Church Profile. The presiding elder shall develop with the pastor and the staff parish relations committee a profile that reflects the needs, characteristics, and opportunities for mission of the local church consistent with the overall mission of the _____ Church. The profile shall be reviewed annually and updated when appropriate, particularly when a pastoral change is anticipated. The profile shall include:

- a. The general context of the geographical area in which a congregation finds itself, including demographics and economic factors.
- b. The size, financial condition, quality of lay leadership, history, and special needs of the congregation.
- c. The congregation's service programs, evangelism efforts, discipleship model, and mission to the community and the world.
- d. The qualities and functions of pastoral ministry needed to fulfill the mission, goals, and special needs of the congregation.
- e. A tentative job description for the pastoral position the congregation seeks to fill.

2. Clergy Profile. The presiding elder shall develop with the pastor a profile that reflects the pastor's gifts, evidence of God's grace, professional experience and expectations, and the needs and concerns of the pastor's spouse and family. This profile shall be reviewed annually and updated when appropriate, particularly when a pastoral change is anticipated. The profile shall include:

- a. An overview of the pastor's personal faith, call and commitment to ordained ministry, and the integration of his or her vocation with personal and family well-being and lifestyle.
- b. A vitae of the pastor's academic and career background, including his or her professional experience, academic degrees, professional experience, and publications.
- c. A listing of the pastor's skills and abilities as they relate to pastoral ministry.
- d. A statement of the pastor's preferred type of ministry setting.

3. Clergy Evaluation. The staff-parish relations committee shall conduct an annual written evaluation of the pastor's ministry, using forms prepared by the conference board of ordained ministry, which shall be shared with the presiding elder and the pastor. The presiding elder shall meet with the pastor annually to review this evaluation.

4. Church-Clergy Advisory Form. The pastor and staff-parish relations committee shall each complete an advisory form annually to declare their desires for continued ministry for the next ministry year. The advisory form shall offer several options, each of which must be supported by a descriptive narrative. The advisory options shall be:

- a. Stay — The pastor and/or congregation have a missional reason to remain in ministry together for the coming year.
- b. Either — The pastor and/or congregation are ambivalent about whether to remain in ministry together for the coming year.
- c. Go — The pastor and/or congregation believe that it is time for a pastoral change.

- d. Help — The pastor and/or congregation requests that the presiding elder provide mediation or advisory help to resolve an issue between the pastor and congregation.
- e. If the pastor and committee do not match in their desire for the coming year, the presiding elder shall meet with both parties to seek resolution or to advise a pastoral change. No pastor may be removed from a pastoral charge without the consent of the resident bishop.

¶ 519. THE PROCESS OF CLERGY DEPLOYMENT. The process used in clergy deployment shall include the following:

1. An opening for a pastoral charge may be initiated in a number of ways:
 - a. Voluntarily
 - i. The pastor chooses to leave a charge to take another pastoral position in a different church. The pastor must receive written permission from the presiding elder before interviewing for another pastoral opening.
 - ii. The pastor retires.
 - iii. The pastor chooses to go on transitional leave, unpaid leave of absence or surrenders his or her credentials.
 - b. Involuntarily
 - i. The pastor dies or is incapacitated for an unreasonable length of time.
 - ii. The pastor is removed for misconduct after due judicial process.
 - iii. The local church requests a change of pastors and the change is approved by the bishop.
2. When a pastoral charge has been declared open by the bishop, the presiding elder consults with the local church's governing board to determine the process by which clergy candidates for the opening may be identified. The presiding elder and governing board may choose together from one or more of the following options:
 - a. The governing board may choose to develop its own list of potential clergy candidates for the pastoral opening. The presiding elder must approve any candidate(s) before they may be interviewed by the local church.
 - b. The governing board may choose to request the presiding elder to conduct a search and present a candidate or a list of candidates for the pastoral opening.
 - c. The presiding elder may choose to offer additional candidates for consideration.
3. The presiding elder shall advise the governing board on the nomination, formation, and election of a transition team to manage the deployment process, the outgoing pastor's exit, and the first year of the pastoral transition.
4. The transition team consists of up to 15 persons, chaired by the chairperson of the staff-parish relations committee, which will include the chair of the church governing

board and may include the staff-parish relations committee, or a subset thereof, and other at-large members elected by the governing board.

5. The transition team is responsible for managing the steps in the deployment process and conducts transition planning with both the incoming and outgoing pastors:

- a. The transition team advises the outgoing pastor (when applicable) to ensure that he or she leaves well and provides the incoming pastor with necessary information.
- b. The transition team develops a list of candidates for the pastoral opening and submits a preferred list to the presiding elder for approval, or receives a recommended candidate from the presiding elder.
- c. The transition team conducts interviews of a clergy candidate presented by the presiding elder or candidates on a list approved by the presiding elder and chooses its preferred candidate.
- d. The transition team advises the incoming pastor, prepares an appropriate congregational welcome, and meets at least monthly with the pastor through the first year of the transition to identify opportunities for early wins, potential points of conflict, and to assist the pastor in learning the congregation and community.

6. A list of clergy candidates for a pastoral opening may be generated from among the following sources:

- a. A database of available clergy maintained by the _____ Church.
- b. Clergy who apply for a particular pastoral opening via the presiding elder.
- c. A list of clergy generated by a search firm employed by the local church.
- d. Clergy currently serving another church may be contacted by a local church to gauge interest in the pastoral opening, but clergy must obtain written permission from their presiding elder before interviewing.
- e. Other sources as determined.

7. Any list of clergy candidates for a pastoral opening must be approved by the presiding elder before interviews take place with the transition team. The presiding elder will also ensure that the list of approved candidates conforms to the provisions of Paragraph 517.

8. The transition team shall interview clergy candidates using its preferred method. The presiding elder may act as advisor and coach for the interview process.

9. The transition team shall identify its preferred candidate. After consultation with the candidate, the presiding elder informs the bishop and cabinet.

10. The bishop, presiding elder, transition team, and incoming pastor must all give written consent to the pastor's placement prior to declaring the position closed. If any

of these parties does not give consent, the process begins again with consultation between the presiding elder and transition team.

11. In the placement of associate pastors, the senior pastor of the church must also give consent prior to declaring the position closed.

¶ 520. DIVERSITY IN CLERGY DEPLOYMENT. Consistent with the values and mission of a global church, recruiting, developing and retaining talented and gifted clergy that can reach all people is a priority. We welcome and rejoice in the expansion of racial-ethnic and multicultural churches within our movement. We also encourage and affirm clergy who may be called to cross-cultural ministry as they follow the pioneering and teaching leadership of the Holy Spirit, along with both male and female clergy who enhance the witness of the church with their different lenses and intrinsic gifts and graces. In particular, we seek to attract, equip and deploy women and those of all ethnic backgrounds so that their ministries may thrive.

To that end, establishing a diverse pool of clergy is critical, as is offering deployment opportunities for both male and female clergy, from diverse races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. Each annual conference and bishop shall be charged with developing and implementing demonstrable recruitment strategies and best practices for attracting gifted and diverse clergy.

¶ 521. THE HOSIER RULE. The interview slate developed for each clergy opening must comply to the following parameter, hereby known as the “Hosier Rule,” named in honor of Harry Hosier, a black Methodist preacher recognized as one of the greatest orators of his time who often accompanied Francis Asbury during the Second Great Awakening in early American history. The list of candidates approved to interview with a local church or other

_____ Church entity with a clergy opening for an elder, deacon, or local pastor in any position, as well as those interviewed, must include at least one cross-cultural and one female candidate from outside of the church or organization involved.

The _____ Church will maintain a current record of available female and clergy interested in a cross-cultural ministry opportunity within its denomination-wide database that the presiding elder and local church will draw upon for the slate. The presiding elder and local church may also honor the Hosier Rule by finding qualified female and candidates interested in cross-cultural appointments to interview from other external resources as well.

Records of interview slates showing a good faith effort to comply with the Hosier Rule shall be kept by the presiding elder and shall be periodically reviewed by the bishop’s office.

Compliance with the Hosier Rule may only be waived if the transition team of the local church or entity, along with the presiding elder and bishop, all certify in writing that such compliance is not feasible in a particular instance, specifying the reasons why such is not possible. Barring such certification, evidence of failing to abide with the integrity and spirit of this rule shall lead to corrective actions by the presiding elder and restricted resourcing to the local church/entity.

PART SIX THE SUPERINTENDENCY

¶601. THE NATURE OF THE EPISCOPACY. From apostolic times, certain ordained persons have been set apart and entrusted with the task of defending the Apostolic faith and to that end overseeing and leading the church in its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the entire world. While shared by the whole people of God, this apostolic task is most clearly expressed in the historic office of bishop. The _____ Church is led, equipped, and supervised by an episcopacy modeled after that of the early centuries of Christianity and stemming from the historic line of Methodist bishops.

We share John Wesley's conviction that bishops are part of the Order of elders. Therefore, bishops in the _____ Church represent a specialized ministry rather than a separate order and are consecrated rather than ordained to their office. The role of bishop is a sacred trust held for a time as the Discipline of our church allows. It is not a lifelong office.

Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishops, exemplified an evangelistic and missionary spirit that we trust we will be shared by every bishop in the _____ Church. The episcopal office is to keep us relentlessly focused outward toward our mission field. Our bishops must not lean on the trappings of ecclesial office but lead us from an authentic, evangelistic love for God and neighbor.

The bishop's primary place of servant leadership shall be to an annual conference of our church. When convened together, the bishops of the _____ Church comprise a general superintendency that leads our church in all spiritual and temporal matters.

¶602. QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS. Bishops shall be selected from among the elders as persons of genuine faith, upstanding moral character, and evangelistic effectiveness. Candidates for the episcopacy should have a strong record of effectiveness in leading the church in evangelism, discipleship, and mission. Bishops should be able to effectively teach and communicate the historic Christian faith from a Wesleyan perspective.

¶603. SELECTION OF BISHOPS. Prior to each regularly called session of General Conference, each annual conference may nominate up to two elders for consideration in the episcopal selection process. The names and profiles of these nominees shall be submitted to the secretary of the General Conference who shall compile the ballot and election materials. From this ballot General Conference shall elect an episcopal pool consisting of not less than the number of annual conferences. A sixty percent majority shall be needed for election. Consideration shall be given to make each episcopal pool inclusive with respect to gender, race, and the various nationalities represented in the _____ Church.

¶1604. VACANCIES WITHIN THE EPISCOPACY. When an episcopal vacancy occurs within an annual conference, the conference episcopacy committee shall be empowered to conduct a search from among those clergy elected to the episcopal pool at the most recent regularly scheduled General Conference with due regard given to compliance with the provisions of the Hosier Rule (see ¶1 521) in its consideration of candidates. The selection of the episcopacy committee shall be ratified by the Council of Bishops and the General Committee on Episcopacy by a simple majority vote. Bishops may not be selected from their own annual conference without an exception being granted by a 2/3 vote of the General Committee on Episcopacy.

An episcopal vacancy shall exist when (1) a bishop reaches their maximum term of office, (2) when a death, resignation, or incapacity occurs, (3) a bishop is removed as elsewhere set forth or (4) when the General Committee on Episcopacy declares the seat open upon a 2/3 majority request of the conference committee on episcopacy. There shall be a thorough review of the bishops' effectiveness by the conference episcopacy committee at least every two years and a report from this review shall be shared with the bishop and the General Committee on Episcopacy.

¶1605. LENGTH OF SERVICE. Clergy may not serve in the capacity of bishop for longer than twelve years, except as needed for service as an interim bishop (Paragraph 606). After this they are returned as elders to the annual conference of their previous service. A former bishop in good standing shall bear the title of bishop emeritus. A bishop may serve more than one conference during their twelve-year maximum term with consent of the General Committee on Episcopacy. This consent returns the name of a bishop to the episcopal pool for possible redeployment. At the next regularly scheduled General Conference a former bishop with remaining service years may be re-elected to the episcopal pool but the bishop's total years of episcopal service may not exceed twelve years.

For the sake of the church's mission, the General Committee on Episcopacy may by a two-thirds vote grant a two-year extension to the maximum term limit of bishops.

¶1606. INTERIM BISHOPS. When a bishop is needed for an interim period in a conference, the General Committee on Episcopacy may provide a clergy from the episcopal pool or a clergy in good standing who has previously served as bishop. The appointment of an interim bishop requires the consent of the conference committee on episcopacy and the Council of Bishops.

¶1607. THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS. The consecration of bishops shall take place in the annual conference to which they are deployed. At least two other bishops should be present and representation from other Christian communions is strongly suggested. A bishop shall receive salary and benefit in the conference of service as negotiated with the conference committee on episcopacy and in keeping with the guidelines provided by the General Committee on Episcopacy. The bishop shall remain a clergy member of the annual conference from which they were selected but complaints against active bishops shall be processed by the General Committee on Episcopacy. The Service of Consecration is repeatable and shall be held whenever a bishop is consecrated for leadership in a particular conference.

¶1608. THE ROLE OF BISHOPS. Bishops are elected from among the elders and set apart for a ministry of servant leadership, encouragement, general oversight and supervision. Bishops are charged to guard the faith, order, unity, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the church. Bishops focus the people of God outward toward our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the world. Bishops are to have the witness of personal faith and spiritual maturity. Specifically, bishops shall have the authority and responsibility to do the following:

1. Exercise a strong teaching office in the life of the church, communicating and defending the cause of Christ and the doctrines of the church. Sermons and studies of the bishop may become resources for use by the clergy and laity of the church.
2. Work with annual conference leadership to set vision and build a clear and articulated missional strategy for the conference. This strategy may include action plans and benchmarks aimed at advancing the Kingdom of Christ through initiatives related to establishing new faith communities, growing vital congregations, making mature disciples of Jesus Christ and serving in ministries of justice and mercy.
3. Encourage, inspire and motivate the clergy, laity and churches of the annual conference to embrace and implement the vision and missional strategy of the annual conference as well as the vision and mission the _____ Church.
4. Provide general oversight to the spiritual, missional, temporal, and programmatic affairs of the annual conference he or she serves.
5. As part of the bishop's missional responsibilities, they shall engage and participate in local churches in their Annual Conference.
6. Provide consent and direction in the deployment of all clergy within the annual conference. The approval of the bishop is required before a clergy appointment is finalized.
7. Convene together and supervise the presiding elders and conference officers which shall constitute the cabinet of the annual conference.
8. Arrange the districts or similar sub-units in the annual conference.
9. Where appropriate, declare the position of a presiding elder vacant so that a new individual may be selected.
10. Serve as an *ex officio* member of the conference's board of ordained ministry with voice but not vote. The endorsement of the bishop shall be required for each candidate prior to recommendation to the clergy session for approval. In instances where a candidate may be approved by the board but not recommended by the bishop, the bishop shall provide just cause for his or her decision to both the board and to the candidate.
11. Preside in the ordination of clergy, provided that a bishop may not ordain individuals without the consent of the appropriate annual conference bodies.
12. Keep and maintain appropriate supervisory records on the clergy within his or her annual conference, including presiding elders, as well as on conference staff.
13. In consultation and conjunction with the conference board of ordained ministry, suspend clergy (with pay continued by their salary-paying unit) for a maximum of six months pending resolution of administrative or other complaints.
14. Preside at the annual conference and convene the clergy members together at other times as deemed appropriate.

15. Share with other bishops in the oversight of the whole church through the Council of Bishops, including presiding when selected at General Conference sessions.

16. Participate in the consecration of other bishops selected in keeping with our historic practices and discipline.

¶609. TRANSITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. A bishop of The United Methodist Church or other body recognized by the General Committee on Episcopacy may join the _____ Church by clergy transfer. A bishop serving an annual conference also transferring to the _____ Church may continue to serve that conference up to a term not to exceed twelve total years. This term is to include years of assignment to the conference in the United Methodist Church. Bishops transferring to the _____ Church without their annual conference shall become a part of the episcopal pool until the time of their appointment as a bishop in the _____ Church or their retirement. A retired bishop joining the _____ Church shall bear the title of bishop emeritus.

¶610. THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY. There shall be a General Committee on Episcopacy elected at General Conference. The committee shall be comprised of half clergy and half laity and divided into three classes with a twelve-year maximum term. The size of the committee shall be determined by General Conference not to exceed twice the number of annual conferences. Attention shall be given to wide representation from the various annual conferences in the process of election. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall:

1. Foster a vital, healthy, accountable episcopacy in the _____ Church.
2. Approve the deployment of clergy from the episcopal pool as bishops in annual conferences by recommendation of the conference committee on episcopacy.
3. Approve plans for interim episcopal leadership.
4. Declare an episcopal seat vacant. In the case of bishops not at the end of their term, this shall require a two-thirds majority recommendation of the conference committee on episcopacy.
5. Receive evaluations of bishops by conference committees on episcopacy.
6. Meet with the Council of Bishops as agreed to best serve the mission of the church and effectiveness of the committee.
7. Approve guidelines for the conference episcopacy committees related to the salary and benefits of bishops, provided that bishops shall have the same pension program as other clergy.
8. Receive complaints against the bishop.
 - a. Complaints of an administrative nature shall be processed by the committee within the following range of options:
 - i. Dismissal of the complaint.
 - ii. Attempted resolution through a process designed by the committee.
 - iii. Declare the episcopal seat vacant by the General Committee on Episcopacy.
 - b. Complaints regarding actions deemed inconsistent with the high moral ideals of the clergy shall be referred to the board of ordained ministry of the annual

conference to which the bishop retains clergy membership. One observer from the General Committee on Episcopacy and one observer from the conference committee on episcopacy shall be party, with voice, to the due process proceeding in the bishop's annual conference of membership, including any committee on investigation. Regular updates and complete final records of actions shall be shared with both the committee on episcopacy in the conference of episcopal service and with the General Committee on Episcopacy. The conference board of ordained ministry shall have authority to suspend the clergy under complaint for a period not to exceed sixty days. A clergy so suspended shall not exercise the episcopal office during this time of suspension. Notice shall be provided to both the committee on episcopacy in the conference of service and the General Committee on Episcopacy. Salary and benefits shall continue during the time of suspension.

c. Regardless of other processes, complaints deemed to be of a serious nature may result in the suspension of the bishop by majority vote of the committee on episcopacy for a period not to exceed sixty days. Salary and benefits shall continue during this period. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall be informed in a timely fashion. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall provide interim episcopal leadership as elsewhere set forth. If there is an administrative complaint resulting in suspension of a bishop by the conference committee on episcopacy, a representative from the General Committee on Episcopacy shall be present with voice during all meetings related to resolution of the matter.

¶611. THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY. There shall be a committee on episcopacy in each annual conference elected from the annual conference session to include half clergy and half laity. The committee shall:

1. Foster a healthy relationship between the bishop and annual conference.
2. Evaluate the bishop at least every other year and share this evaluation with the bishop and the General Committee on Episcopacy.
3. Meet at least twice annually. The bishop shall be present at all meetings unless permission is granted to meet without the bishop by the chair of the General Committee on Episcopacy. In such cases a representative from the General Committee on Episcopacy shall be present.
4. When an episcopal vacancy exists in the annual conference, the committee on episcopacy shall conduct a search from among the clergy elected to the episcopal pool by the most recent General Conference with due regard given to compliance with the provisions of the Hosier Rule (see ¶ 521) in its consideration of candidates. This selection must be approved by the Council of Bishops and the General Committee on Episcopacy. The salary and benefits of the bishop may be negotiated with the candidate in keeping with the guidelines developed by the General Committee on Episcopacy.
5. Plan the consecration of the bishop at the beginning of his or her term.

¶612. THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS. The bishops of the church shall convene at least annually as the Council of Bishops. They shall elect from among their number a president to organize them in their work and this president shall serve a term of two years. They shall also choose a bishop or other elder to serve as an ecumenical officer for the church. The council shall select and supervise a connectional operating officer to lead the temporal affairs of the church. This selection shall be ratified by the General Committee on Episcopacy.

¶613. THE CONNECTIONAL OPERATING OFFICER. The connectional operating officer shall bear responsibility for the fruitful and accountable functioning of the general church. As an extension of the general superintendency of bishops, the connectional operating officer shall be directly answerable to the Council of Bishops. The connectional operating officer shall chair any general administrative agency and provide oversight to all general church staff.

1. *Selection.* The connectional operating officer shall be selected by the Council of Bishops. Before taking office, the selection must be approved by the General Committee on Episcopacy. The connectional operating officer position may be declared vacant by the General Committee on Episcopacy upon recommendation by the council.

2. *Responsibilities and Duties.* The responsibilities of the connectional operating officer shall include the following:

- a. Serve as the chief executive and administrative officer of all connectional commissions and enterprises.
- b. Prepare the connectional budget and, once approved, oversee its implementation, including, but not limited to, overseeing connectional finances and the maintenance of financial records.
- c. Oversee yearly audits of connectional financial records.
- d. Direct the development of policies and procedures to implement the provisions of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
- e. Direct connectional communications, public relations, and marketing.
- f. Serve as the chief spokesperson for the denomination to the extent authorized by the General Conference or the council.
- g. Negotiate contracts for services including, but not limited to, connectional pension, insurance and other benefit programs.
- i. Coordinate the ministries of the general church to fulfill the mandates of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* and to implement the actions of the General Conference.
- j. Review and evaluate the missional effectiveness of general program-related agencies and connectional structures of the church.
- k. Recommend to General Conference changes to the Book of Doctrines and Discipline and implementing legislation.
- l. Oversee planning and research to advance the mission of the church.

¶614. PRESIDING ELDERS. Each district in an annual conference shall be led by a presiding elder, a clergy who has the witness of personal faith and spiritual maturity and who serves the mission of the church as an extension of the office of bishop. These may be persons who serve a local church or are in retired relationship. It is recommended that districts consist of 20-30

congregations and that the presiding elder also serve a church within the district. Presiding elders shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Serve as the chief missional strategist of the district working closely with clergy and lay leadership to ensure congregations are living out the doctrines and values of the church; In addition, the presiding elder shall work closely with clergy and lay leadership to develop and implement action plans and realize any benchmarks set by the Conference strategic plan such as worship attendance, professions of faith, mission activity and small group participation, and giving and stewardship that extend the witness of Christ into the world.
2. Supervise the clergy of the district, including those in extension ministries.
3. Mediate conflicts in local church and among the clergy.
4. Offer support, care, and counsel to clergy concerning matters affecting their ministry.
5. Encourage the building of covenant groups and communities among the clergy, clergy families, and the laity on the district. Encourage all clergy to be part of a covenant group and continue in leadership development and spiritual progress;
6. Play a pivotal role in the deployment of clergy as outlined in the *Doctrines and Discipline*.
7. Work with the district committee on ministry to recruit and examine candidates for ordained or licensed ministry, and to provide for the ongoing oversight of persons approved for licensing;
8. Address issues with clergy in times of conflict and/or ineffectiveness. This will include holding documented supervisory conversations with the district clergy person that identifies the concerns and designs collaboratively with the clergy a corrective plan of action with a timeline for completion and evaluation. Upon evaluation, should the presiding elder determine that the plan of action has not carried out or produced fruit that gives a realistic expectation of fruitfulness, a complaint will be forwarded to the conference committee on ordained ministry;
9. Preside at a district conference at least annually.
10. Attend when appropriate meetings of the conference board of ordained ministry and provide voice when a candidate from their district is being considered for commissioning or ordination. Upon request from the board of ordained ministry, the presiding elder may provide information relevant to the process from the supervisory files of the candidate.
11. Grant permission for local churches to assume alternative leadership structures to best fulfill their mission.
12. Maintain appropriate records for the clergy under their supervision that may include documentation of credentialing, annual evaluations, supervisory conversations, pastoral compensation, and other relevant material.

¶615. SELECTION OF PRESIDING ELDERS. Districts will gather at least annually for worship, reporting, coordination, and strategy. They shall also meet whenever the presiding elder position is or will soon be vacant. Three persons shall be elected by ballot from among the clergy. Attention shall be given to compliance with the Hosier Rule (see ¶ 521) in the consideration of candidates. A 60% majority shall be required for selection to the presiding elder pool. The bishop shall select the presiding elder for the district from pool of three. Presiding elders shall receive a significant stipend for their work and administrative help shall be provided to them on the level of the local church, the district, or both.

¶616. TERM LIMITS OF PRESIDING ELDERS. A presiding elder shall be installed at a district conference and serve no longer than twelve years. The bishop may declare the seat vacant at any time. When the seat is vacant the district conference shall convene, presided over by a clergy designated by the bishop, and a new pool of candidates shall be elected from among the clergy of the district. The bishop may select an interim presiding elder to serve no more than six months.

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