

# DRAFT BOOK OF DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE FOR A NEW METHODIST CHURCH

Version 1.1 (December 3, 2020)

## *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 recommended this document for consideration by a new global traditional Methodist church to be launched. This document consists of the following parts:

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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 2021 General Conference of The United Methodist Church. We anticipate the new Methodist church will be governed by a transitional process from its launch until a convening conference is held. 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](mailto: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 Transitional Leadership Council of the new Methodist church.

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 1.1, released on December 3, 2020.

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 four volumes that included fifty-three of Wesley’s sermons 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 convicting 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 enjoy 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 Confession of Faith of the United Brethren in Christ and the Articles of Faith of the Evangelical Church. 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. **THE 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 1771 edition of Wesley’s *Works* included nine additional sermons:

- The Witness of the Spirit, II*
- On Sin in Believers*
- The Repentance of Believers*
- The Great Assize*

*The Lord Our Righteousness*  
*The Scripture Way of Salvation*  
*The Good Steward*  
*The Reformation of Manners*  
*On the Death of George Whitefield*

In addition to the forty-four, these nine sermons were adopted as standards of doctrine for the American church in 1784. The 1787-88 edition of Wesley's sermons included only the forty-four, in keeping with the stipulations of the model deed.

The additional nine sermons supplement the original forty-four, providing additional teaching on matters of practical divinity and other topics.

**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, reproofing, 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.

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## ¶ 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. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH.** The church's ministry is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all people to receive salvation and follow him as disciples in the way of love. The primary call to ministry is to the people of God, or Laity. The Laity are members of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that [they] may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9 NRSV). The Laity are called out of the world, and called into the church for witness and service in the world. Baptism initiates this call to ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The whole church receives and accepts this call.

With the exception of the offices of bishop and presiding elder, which are reserved for Elders, all Laity and Clergy may serve in various offices. Offices of ministry refer to what followers of Christ do for the general building up of the body of Christ. Offices include, but are not limited to, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, administrators, miracle workers, healers, and helpers (Eph 4:11-13, and 1 Cor 12:28).

**¶ 502. CERTIFIED LAY MINISTERS.** 1. A certified lay minister is a professing member of a local congregation who has received special training in Wesleyan doctrine and our denominational polity, and endorsement by the church in order to serve the church as laity. This category encompasses all those who were previously named certified lay servants, certified lay speakers, certified lay ministers, deaconesses, home missionaries, and lay missionaries. Certified lay ministers may work in any area of the church’s ministry, including leading, teaching, proclaiming/preaching, evangelizing, worship, and caring ministry. As laity, a certified lay minister is not subject to the approval or appointment of the bishop or presiding elder, although they may request the lay minister serve in a ministry capacity outside his or her own local church.

2. Qualifications. Persons desiring to be certified lay ministers must fulfill the following qualifications:

- a. Professing member of a local \_\_\_\_\_ congregation (or its predecessor) for at least two years.
- b. Satisfactory completion of a course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, covering the church’s doctrine, history, polity, and basic Bible knowledge.
- c. Satisfactory completion of at least one advanced course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, on an area of ministry (e.g., preaching, worship leading, caring ministry, etc.). Coursework or training in other settings may be counted to meet this requirement at the discretion of the board of ministry.
- d. National background check.
- e. Written recommendation by the pastor and endorsement by majority vote of the pastor-parish relations committee and the charge conference.

f. Interview and approval by the annual conference board of ministry. A public service of commitment recognizing the certification is recommended.

3. Renewal of Certification. Certification for lay ministry may be renewed every three years by the annual conference board of ministry based on the following:

a. An annual report to the charge conference and annual conference board of ministry outlining what ministry had been done during the year and giving evidence of satisfactory performance.

b. Endorsement by majority vote of the charge conference annually.

c. Written recommendation for renewal by the pastor.

d. Completion of an additional national background check every three years

e. Satisfactory completion of at least one additional advanced course in lay ministry, approved by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry, in the last three years.

4. Conditions of service.

a. A certified lay minister serves as a volunteer, but an honorarium and expenses for pulpit supply or other specialized ministries outside one's own local church are appropriate. A certified lay minister serving as a lay staff member of a church or other ministry should be equitably compensated for their work.

b. Certification as a lay minister may be transferred to another annual conference if the person relocates. Subsequent renewal in that new annual conference is in accordance with ¶ 502.3.

c. Persons who held active certification in a predecessor denomination shall automatically be received as certified lay ministers in the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, provided that they have met the requirements of ¶ 502.2b-c through coursework in the predecessor denomination, subscribe to the doctrinal standards and Social Witness of this *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, and agree to abide by its discipline. Subsequent renewal is in accordance with ¶ 502.3. Those not meeting the requirements of ¶ 502.2b-c are not certified, but may work toward certification and are not required to repeat coursework they have already completed.

**¶503. ORDERS OF MINISTRY.** Clergy are those called out from the laity and set apart, through the laying on of hands, for particular service to the church. The early church called and set apart seven disciples who were "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" to distribute food to the widows among them (Acts 6:1-6). Clergy, such as Stephen, Phoebe, and Timothy, served in various ways to benefit the people of God. All clergy are required to live lives of integrity and self-control as they hold fast to the mystery of faith (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

Ordination is the action, through the physical laying on of hands, by which the church sets apart and orders those called by God to this particular ministry for the good of the whole church. There are two orders of clergy.

1. *Order of Deacons.* Deacons are called out from the laity to service. Within and beyond a local church, Deacons may, among other ministries, lead in worship, preach and teach, conduct marriages, bury the dead, care for the sick and needy, and interpret the needs of the world to the church. Deacons may also consecrate or assist with the Sacraments in accordance with paragraph 508. Deacons may serve in a variety of offices within and

beyond a local church, including, but not limited to, serving as pastor of a local church. Deacons retain their call as Laity to witness and service in the world. Deacon is a permanent and full ordination, even for those who are then called to the order of Elder. Persons may remain as permanent Deacons indefinitely. Deacon's orders are received through the laying on of hands by a bishop among the people of God in conference after examination by Clergy.

2. *Order of Elders.* Elders are called out from the Deacons to the particular service of oversight of word, sacrament and order in the church. Elders retain their call as laity to witness and service in the world, as well as their call as Deacons to serve among the people of God. Elder's orders are received through the laying on of hands by a bishop among the people of God in conference after examination by elders.

**¶504. TYPES OF ORDAINED MINISTRY.** There are two types of ordered ministry: located ministry and apostolic (or itinerant) ministry.

1. *Located Ministry.* Clergy called to minister in a particular place, serve in located ministry. Deacons and Elders who are called to an office of ministry in a particular location shall have that call affirmed and be appointed by the bishop over the annual conference wherein they would minister. Their ministries shall be overseen by those appointed to apostolic ministry on the circuit that includes their church or ministry.
2. *Apostolic Ministry.* Elders called and appointed to travel receive itinerant (apostolic) ministry. The office of bishop is an apostolic office for an Elder who has been elected to oversee and discipline churches that gather in annual conference. Bishops may call and appoint other Elders as Presiding Elders to organize new churches, provide superintendency over other Elders and Deacons, and assist, discipline, and provide sacramental support to Laity, Deacons, and Elders in located ministry.

**¶505. BASIC QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ORDAINED.** Those to be ordained must:

- a) Have a personal faith in Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.
- b) Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness consistent with the General Rules including responsible self-control by exhibiting personal habits that are conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all relationships, fidelity in a Christian marriage between one man and one woman, and chastity in singleness, social responsibility and the knowledge and love of God.
- c) Have a call by God and the people of God to give themselves completely to the work of ministry.
- d) Be able to effectively communicate the Christian faith.
- e) Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the church.

- f) Accept the authority of Scripture; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history and polity; possess the skills essential for the practice of ministry, and lead in making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- g) Be accountable to the church, accept its doctrinal standards and Discipline and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to the ministry of oversight, and live in covenant with its ordained ministers.

¶ **506. ENTRANCE INTO ORDAINED MINISTRY.** 1. Persons who hear a call to ordained ministry should meet with their local pastor or presiding elder to inquire about candidacy. They must have held membership in a local church for at least one year and shall complete a background and credit check. Upon the recommendation of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee or equivalent, the local church shall vote whether to approve them for candidacy.

2. Candidacy Discernment. After local church approval, a candidate shall spend a minimum of six months in discernment, which must include a supervised internship or employment in a ministry setting. During which time, the candidate shall:

- a. Engage with discernment, including, but not limited to, completion of a guidebook, mentoring, and participation in a small group with other candidates;
- b. Complete required coursework on doctrine, history, discipline, and basic Bible;
- c. Undergo a psychological evaluation; and
- d. Pass a basic knowledge examination in doctrine, history, discipline and Bible.

Upon completion of the foregoing, the candidate shall write a statement detailing his or her call to ordained ministry and submit it to the annual conference board of ministry.

¶ **507. HISTORIC QUESTIONS.** In addition to whatever other questions may be asked, persons seeking ordination as Deacon shall be evaluated during their interview by the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent based upon the historic questions first asked about those desiring to be "traveling preachers":

*"(1) Do they know God as pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?"*

*(2) Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?"*

*(3) Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service?"*

*As long as these marks occur in them, we believe that they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit."*

Prior to ordination as Elder, candidates shall answer the following questions historically asked by bishops within the Methodist tradition:

- (1) *Have you faith in Christ?*
- (2) *Are you going on to perfection?*
- (3) *Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?*
- (4) *Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?*
- (5) *Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to God's work?*
- (6) *Do you know the General Rules of our Church?*
- (7) *Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?*
- (8) *Have you studied the doctrines of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church?*
- (9) *After full consideration do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?*

- (10) *Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?*
- (11) *Do you approve our Church government and polity?*
- (12) *Will you support and maintain them?*
- (13) *Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?*
- (14) *Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?*
- (15) *Will you visit from house to house?*
- (16) *Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?*
- (17) *Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?*
- (18) *Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?*
- (19) *Will you observe the following directions?*

(a) *Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.*

(b) *Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.*

¶ **508. ORDINATION PATHWAYS.** Within the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, certified candidates must first be ordained as deacons and, after ordination as deacons, may be ordained as elders.

1. *Ordination as Deacons.* Upon completion of educational requirements, a candidate for ordination as Deacon shall be interviewed by the annual conference board of ordained ministry or equivalent. During such interview, the candidate shall be asked the following questions:

- (a) *What is your personal experience of God?*
- (b) *What is your understanding of evil?*
- (c) *What is your understanding of grace?*
- (d) *How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and in the church?*
- (e) *What is your understanding of the Kingdom of God?*
- (f) *What significance do you believe that the Resurrection holds?*
- (g) *What is your understanding of the nature and authority of scripture?*
- (h) *What is your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church?*
- (i) *What gifts and graces do you bring to the work of ministry?*
- (j) *What is the meaning of ordination?*
- (k) *What is the role and significance of the sacraments?*
- (l) *For the sake of the church's witness, are you willing to dedicate yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, exercising self-control in your personal habits,*

*integrity in all of your relationships and if married, fidelity in your covenant with your spouse, or if single, chastity in your personal conduct?*

The annual conference board of ordained ministry or equivalent will interview the candidate for readiness for ordination as deacon. After being interviewed and recommended by the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent by a two-thirds vote, and approved by the two-thirds vote of the clergy of the annual conference in executive session and the bishop, a certified candidate shall be ordained as Deacon by the bishop through the laying on of hands.

Deacons are clergy members in full connection of the annual conference with full voice and vote on all matters except the ordination and conference relation of Elders. Deacons not serving under appointment shall be classified as inactive and shall have no voting rights in the annual conference.

Deacons may be asked to serve as part of a ministry team in a local church or another ministry setting by the bishop or presiding elder, or they may secure their own position with the approval and appointment of the bishop. Deacons may continue to serve as a deacon indefinitely under appointment by the bishop and are encouraged to continue their education in regard to whatever ministry specialty they are called to pursue.

Deacons considering a call to ordination as an Elder, or in whom the gifts and graces for the ministry of Elder are recognized by a bishop or presiding elder, may be appointed to the office of pastor in a local church. If such an appointment is more than a temporary assignment, a deacon who accepts such an appointment must declare candidacy for ordination as an Elder and begin the process toward such ordination.

2. *Ordination as Elder.* Deacons who desire to be ordained as an Elder shall declare their candidacy for such ordination to the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent. They shall be eligible for ordination as Elder once they:
  - a. Prove themselves faithful and mature over a period of a minimum of two years' service as a Deacon;
  - b. Complete the educational requirements for ordination as an Elder;
  - c. Pass an advanced level examination in doctrine, history, discipline and Bible;
  - d. Be interviewed and recommended by a two-thirds vote of the annual conference board of ordained ministry or equivalent for ordination as an Elder; and
  - e. Be approved by two-thirds vote by the Elders of the annual conference in executive session and be approved by the bishop.

Upon completing such requirements, the candidate shall be ordained Elder by the bishop through the laying on of hands.

All requirements for ordination as an Elder must be completed within seven (7) years of having declared candidacy for ordination as Elder. Persons who do not complete such requirements in a timely manner shall be ineligible thereafter to serve in the office of pastor of a local church, but may continue to serve as a Deacon.

Elders are clergy members in full connection of the annual conference with full voice and vote on all matters. An Elder not serving under appointment shall be classified as inactive and shall not have voting rights in the annual conference. Elders may be appointed by the bishop as a presiding elder, to local ministry as pastor in charge, to the staff of a local church, or to other ministry settings. Elders are eligible to be elected to the office of bishop.

**¶ 509. SACRAMENTAL AUTHORITY.** Elders have sacramental authority. A bishop or presiding elder may grant sacramental authority to a Deacon appointed to the office of pastor in a local church or in another specialized ministry setting where the sacraments are required. Such sacramental authority for Deacons is limited to that ministry setting and is exercised under the oversight and authority of a presiding elder.

**¶ 510. EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**

1. Deacons shall meet minimum educational requirements at the time of ordination as determined by their annual conference. Following ordination, deacons must fulfill the educational requirements established for deacons by General Conference and their annual conference within seven years. Upon completion of studies a deacon may apply for elder's orders. Deacons who do not complete all educational requirements within the allotted time shall be classified as inactive until such educational requirements are completed.
2. Prior to ordination as an Elder, a candidate for such ordination shall have completed, at an approved Educational Institution (a) the Course of Study, or (b) a Bachelor of Arts in the practice of ministry, or (c) a joint Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Divinity, or (d) a Masters of Divinity, or (e) a Master of Arts or equivalent degree in the practice of ministry. Annual conferences may establish more stringent educational requirements.

**¶ 511. APPROVED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.** An approved list of schools for ministry education will be maintained by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry (CHEM). Upon appeal, the commission will consider any exceptions to this list and may grant its approval on an individual basis. It will also recommend competencies and courses for ministerial training, as well as supervise the course of study in conjunction with the annual conference boards.

**¶ 512. MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND.** A fund shall be maintained for ministerial education by the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry (CHEM). Once certified, a candidate may request a loan to assist with educational requirements. A service commitment of five years duration after ordination is required of any clergy who receives such assistance, with twenty percent of the loan amount forgiven for each year of ministry within the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

**¶ 513. LAY SUPPLY PASTOR.** A bishop may appoint a layperson to serve as a supply pastor under the immediate supervision of an elder who can provide mentoring to the supply pastor and sacramental ministry to the congregation. Such layperson must be a candidate for ordained ministry and must be ordained as deacon within three years of being appointed to serve as a supply pastor. Persons serving as pastors in a predecessor denomination who do not yet qualify for ordination as deacon shall have three years from the time of their transfer into the \_\_\_\_\_ Church to be ordained while continuing to serve as a supply pastor.

**¶ 514. CHAPLAINCY AND OTHER ENDORSEMENTS.** An ecclesiastical endorsing board of the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry shall recommend persons to specialized ministries that require a denominational endorsement.

**¶ 515. TRANSFER OF CLERGY CREDENTIALS.** Clergy applying to transfer to the \_\_\_\_\_ Church from another Christian denomination must provide the following: (1) A formal resume with references, (2) Proof of ordination, and (3) Official transcripts of all post high school education. The applicant must also: (1) Submit to a background and credit check, and psychological examination, (2) Interview with a presiding elder, (3) pass denominational exams on doctrine, history, polity, and Bible for their level of ordination, and (4) Interview with the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent. Upon the completion of these requirements, and upon the recommendation of the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent by two-thirds vote, transfers must be approved by the bishop and a two-thirds vote of the clergy session of the annual conference to which the applicant is seeking admittance.

**¶ 516. LEAVES OF ABSENCE.** A change in conference relations may be affected by the following:

(1) Clergy may request in writing a voluntary temporary leave of absence of up to one year from their ministerial duties due to medical needs, family circumstances, or other personal issues. Transitional leaves may similarly be granted for clergy in good standing who are temporarily between appointments. Such a change in conference relationship may be granted by the clergy members of the annual conference upon recommendation of two-thirds of the annual conference board of ordained ministry or equivalent. Between sessions of annual conference, a voluntary leave of absence may be granted or terminated, with the approval of the bishop and presiding elders, by the executive committee of the annual conference board of ordained ministry. Those on voluntary leave shall continue to be held amenable to the annual conference for their conduct and the performance of ministry.

(2) Clergypersons on voluntary leave shall have no claim on conference funds but may be eligible to continue in conference health programs through their own contributions. They shall also remain eligible for membership on annual conference commissions, committees or boards, as well as election as a delegate to General Conference, and may vote for other clergy delegates to such meetings. Renewal of voluntary leave may be made annually by the vote of the clergy session, for a period up to five years.

(3) Involuntary leaves may be requested by the bishop and the presiding elder and referred to the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent who shall determine what if any disciplinary action is also required. The fair process for administrative hearings shall be followed in any involuntary absence procedure.

(4) Clergypersons on involuntary leave shall have no claim on annual conference funds and the conference shall assume no responsibility for salary, pension, or other benefits during the leave of absence. Clergy on involuntary leave shall not participate in the boards and committees of the annual conference, be delegates to General Conference, or vote on other clergy delegates. When an end to the involuntary leave of absence is requested by the bishop and presiding elders, the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent shall review the circumstances surrounding the granting of the relationship in order to determine if the conditions of the leave have been met. If the board determines that such is not the case, it may continue involuntary leave of absence for up to three years, or pursue administrative location as elsewhere specified.

(5) Maternity or paternity leave shall be granted up to three months to any local pastor or clergy member who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption. During the leave, the clergyperson's annual conference relations will remain unchanged, and the health and benefit plans will remain in force. Compensation shall be provided by the salary-paying unit for no less than eight weeks of leave.

**¶ 517. RETIREMENT.** Within the \_\_\_\_\_ Church there is no mandatory retirement age, but clergy members may be granted retired status with the majority vote of the board of ministry. Retired clergy will remain eligible for membership on annual conference commissions, committees or boards. Retired clergy under appointment have voice and vote at meetings of the annual conference, are eligible to be elected as a delegate to General Conference, and may vote for other clergy delegates. Retired clergy not under appointment shall have voice, but no vote at meetings of the annual conference, are not eligible to serve as a delegate to General Conference, and may not vote for other clergy delegates.

**¶ 518. 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.

**¶ 519. 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.

**¶ 520. 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.

**¶ 521. 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.

**¶ 522. 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.

**¶1602. 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.

**¶1603. 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 ¶ 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.

**¶606. 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.

**¶607. 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.

**¶608. 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. 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.

**¶614. 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.

**¶615. 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.

## PART SEVEN CONFERENCES

**¶701. THE CONFERENCE SYSTEM.** Beginning in 1744 when John Wesley first met with his brother Charles and a few other clergymen to consider "how we should proceed to save our own souls and those that heard us," the principle expression of connectionalism within Methodism has historically been within its conference system.

The agenda for the first conference was a simple one: "1. What to teach, 2. How to teach, and 3. What to do, that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice," and the agenda for that and subsequent meetings was generally expressed in a question and answer format.

Organized at multiple levels -- charge conferences, district conferences, annual conferences, regional conferences, and a general conference -- the conference system is at the spiritual center of Methodism, and refers not simply to a meeting and the decisions that may be made at such a setting, but both to the act of gathering together in holy conferencing, and to the persons themselves who do so. The conference system provides for collective discernment and collective decision-making as the governing principle of our church polity (Proverbs 15:22, Acts 15:1-35).

**¶702. THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.** Embodying the covenant of our connectional church is the Annual Conference, whose composition and character are set forth in the Constitution (¶203, Article VII.)

1. *Meetings.* As its name implies, the Annual Conference of each designated area shall meet at least once a year, presided over by the bishop in charge, or in his or her absence, by a president who shall be elected by the members of the annual conference from the clergy of that conference. Bishops shall appoint the times for holding the conference. The Annual Conference or a committee thereof shall select the place for such meetings, provided that should it become necessary for any reason, a majority of the presiding elders, with the consent of the bishop in charge, may change the place. A special session of the annual conference may be called by action of the annual conference or by the bishop, with the concurrence of three-fourths of the presiding elders, at such time and place as established in the call. A special session shall address only such matters as stated in the call, unless a two-thirds majority votes to add a matter.

2. *Boundaries.* The boundaries of each annual conference shall be adopted, and any changes approved, by the General Conference or, if there is one, by a regional conference which includes the geographical area of the annual conference (see ¶ 203, Article VI). A special annual conference or district that is not geographically bound and overlaps the boundaries of other annual conferences or districts can be formed by the decision of General Conference at the request of a group of churches.

3. *Powers and Duties.* In addition to those responsibilities enumerated in the Constitution, the Annual Conference may adopt rules for its own governance, provided they do not conflict with the requirements of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.

4. *Boards and Agencies.* Annual Conferences shall create such boards, commissions and agencies as may be required to further its mission (§ 202, Article III and § 203, Article VII). These shall include:

- a. A Board of Trustees to care for the property of the annual conference, if any
- b. A Finance Committee to oversee the financial operations of the annual conference (This committee may be combined with the Board of Trustees.)
- c. An Episcopacy Committee (§ 604, 611) to care for selecting a bishop to serve in the annual conference, act as a liaison between that bishop and the leaders and members of the annual conference, and to be the first step in episcopal accountability (§ XXX)
- d. A Board of Ministry (§ 505ff) to care for the process of recruiting, vetting, and recommending persons for ordained ministry

**§703. REGIONAL CONFERENCES.**

As per the Constitution (§203, Article VIII), with the approval or at the request of annual conferences within a geographical region, the General Conference may organize those conferences into a Regional Conference in order to better carry out the mission of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. In addition to those responsibilities enumerated in the Constitution, the regional conference may adopt rules for its own governance, provided they do not conflict with the requirements of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.

**§704. ADAPTABILITY OF THE DOCTRINES AND DISCIPLINE.** All provisions of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* shall be generally applicable to all geographic, national, and cultural parts of the church. The adaptability of any provisions shall be written into the provisions themselves in order to be recognized as valid.

**§705. GENERAL CONFERENCE.** The global nature of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church shall be expressed in its General Conference, whose composition and character are set forth in the Constitution (§203, Article VI). All actions of the General Conference, including this *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, shall be translated at general church expense into the official languages of any part of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. This material shall also be available in digital form.

**PART EIGHT  
CONNECTIONAL ORGANIZATION**

**§ 801. CONNECTIONAL COMMISSIONS.** Working on behalf of local congregations and conferences, the connectional commissions of the General Church provide for essential functions in an efficient, fiscally responsible, and cooperative manner, conducive to the needs of our collective ministry. To this end, they exist to serve the Church, whether embodied in resourcing its members, clergy, local churches, missions, or conferences; or embodied in the exercising of authority on behalf of the General Church and its constituent bodies. At all times the commissions exist to serve and facilitate the mission and ministry of the Church, which in turn exists to serve her Lord.

1. All commissions of the Church are amenable to the General Conference, except as herein otherwise provided, or as governed by appropriate civil law.

2. The General Conference shall have authority to create, regulate, reconfigure, or abolish connectional commissions, except as limited herein or as governed by appropriate civil law; and shall have the authority to define the scope of authority for commissions of the Regional and Annual Conferences.

a. The following connectional commissions are established within the \_\_\_\_\_ Church: Commission on Evangelism, Missions, and Church Planting; Commission on Discipleship and Just Ministry; Commission for Higher Education and Ministry; Commission for Communications; and the Commission for Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits.

3. Regional and Annual Conferences shall have authority in like manner to establish, regulate, reconfigure, or abolish their own commissions; provided this is done in accordance with the requirements established by the General Conference.

a. Regional and Annual Conferences may share commissions between them by joint agreement for the purpose of promoting greater economy, efficiency, and accountability.

4. The program and priorities of the connectional commissions shall be established by the General Conference or other governing entity at the time of the commission's creation, subject to the provisions of the *Doctrines and Discipline* and governing law, and may be altered by the General Conference as needed. Each commission is permitted to structure itself for maximum effectiveness, subject to the requirements of the *Doctrines and Discipline* and the limitation of available funding.

5. Commissions and their sub-units may meet electronically where it is feasible to ensure the full and equal participation of all its members.

6. All general church staff shall be employed by the Connectional Council and assigned to support and resource the various commissions as needed by the connectional operating officer. All staff positions must be approved by the Connectional Council, subject to the budget limits set by General Conference and allocated by the Council.

**¶ 802. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSIONS.** The members of general church commissions shall be elected by the General Conference, drawing on persons nominated by the annual conferences. The term of service shall be six years, with members eligible to be reelected once for a total of twelve years. The procedure for election shall be as follows:

1. Each annual conference shall nominate, by majority vote of both lay and clergy delegates, up to eight persons (clergy or lay, but not bishops) as candidates for connectional commissions and with at least half being lay. Nominees shall be designated for one or two commissions based on gifts, training, and experience. Care shall be taken to include persons from a broad range of racial, ethnic, tribal, gender, economic, and age characteristics.

2. Persons eligible for nomination shall have been members of a local church or annual conference within the \_\_\_\_\_ Church (or its predecessor) for a period of two years at the time of their nomination.

3. The General Conference Committee on Nominations shall, from the list of candidates received from the annual conferences, propose a diverse slate of individuals to serve on the

general commissions of the church, for election by the General Conference, provided that individuals nominated by annual conferences who do not appear on the slate may be nominated from the floor. The slate for each commission shall include the number of members specified by the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, as well as the person the committee nominates to serve as the commission chair.

4. The General Conference shall elect by simple majority two-thirds of the members of each commission and chair . The remaining one-third of the members of each commission shall be elected by the Connectional Council upon nomination by the relevant commission. Persons interested in serving may apply to the relevant commission. Members elected by the Connectional Council are for the purpose of securing greater inclusiveness, experience, or special skills needed for the commission's work. The membership of each commission shall be at least one-half lay.

5. No person may serve simultaneously on more than one connectional commission (not including the Connectional Council). Members of commissions, including the chair, shall serve without remuneration. Travel and meeting expenses shall be paid for commission members by the commission out of its budget.

#### **¶ 803. LEADERSHIP OF COMMISSIONS.**

1. *Commission Chair.* The presiding officer of the commission shall be the chair of the commission. The chair may be lay or clergy and shall be subject to the membership requirement of ¶ 802.2. The General Conference shall elect the chair from names nominated by the annual conferences, for a term of six years, with eligibility to be re-elected once for a second term of six years. Time served as a commission member shall count toward the total term limit for the chair. Any vacancy in the chair position shall be filled by the Connectional Council upon nomination by the relevant commission.

2. *Officers.* The commission shall elect a secretary and may elect other officers to facilitate its work.

3. *Role of Bishops.* No person may serve as the chair of a commission while serving in the episcopal office. Each connectional commission will have one bishop, selected by the Council of Bishops, serving with voice and vote to help maintain communication and coordination with the Council of Bishops and to provide spiritual leadership to the commission.

**¶ 804. OPERATIONS.** Except as provided herein, each connectional commission shall have the authority to structure its own work and business.

1. *Staff.* Each connectional commission may request such staff as is required for the pursuit of its mission. All staff positions must be approved by the Connectional Council, subject to the budget limits set by General Conference and allocated by the Council. Except for the connectional operating officer, all staff are hired, assigned, and evaluated by the connectional operating officer (¶ 812.2j) and serve as at-will employees.

a. Special grants, or gifts designated for staffing, may be used for the hiring and retention of additional staff on a temporary basis, subject to the availability of said monies and with approval of the Connectional Council. Such staff shall be hired and supervised by the connectional operating officer, respecting the purpose of the grant or designated gift.

b. Connectional commissions may contract with organizations, missions, and

denominational entities within the denomination, other ecclesiastical bodies, or parachurch organizations and ministries for the purpose of fulfilling their mission or coordinating on a particular project; provided that no contract will be made with an organization whose mission and/or theological position is inconsistent with those of the connectional commission or of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Contracts that have financial implications beyond the commission's budget must be approved in advance by the Connectional Council.

c. Each commission shall have the power to dismiss any member of that commission for any of the following reasons: incapacity or a pattern of ineffectiveness, including failure to attend meetings or to perform the duties of their office, immorality, breach of trust, doctrinal incompatibility, or criminal activity. A commission may recommend dismissal or other disciplinary action against a staff person.

2. *Nondiscrimination.* The \_\_\_\_\_ Church is committed to open and fair processes in its commissions and institutions, including in the hiring, retention, compensation, promotion, and retirement of staff. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability, current or potential pregnancy, or chronic or potentially terminal illnesses, including HIV, provided that the individual is able to adequately discharge the duties assigned to her or him. As a part of our witness, individuals employed by the church shall subscribe to the doctrinal and moral standards of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church and give evidence of the same in their life and ministry, including faithfulness in marriage, understood to be between one man and one woman, or chastity in singleness.

**¶ 805. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND MISSION.** The areas of responsibility specified below shall accrue to each of the connectional commissions of the Church. Commissions are encouraged to partner with existing ministries or organizations that are effectively accomplishing one or more of the commission's responsibilities. Commissions shall have the flexibility to organize themselves within the resources allotted to or raised by that commission. No commission may serve as a lobbying agency to engage with governmental bodies, either directly or through other entities, except as explicitly authorized by the General Conference and a commission shall not profess to speak for the \_\_\_\_\_ Church unless it reflects statements adopted by the General Conference. The members of each commission and supporting staff are expected to coordinate and collaborate in sharing best practices and in resourcing a full-orbed general church ministry incorporating all the components of each ministry area together, working together with other commissions where possible, in support of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church's mission and strategic plan.

**¶ 806. COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM, MISSIONS, AND CHURCH PLANTING.**

1. This commission shall consist initially of 15 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission. The commission shall thereafter propose the number of members, up to a maximum of 35 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission, subject to General Conference approval.
2. The commission shall offer resourcing to local churches, annual conferences, and the general church in fulfilling the strategic plan in the following ministry areas, to include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Evangelism - Train and equip both individuals and congregations to lead

others to know Christ and to foster spiritual renewal across the church, including the certification of those called to serve as approved evangelists of the church.

- b. Missions -- foster cross-cultural and international partnerships between local churches, districts, and annual conferences, vet, approve, and maintain accountability for mission projects and their funding, recruit, train, deploy, and support missionaries in partnership with mission agencies, foster holistic mission strategies that address both physical and spiritual needs, expand the passion for mission outreach in local churches and channels for mission outreach by local churches, provide for disaster relief and refugee ministry.
- c. Church Planting – identify and provide resources for church planting in various cultural contexts, consult with bishops, annual conference leaders, and local churches to plan and strategize for planting churches, identify, recruit, and train church planters, plant churches in consultation with the relevant bishops and presiding elders

**¶ 807. COMMISSION ON DISCIPLESHIP, DOCTRINE, AND JUST MINISTRY**

- 1. This commission shall consist initially of 15 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission. The commission shall thereafter propose the number of members, up to a maximum of 35 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission, subject to General Conference approval.
- 2. The commission shall offer resourcing to local churches, annual conferences, and the general church in fulfilling the strategic plan in these ministry areas, to include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Discipleship - Encourage and resource the continuing spiritual growth of individuals at all levels of the church through such discipleship programs as classes, bands, and other small groups, the training of leaders, and through identifying and developing liturgies and orders of worship for use by both local congregations and the general church with General Conference approval, emphasizing racial, tribal, gender, and language equity throughout.
  - b. Doctrine - Increase understanding of the importance of our doctrine through teaching and preaching ministries and the use of liturgical resources that are consistent with our understandings of the faith, study and propose any revisions in our doctrinal statements, and give guidance to ecumenical engagement with other Christian churches.
  - c. Just Ministry - Enable both individuals and congregations to “do justice” in ways consistent with our social witness and commitments to the sacred worth and equality of all individuals, including developing policies, procedures, and training for addressing sexual harassment and sexual misconduct and advocacy with and on behalf of women, persons of various racial, ethnic, and tribal identities, and persons with disabilities for full and equal participation in the membership and leadership of the church, monitoring and growing compliance with the non-discrimination policy (¶ 804.2) and the Hosier Rule (¶ 517), resourcing annual conferences and local

churches in the areas of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments, and resourcing local churches in engaging with the church's Social Witness and social issues from a variety of political perspectives and from a biblical foundation.

**¶ 808. COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY**

1. This commission shall consist initially of 15 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission. The commission shall thereafter propose the number of members, up to a maximum of 35 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission, subject to General Conference approval.
2. The commission shall offer resourcing to local churches, annual conferences, and the general church in fulfilling the strategic plan in these ministry areas, to include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Ministry Credentials – implement the standards and qualifications set for various forms of ministry by General Conference, certify the educational programs for training lay ministers, deacons, and elders, develop curricula for ministry training courses, resource annual conference boards of ministry, ensure adequate psychological and background evaluation for candidates, and approve seminaries for ministry training.
  - b. Higher Education - Help unite “knowledge and vital piety” by encouraging Christian perspectives within institutions of higher education that are related to the church, provide a network of such institutions, and assist in the founding and growth of needed Christian colleges and seminaries with a Wesleyan theological perspective across the world, particularly in underserved regions.
  - c. Ministry Endorsement – establish and refine criteria and qualifications for various forms of non-parish ministry, such as hospital and military chaplaincy, evaluate and approve training programs that meet the criteria and qualifications, examine and credential persons for various forms of non-parish ministry, and support persons engaging in non-parish ministry.

**¶ 809. COMMISSION ON COMMUNICATIONS**

1. This commission shall consist initially of 15 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission. The commission shall thereafter propose the number of members, up to a maximum of 35 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission, subject to General Conference approval.
2. The commission shall offer resourcing to local churches, annual conferences, and the general church in fulfilling the strategic plan in these ministry areas, to include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Develop and encourage communication strategies appropriate across various geographical and cultural contexts that can help to tell the story and mission of the church better, and develop and administer the branding of the church.
  - b. Create print and digital resources that communicate the work of the church, including its commissions and programs, to both laity and clergy, including

the publishing of the *Book of Doctrines and Disciplines*, and other materials to foster the growth and discipleship of all of our members, translate communications and resources into the languages of the church, and grow the digital communication capability of the church.

**¶ 810. COMMISSION ON FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION, PENSIONS, AND BENEFITS**

1. This commission shall consist initially of 15 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission. The commission shall thereafter propose the number of members, up to a maximum of 35 members plus the chair and the bishop assigned to that commission, subject to General Conference approval.
2. The commission shall offer resourcing to local churches, annual conferences, and the general church in fulfilling the strategic plan in these ministry areas, to include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Finance - Oversee the financial and fiduciary life of the general church, including its commissions and programs, to insure both its integrity and efficiency, reporting publicly the detailed expenses and income of all groups, conducting an annual independent audit of each commission's finances, collecting and allocating distributing all income received by the general church, and recommending to the General Conference through the Connectional Council both a budget and apportionment allocations to each annual conference.
  - b. General Counsel - Manage the legal work of the general church and provide legal counsel to annual conferences and local congregations as requested, provide for the ownership and maintenance of any general church property.
  - c. Archives and History - Maintain the historical archives of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church and encourage the study of our history to better understand how "hitherto the Lord has helped us" (1 Samuel 7.12).
  - d. Statistics - Collect, make public, and help interpret accurate and timely statistics on our membership, ministry, and participation by our members.
  - e. Pensions and Benefits - Give oversight to the pension and benefits (i.e., insurance, disability, etc.) programs for clergy and lay employees of the church worldwide and encourage conferences worldwide to provide adequate pension funding and medical care for those who serve in the church's ministry (active and retired).

**¶ 811. CONNECTIONAL COUNCIL**

1. Each general commission shall elect two of its members who are not bishops, including the commission chair, to represent the commission on the Connectional Council. The top staff person supporting each commission shall also be a member of the Connectional Council with voice but without vote. The Council of Bishops shall elect four bishops who are globally representative and not members of one of the other commissions to serve with voice and vote. Members shall be elected by each commission at the first commission meeting following General Conference and shall serve until their successors are elected or their membership on the commission

ceases, whichever comes first. In case of a vacancy, a commission shall elect a replacement member. The Connectional Council shall elect its own officers from among its members. The connectional operating officer shall serve as the staff person for the Council, with voice but without vote.

2. The Connectional Council shall meet at least twice per year face-to-face (absent exigent circumstances that would require electronic or other forms of meeting) and electronically at other times for the purpose of communication and coordination of ministry among the commissions. The Council shall have the following specific authority and responsibilities:
  - a. To engage in proactive global strategizing, including a strategic plan, for growth in discipleship and mission, and to implement the priorities established by General Conference, making recommendations to the commissions for implementation.
  - b. To adjust the general church budget between General Conferences with published rationale, as long as it does not exceed the total amount of the budget.
  - c. To hire the connectional operating officer and evaluate his/her work annually (§ 812).
  - d. To approve the staffing levels for all commissions, consistent with budget limitations.
  - e. To adopt policies and procedures applicable to the general church, its commissions, and its other entities in alignment with the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* and the priorities set by General Conference.
  - f. To fill vacancies among the members or chair of a commission that occur between General Conferences, upon nomination by the relevant commission.
  - g. To coordinate proposals coming from the commissions to the General Conference, including the proposed budget, to assure congruence with the church's mission and strategy, as well as congruence with each other.
  - h. To initiate, staff, and set parameters for task forces dealing with issues beyond the scope of an individual commission.
3. The Connectional Council shall be an incorporated legal entity.

**§812. THE CONNECTIONAL OPERATING OFFICER.** The connectional operating officer shall bear primary responsibility for the fruitful and accountable functioning of the general church and serve as its chief executive and administrative officer. The connectional operating officer shall be directly amenable to the Connectional Council. The connectional operating officer shall assign staff to support and resource any general commission and provide oversight to all general church staff.

1. *Selection.* The connectional operating officer may be either a clergy or lay person and shall be selected by the Connectional Council by majority vote of the Council.

2. *Term.* The connectional operating officer serves at the pleasure of the Connectional Council and shall serve no more than twelve years, unless the Connectional Council approves an extension of no more than two years for missional reasons by a three-fourths vote.

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

a. Serve as the general church's chief executive and administrative officer and oversee all connectional commissions and enterprises.

b. Oversee planning and research to advance and implement the mission and strategic plan of the church.

c. Serve as the staff person for the Connectional Council in assisting the Council in all its work, but especially to provide a unified sense of vision and mission for all the work of the denomination.

d. Along with the Connectional Council, 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.

e. Review and evaluate the missional effectiveness of the general commissions of the church, making recommendations to the Council.

f. In consultation with the Commission on Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits, prepare the proposed connectional budget for Connectional Council and General Conference approval and, once approved, oversee its implementation, including, but not limited to, overseeing connectional finances and the maintenance of financial records.

g. Oversee yearly audits of connectional financial records.

h. Direct the development of policies and procedures to implement the provisions of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, including but not limited to personnel matters.

i. Direct and/or oversee connectional communications, public relations, and marketing.

j. Serve as the chief spokesperson for the denomination to the extent authorized by the General Conference or the Council.

k. With appropriate consultation, manage the process for and make the final decision on hiring, assigning, and retaining all general church staff, supervise and direct all general church staff, including performance reviews in consultation with the relevant commission(s), recommend compensation levels for all program staff for Connectional Council approval, and set compensation levels for all support staff. All processes shall comply with the policies and procedures adopted by the Connectional Council.

l. Negotiate and/or oversee negotiation of contracts for services including, but not limited to, facilities, connectional pension, insurance, and other benefit programs, with the approval of the relevant commission.

m. Recommend to General Conference through the Connectional Council changes to the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* and implementing legislation.

n. Carry out other responsibilities and duties assigned by the General Conference or the Connectional Council.

## Part Nine Judicial Administration

**¶ 901. ACCOUNTABILITY** – Ordination and membership in an annual conference in the \_\_\_\_\_ Church is a sacred trust. The qualifications and duties of clergy members and bishops are set forth in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of The \_\_\_\_\_ Church, and we believe they flow from the Scriptures. Laity, as well, are accountable to the vows of baptism and membership, and biblical moral standards. Whenever a person in any of the above categories, including those on leaves of all types, honorable or administrative location, or retirement, is accused of violating this trust, the membership of his or her ministerial office shall be subject to review. This review shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust, in the hope that God’s work of justice, reconciliation, and healing may be realized in the body of Christ.

**¶ 902. COMPLAINTS** – The process of accountability is initiated when a formal complaint is filed. A complaint is a written and signed statement alleging misconduct as defined in ¶ 906.1-2 (a judicial complaint) or unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties (an administrative complaint, ¶ 905). If the complaint is against a bishop, the complaint shall be submitted to the president of the Council of Bishops, or if the respondent is the president, to the secretary. If the complaint is against a pastor, the complaint shall be submitted to that pastor’s presiding elder and bishop. If the complaint is against a local church member, the complaint shall be submitted to the presiding elder over that local church. When a complaint is received by the person in authority over the respondent, both the person making the complaint (“complainant”) and the person against whom the complaint is made (“respondent”) shall be informed in writing of the process to be followed at that stage. When and if the stage changes, those persons shall continue to be informed in writing of the new process in a timely fashion. All original time limitations may be extended for one (and only one) 30-day period upon the consent of the complainant and the respondent.

**¶ 903. JUST RESOLUTION** – Complaints may be resolved during the supervisory response stage by a just resolution. A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability, making things right in so far as possible, and bringing healing to all the parties. In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution may include by agreement of all parties the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s) in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties. Special attention should be given to ensuring that cultural, racial, ethnic and gender contexts are valued throughout the process in terms of their understandings of fairness, justice, and restoration. A resolution of the complaint at the supervisory response level shall involve a written statement of the allegations, a list of all parties to the complaint, determination of facts, elucidation of context, and plan of action or agreed penalty to address the allegations, including follow-up accountability. Any just resolution that involves an allegation of disobedience to a provision of the *Doctrines and Discipline* shall include a commitment by the respondent to abide by all applicable disciplinary requirements, including those alleged to have

been violated. Such a resolution shall not be imposed, but must be voluntarily agreed to and signed by all parties to the complaint, including as a minimum the complainant, the respondent, and the presiding elder or bishop. Such a resolution shall be placed in the respondent's personnel file. A just resolution agreed to by all parties shall be a final disposition of the related complaint.

**¶ 904. PRINCIPLES OF FAIR PROCESS** – As a part of the holy covenant that exists within the membership and organization of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, the following procedures are presented for the protection of the rights of individuals and for the protection of the church in administrative and judicial processes. The principles set forth in this paragraph shall be followed whenever there is administrative or judicial complaint. Special attention shall be given to the timely disposition of all matters and to ensuring racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the committees dealing with complaints.

1. The bishop or the bishop's designee, the complainant, and the respondent shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken at any stage in the process.

2. Notice of any hearing shall advise the respondent and the complainant of the reason for the proposed procedures with sufficient detail to allow the respondent to prepare a response. Notice shall be given not less than twenty (20) calendar days prior to the hearing.

3. The respondent and the complainant shall have a right to be present at all hearings and the right to be accompanied to any hearing by a support person with the right to voice. The support person shall be a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Under no circumstances shall the church award compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent's or complainant's use of an attorney.

4. Under no circumstances shall one party, in the absence of the other party, discuss substantive issues with members of the pending hearing body, with the exception of ¶ 904.6. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer of the hearing body, with the answers shared with all parties.

5. The respondent shall have access, at least ten (10) calendar days prior to any hearing, to all records to be relied upon in the determination of the outcome of the process, including the written texts of the complaints themselves.

6. In the event that a respondent fails to appear for supervisory interviews, refuses mail, refuses to communicate personally with the bishop or presiding elder or church representatives, or otherwise fails to respond to supervisory requests or requests from official committees, such actions or inactions shall not be used as an excuse to avoid or delay any church processes, and such processes may continue without the participation of such individual.

7. As a part of the accountability process, the bishop and cabinet, in consultation with the presiding officer of the pending hearing, trial, or appellate body then sitting, shall provide for healing if there has been significant disruption to the congregation, the annual conference, or the context of ministry by the matter. Provisions for healing shall include communication about the complaint and the process and the release of as much information as possible, without compromising the process.

8. No person shall be subject to double jeopardy. This means, barring new compelling information or facts, no complaint shall be accepted for the same alleged offenses based on the same set of facts, when a similar complaint has already been adjudicated via just resolution or

final action by an administrative or judicial body. This does not preclude filing a new complaint for new instances of the same offense.

9. *Immunity From Prosecution* – In order to preserve the integrity of the church’s process and ensure full participation in it at all times, the bishop, cabinet, Board of Ministry, witnesses, advocates, administrative review committee, clergy voting in executive session, and all others who participate in the church’s process shall have immunity from prosecution of complaints brought against them related to their role in a particular process, unless they have committed a chargeable offense in conscious and knowing bad faith. The complainant/plaintiff in any proceeding against any such person related to their role in a particular judicial process shall have the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, that such person’s actions constituted a chargeable offense committed knowingly in bad faith. The immunity set forth in this provision shall extend to civil court proceedings, to the fullest extent permissible by the civil laws.

**¶ 905. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS** – An administrative complaint involves allegations of the unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties through incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform such duties and shall not allege any form of misconduct. Such complaints may be filed by laypersons who are within the scope of a respondent’s ministry, other clergy familiar with the respondent’s ministry, the presiding elder, or the bishop. The complaint shall contain specific examples of unsatisfactory performance, including at least approximate dates and times (if appropriate).

1. *Supervisory Response* – The first step in resolving an administrative complaint is a meeting of the complainant, the respondent, and the bishop or presiding elder (at the bishop’s discretion). Both the complainant and the respondent are entitled to have with them a support person who shall have voice in the meeting. The participants in the meeting shall be informed a minimum of twenty calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting, and the written complaint shall be presented to the complainant at least twenty calendar days prior to any supervisory response. The purpose of the supervisory response is to, so far as possible, establish facts, consider circumstances and explanations, determine if there is an issue that merits action, and arrive at a plan of addressing the unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties (if any).

The supervisory response shall result in one of three possible outcomes:

a. The presiding elder or bishop dismisses the complaint, with the agreement of a majority of the presiding elders in the annual conference as having no basis in church law or fact. In such a case, the presiding elder or bishop shall provide a written rationale for dismissing the complaint, which shall be placed in the respondent’s personnel file and copies of which shall be given to the complainant and respondent.

b. A resolution of the complaint is agreed to by all parties, signed, and placed in the respondent’s personnel file.

c. A resolution of the complaint is not agreed to and the presiding elder or bishop determines that the allegations have a basis in fact that merits a response. In such case, the complaint shall be forwarded to the chairperson of the Board of Ministry for an examination and investigative process.

The supervisory response shall be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of the receipt of the complaint by the bishop or presiding elder, with the possibility of one (and only one) 30-

calendar-day extension if agreed upon by both the respondent and the complainant.

2. *Investigative Response.* Once a complaint is forwarded under ¶ 905.1(c), a committee of at least five persons from the Board of Ministry shall convene to investigate the allegations of the complaint. The purpose of the investigative response is to, so far as possible, establish facts, consider circumstances and explanations, determine if there is an issue that merits action, and arrive at a plan of addressing the unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties (if any). The committee shall have access to all relevant materials related to the allegations and shall be able to interview witnesses. When witnesses are interviewed, the respondent and complainant, along with their support persons (with voice) shall be entitled to be present and also ask questions.

When the committee has finished its investigation, it shall hold a closed hearing, with the respondent and complaint and their support persons (with voice) entitled to be present. The evidence regarding the allegations shall be presented. The respondent shall have the opportunity to present evidence, as well, and make statements to the committee. A verbatim record of the hearing shall be made and kept in the respondent's personnel file. At the conclusion of the hearing, the committee shall enter into executive session for the purpose of resolving the allegations. The committee's investigation shall be completed and the hearing held within 60 calendar days of the referral of the complaint to the Board of Ministry, with the possibility of one (and only one) 30-calendar-day extension if agreed upon by both the respondent and the complainant. A written report of the committee's decision, including rationale, shall be placed in the respondent's personnel file and copies given to the respondent and complainant.

The investigative response shall result in one of three outcomes:

a. The committee may find the allegations are without sufficient basis to take action and dismiss the complaint.

b. The committee may find the allegations are substantiated and mandate a course of remedial actions, with appropriate benchmarks and follow-up subject to regular oversight by the board and annual review, including but not limited to:

- 1) Program of continuing education;
- 2) Sabbatical leave;
- 3) Personal counseling or therapy;
- 4) Program of career evaluation;
- 5) Peer support and supervision;

c. The committee may find the allegations are substantiated and recommend an involuntary status change, such as surrender of credentials, administrative location, involuntary leave of absence, or involuntary retirement.

Outcomes a or b shall be determined by majority vote of the committee and reported to the Board of Ministry. Outcome c shall require a three-quarters vote of the committee, ratification by a majority of the Board of Ministry, and ratification by a majority of the clergy session.

3. *Administrative Review.* There shall be an administrative review committee in every annual conference composed of three clergy and two alternates who are not members of the cabinet, the Board of Ministry, or immediate family members of the above. The committee shall be nominated by the bishop and elected by the clergy session of the annual conference. Its only

purpose shall be to ensure that the disciplinary procedures for resolving a substantiated administrative complaint are properly followed.

The administrative review committee shall review the report and entire process used by the Board of Ministry in the Investigative Response to determine whether it followed the requirements of ¶ 905.2 and fair process (¶ 904). The committee shall issue a report on the process and its compliance with the *Doctrines and Discipline*, which report shall be given to the respondent, the complainant, the bishop and cabinet, and to the Board of Ministry and clergy session prior to any action by those bodies on the investigative response. Prior to its report, if the committee determines that any error has occurred, it may recommend to the appropriate person or body that action be taken promptly to remedy the error or decide the error is harmless. Whether or not remedial action is taken shall factor into the response by the Board of Ministry and clergy session.

4. *Appeal.* The respondent and complainant both have the right of appeal of the decision by the investigative response of the Board of Ministry. The appeal shall go first to the full Board of Ministry (with no members of the investigative committee voting as part of the full Board action) and then may be appealed to the clergy session. Both bodies shall have access to the full report of the investigative response, and additional evidence, testimony, and statements may be presented by both sides during the appeal. Any decision is final unless notice of appeal is filed within 30 calendar days of the release of the decision. The decision of the clergy session is final, with no further appeal.

5. *If the respondent is a bishop,* the supervisory process (¶ 905.1) shall be administered by the president of the Council of Bishops (or if the president is the respondent, the secretary). Any investigative process shall be carried out by a committee of the General Committee on Episcopacy (¶¶ 905.2, 610.8). The investigative committee shall not include anyone from the annual conference presided over by the respondent bishop and shall be representative of the global makeup of the church. The conference episcopacy committee shall administer any just resolution of an administrative complaint, with at least an annual report to the president (or secretary) of the Council of Bishops and the chair of the General Committee on Episcopacy. Any involuntary status change of a bishop shall be recommended by a three-fourths vote of the investigative committee and approved by the General Committee on Episcopacy by a two-thirds vote (¶ 610.4). The administrative review committee of the annual conference presided over by the bishop shall examine the administrative process and issue its report prior to any action by the General Committee on Episcopacy. The respondent bishop may appeal a decision of the investigative committee to the full General Committee on Episcopacy (with no members of the investigative committee voting as part of the full General Committee) and then to the Council of Bishops under the provisions of ¶ 905.4. The Council of Bishop's decision shall be final.

**¶ 906. JUDICIAL COMPLAINTS** – A judicial complaint involves allegations of misconduct as enumerated in the chargeable offenses below. Such complaints may be filed by any layperson or clergy person, the presiding elder, or the bishop. The complaint shall contain specific allegations of misconduct, including at least approximate dates and times (if appropriate).

1. *Chargeable Offenses* – A bishop or clergy member of an annual conference, including clergy on honorable or administrative location, may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 906.3) with one or more of the following offenses:

- a. Conviction or admission of guilt in criminal activities, including but not limited to child or elder abuse, theft, or assault;
  - b. Fiscal malfeasance or gross financial mismanagement;
  - c. Racial, gender, or sexual discrimination or harassment;
  - d. Promoting doctrines or practices, or conducting ceremonies or services, that are not in accord with those established by the \_\_\_\_\_ Church;
  - e. Disobedience to the order and discipline of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church;
  - f. Relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor;
  - g. Engaging in sexual activities outside the bonds of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman, including but not limited to sexual abuse or misconduct, the use or possession of pornography, or infidelity;
2. A professing member of a local church may be charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 906.3) with the following offenses, and, if so, may choose a trial:
- a. Conviction or admission of guilt in criminal activities, including but not limited to child or elder abuse, theft, or assault;
  - b. Fiscal malfeasance or gross financial mismanagement;
  - c. Racial, gender, or sexual discrimination or harassment;
  - d. Promoting doctrines or practices that are not in accord with those established by the \_\_\_\_\_ Church;
  - e. Disobedience to the order and discipline of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church;
  - f. Relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of a pastor;
  - g. Engaging in sexual activities outside the bonds of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman, including but not limited to sexual abuse or misconduct, the use or possession of pornography, or infidelity;
3. *Statute of Limitations* – No judicial complaint or charge shall be considered for any alleged occurrence that shall not have been committed within six years immediately preceding the filing of the original complaint, except in the case of sexual or child abuse and in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse, there shall be no limitation. Time spent on leave of absence shall not be considered as part of the six years.
4. *Time of Offense* – A person shall not be charged with an offense that was not a chargeable offense at the time it is alleged to have been committed. Any charge filed shall be in the language of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* in effect at the time the offense is alleged to have occurred, except in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse. Then it shall be in the language of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* in effect at the time the charge was filed. Any charge must relate to an action listed as a chargeable offense in the *Doctrines and Discipline*.
5. *Jurisdiction of Accountability*. Clergy members and bishops shall be accountable for their actions in the annual conference in which a chargeable offense (¶ 906.1) of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* occurs. Such judicial proceedings may be conducted within the conference where the clergy are members (if different from where the offense occurs) if requested by the clergy, and consented to by the bishops of both annual conferences upon a specific finding that fairness will be better served for all parties who are involved. Any just resolution, findings, verdict, or penalty determined by the annual conference in which judicial

proceedings are held is binding on the respondent across the whole church, pending the outcome of any appeal.

6. *If the respondent is a bishop*, the complaint should be directed to the president of the Council of Bishops (or if the president is the respondent, the secretary). The president (or secretary) shall make the conference episcopacy committee where the bishop presides, the General Committee on Episcopacy, and the Council of Bishops aware of the complaint and keep them apprised of its progress.

**¶ 907. SUPERVISORY RESPONSE** – The first step in resolving a judicial complaint is a required meeting of the complainant, the respondent, and the bishop or presiding elder (at the bishop’s discretion). Both the complainant and the respondent are entitled to have with them a support person who shall have voice in the meeting. The participants in the meeting shall be informed a minimum of twenty (20) calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting, and the written complaint shall be presented to the complainant at least twenty (20) calendar days prior to any supervisory response. The purpose of the supervisory response is to, so far as possible, establish facts, consider circumstances and explanations, determine if there is an issue that merits action, and arrive at a resolution of the complaint that restores compliance and redresses any harms resulting from a violation.

*If the respondent is a bishop*, the supervisory process shall be administered by the president of the Council of Bishops (or if the president is the respondent, the secretary) (¶ 909.1).

The supervisory response shall result in one of three possible outcomes:

a. The presiding elder or bishop dismisses the complaint, with the agreement of a majority of the presiding elders in the annual conference (or if the respondent is a bishop, the executive committee of the Council of Bishops) as having no basis in church law or fact. In such a case, the presiding elder or bishop shall provide a written rationale for dismissing the complaint, which shall be placed in the respondent’s personnel file and copies of which shall be given to the complainant and respondent.

b. A resolution of the complaint is agreed to by all parties, signed, and placed in the respondent’s personnel file.

c. A resolution of the complaint is not agreed to and the presiding elder or bishop determines that the allegations have a basis in fact that merits a response. In such case, the complaint shall be forwarded to a counsel for the church to present the complaint to the committee on investigation for an examination and investigative process.

The supervisory response shall be completed within sixty (60) calendar days of the receipt of the complaint by the bishop or presiding elder, with the possibility of one (and only one) 30-calendar-day extension if agreed upon by both the respondent and the complainant.

**¶ 908. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATION.**

1. *When respondent is a bishop*—The General Conference shall elect a global committee on investigation. The Council of Bishops shall nominate persons to be elected. The Council shall nominate persons who reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the church. Further nominations may be offered from the floor of the General Conference.

The committee shall consist of nine members, five clergy who are not bishops and four

professing members, and nine alternate members, five of whom shall be clergy who are not bishops and four of whom shall be professing members. If possible, no two members and alternates shall be from the same annual conference. All continents of the church should be represented on the committee. Committee members shall be in good standing and should be deemed of good character. The committee shall elect a chairperson and secretary and organize at the General Conference following its election. Five clergy and four laity (or their alternates) seated as members of the committee shall constitute a quorum. Where technically feasible, members of the committee may participate in meetings and hearings through video conferencing.

2. *When the respondent is a clergy person* -- Each annual conference shall elect a committee on investigation to consider judicial complaints against clergy members of the annual conference, including clergy members on honorable location or administrative location from that annual conference. It shall consist of seven members, four clergy and three professing members, and seven alternate members, four clergy and three laity. None of the members or alternates shall be members of the Board of Ministry, the cabinet, or immediate family members of the above. The bishop shall nominate persons for the committee, in consultation with the Board of Ministry (for clergy members) and the conference board of laity (if any, for professing members). Nominations shall reflect the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the conference. The annual conference shall elect the committee, with the power to elect additional members or alternates during the term of office as needed. Committee members shall be in good standing and shall be deemed of good character. The committee on investigation shall elect a chair and secretary and organize at the annual conference following its election. Should a member of the committee on investigation have been a party to any of the prior proceedings in the case that finally comes before the committee, he or she shall be disqualified from sitting on the committee during its consideration of that case, and an alternate member shall take his or her place. Four clergy and three laity (or their alternates) seated as members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.

3. *When respondent is a layperson*—In all cases, the pastor or presiding elder should take pastoral steps to resolve any complaints (§ 907). If such pastoral response does not result in resolution and a written complaint is made against a professing member for any of the offenses in § 906.3, the presiding elder and the district lay leader (if any), shall appoint a committee on investigation consisting of four professing members and three clergy in full connection. Both clergy and professing members must come from other congregations, exclusive of the churches of the respondent or the complainant. Committee members shall be in good standing and should be deemed of good character. The committee should reflect racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. Five members shall constitute a quorum.

#### **¶ 909. REFERRAL OF A COMPLAINT TO A COUNSEL FOR THE CHURCH.**

1. *When the respondent is a bishop*  
a. The president of the Council of Bishops (or if the president is the respondent, the secretary) shall handle the supervisory response (§ 907). If a just resolution is not agreed to and the complaint is not dismissed, the president (or secretary) shall notify all active bishops, the General Committee on Episcopacy, and the relevant conference episcopacy committee of the existence and nature of the complaint and refer the complaint within 30 days to an elder within

the same regional conference or equivalent, appointed by the president or secretary, who shall serve as counsel for the Church. By agreeing to serve, counsel for the Church signifies his or her willingness to uphold the requirements of Church law and the *Doctrines and Discipline*. No person who was a member of the cabinet, Board of Ministry, or committee on investigation who earlier considered the case now before the trial court shall be appointed counsel for the Church or serve as counsel for the respondent or any of the persons bringing complaints in a case. Counsel for the Church shall represent the interests of the Church in pressing the claims of the person making the complaint. Counsel for the Church shall have the right to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. The counsel for the Church shall draft and sign the complaint as a judicial complaint, forward it to the committee on investigation (¶ 908), and represent the Church in the judicial process.

b. The counsel for the Church, as appointed under ¶ 909.1a, shall prepare, sign, and forward the judicial complaint and all documentary evidence under consideration, including but not limited to information from the supervisory process and a suggested list of witnesses as deemed appropriate, to the chairperson of the committee on investigation, the complainant, and the respondent. The counsel for the Church shall be responsible for providing a progress report of the development of the judicial complaint every thirty (30) calendar days to all parties, starting from the date of appointment until the date the judicial complaint is heard by the committee on investigation. The respondent shall be given an opportunity to submit to the committee on investigation a written response to the judicial complaint within thirty calendar days of receipt of the judicial complaint. The chairperson shall convene the committee on investigation within sixty calendar days of receiving the judicial complaint.

c. If six or more members of the committee on investigation so recommend, the general committee on the episcopacy may suspend the respondent with pay from all episcopal duties and responsibilities pending the conclusion of the trial process (¶ 915.6). The respondent retains all rights and privileges while suspended from episcopal duties.

2. *When the respondent is a clergy person*

a. If a just resolution is not agreed to and the complaint is not dismissed, the bishop shall notify the staff-parish relations committee of the existence and nature of the complaint and refer the complaint within 30 calendar days to an elder within the annual conference, appointed by the bishop, who shall serve as counsel for the Church. No person who was a member of the cabinet, Board of Ministry, or committee on investigation who earlier considered the case now before the trial court shall be appointed counsel for the Church or serve as counsel for the respondent or any of the persons bringing complaints in a case. By agreeing to serve, counsel for the Church signifies his or her willingness to uphold the requirements of Church law and the *Doctrines and Discipline*. Counsel for the Church shall represent the interests of the Church in pressing the claims of the person making the complaint. Counsel for the Church shall have the right to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. The counsel for the Church shall draft and sign the complaint as a judicial complaint, forward it to the committee on investigation (¶ 908), and represent the Church in the judicial process.

b. The counsel for the Church, as appointed under ¶ 909.2a, shall prepare, sign, and forward the judicial complaint and all documentary evidence under consideration, including but not limited to information from the supervisory process and a suggested list of witnesses as deemed appropriate, to the chairperson of the committee on investigation, the complainant,

and the respondent. The counsel for the Church shall be responsible for providing a progress report of the development of the judicial complaint every thirty (30) calendar days to all parties, starting from the date of appointment until the date the judicial complaint is heard by the committee on investigation. The respondent shall be given an opportunity to submit to the committee on investigation a written response to the judicial complaint within thirty calendar days of receipt of the judicial complaint. The chairperson shall convene the committee on investigation within sixty calendar days of receiving the judicial complaint.

c. If five or more members of the committee on investigation so recommend, the bishop may suspend the respondent with pay from all duties and responsibilities relating to their appointment pending the conclusion of the trial process (§ 916.6). The respondent retains all rights and privileges while suspended from pastoral duties.

3. *When the respondent is a layperson*

a. If a just resolution is not agreed to and the complaint is not dismissed, the pastor, in consultation with the presiding elder, shall within 30 calendar days appoint a \_\_\_\_\_ Church clergy or layperson to serve as counsel for the church. No person who was a member of the cabinet or committee on investigation who earlier considered the case now before the trial court shall be appointed counsel for the Church or serve as counsel for the respondent or any of the persons bringing complaints in a case. By agreeing to serve, counsel for the Church signifies his or her willingness to uphold the requirements of Church law and the *Doctrines and Discipline*. Counsel for the Church shall represent the interests of the Church in pressing the claims of the person making the complaint. Counsel for the Church shall have the right to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. The counsel for the Church shall draft and sign the complaint as a judicial complaint, forward it to the committee on investigation (§ 908), and represent the Church in the judicial process.

b. The counsel for the Church, as appointed under § 909.3a, shall prepare, sign, and forward the judicial complaint and all documentary evidence under consideration, including but not limited to information from the supervisory process and a suggested list of witnesses as deemed appropriate, to the chairperson of the committee on investigation, the complainant, and the respondent. The counsel for the Church shall be responsible for providing a progress report of the development of the judicial complaint every thirty (30) calendar days to all parties, starting from the date of appointment until the date the judicial complaint is heard by the committee on investigation. The respondent shall be given an opportunity to submit to the committee on investigation a written response to the judicial complaint within thirty calendar days of receipt of the judicial complaint. The chairperson shall convene the committee on investigation within sixty calendar days of receiving the judicial complaint.

c. If five or more members of the committee on investigation so recommend, the pastor or presiding elder may suspend the respondent from exercising any church office pending the conclusion of the trial process.

d. The presiding elder shall preside at all meetings of the committee, shall be given a copy of the judicial complaint and any response, and shall have the right to be present and to speak at all meetings of the committee.

**¶ 910. COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATION—PROCEDURES**

1. *Introduction* – The role of the committee on investigation is to conduct an investigation into the allegations made in the judicial complaint and to determine if reasonable grounds exist to bring a bill of charges and specifications to trial. If so, it shall prepare, sign, and certify a bill of charges and specifications. The committee’s duty is only to determine whether reasonable grounds exist to support the charges. It is not the committee’s duty to determine guilt or innocence.

2. *Parties and Counsel* – The parties are the respondent and the Church.

a. *Counsel for the Church* – Counsel for the Church shall be entitled to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. All reasonable expenses of the counsel and assistant counsel shall be paid by the annual conference (or general church, if the respondent is a bishop)

b. *Committee on Investigation* – The committee on investigation may have legal counsel present, who shall not be the conference chancellor, for the sole purpose of providing advice to the committee, at the annual conference’s (or general church’s) expense.

c. A respondent who is a bishop or a clergy person shall be entitled to select an clergy person to serve as respondent’s counsel. A respondent shall be entitled to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. In no instance and under no circumstances shall the respondent be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent’s use of an attorney.

d. A lay respondent shall be entitled to select a lay member or clergy person to serve as respondent’s counsel. A respondent shall be entitled to choose one assistant counsel without voice who may be an attorney. In no instance and under no circumstances shall the respondent be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent’s use of an attorney.

3. *Preliminary Meeting* – Basic procedural decisions shall be made in a preliminary meeting. During this meeting, the respondent and the respondent’s counsel, the complainant, and the counsel for the Church shall have the right to argue procedural points before a decision is made by the chair. All procedural decisions and such unanticipated decisions as may come in the course of the meeting of the committee on investigation shall be rendered in writing so as to be available for consideration in all further possible stages of the case. The chair shall provide any rulings in writing to the parties at least five calendar days prior to the initiation of the hearing before the Committee on Investigation.

4. *Hearing before the Committee on Investigation*

a. If possible, the respondent and the person(s) bringing the original complaint shall be brought face to face, but the inability to do this shall not invalidate an investigation. Notice of the hearings shall be given to all parties, including the complainant, and they all shall be permitted to be present during testimony, but not during deliberations. Proceedings in the investigation shall be informal. No oaths shall be taken. All procedural decisions shall be made by the chairperson.

b. *Interview of witness prior to or outside of hearing*—The chairperson shall have the power, whenever it is appropriate in the committee’s own discretion, to appoint at least two members of the committee to interview any witness(es), provided that all parties may be present (without voice) and that three calendar days notice of the time and place of such

interview shall have been given to all parties. The members so appointed shall create a verbatim record of the interview and certify the record by signature for transmittal to the chairperson.

c. *Examination of witnesses*—The committee on investigation may call and question such persons or request such written information, including but not limited to materials from the supervisory process, as it deems necessary to establish whether or not there are reasonable grounds for formulating a charge or charges. The committee may receive from the counsels suggested lists of persons to be questioned, sources of written material, or questions to be asked. There shall be no right of cross-examination by either the respondent or the person(s) bringing the original complaint.

d. *Evidence*—The committee should only consider testimony or evidence which is relevant and reliable. The chairperson or presiding officer, after consultation with counsel for both parties, shall rule on challenges to relevance and reliability. The introduction of any material relating to events barred by the statute of limitations (§ 906.3) as evidence, as preface to evidence, or as build-up for evidence in the procedures of the committee on investigation or the trial proceedings shall be permitted when the presiding officer, after consultation with counsel for both parties, rules that such material is relevant and reliable.

e. *Verbatim transcript*—There shall be a verbatim record of all proceedings of the committee on investigation, except when the committee meets in executive session. The term *executive session* shall mean the committee meeting alone or with its legal counsel. If the complaint is dismissed or returned to the bishop, a verbatim record shall be sent to the conference secretary for retention.

5. *Bill of Charges and Specifications, Deliberations, Vote, and Referral* – A vote on each charge and each specification shall be taken separately. It is incumbent on each member of the committee to base his or her vote solely on whether reasonable grounds exist to support the charges. If there are members who are unwilling to uphold the *Doctrines and Discipline* for reasons of conscience or otherwise, such members must step aside in this matter and either alternate members or others who are willing to uphold the *Doctrines and Discipline* must be appointed to the Committee to enable it to complete its responsibility.

a. *Bill of Charges and Specifications* – A charge is one of the chargeable offenses listed in § 906. A charge shall not include more than one such chargeable offense. More than one charge against the same person may be presented and tried at the same time. Each charge must be written with specifications that support the charge. Each charge must be accompanied by one or more specifications of fact. Each specification, standing alone, must allege a factual occurrence that, if found to be true, would support a finding of guilty on the related charge. The specifications should be as specific as possible with information such as date, place, and specific events alleged to have occurred.

b. *Finding of reasonable grounds by committee and referral of bill of charges and specifications for trial*

1) *When respondent is a bishop* – A vote to adopt any charge or specification shall require six votes. Any bill of charges and specifications adopted shall be sent within five calendar days to the bishop charged, to the secretary of the General Conference, to the president and secretary of the Council of Bishops, to counsel for the Church, and to the chairpersons of the General and conference committees on episcopacy.

2) *When respondent is a clergyperson other than a bishop* – A vote to adopt any charge or specification shall require five votes. Any bill of charges and specifications adopted by the committee on investigations shall be sent by the chairperson within five calendar days to the respondent, the complainant, the secretary of the annual conference, the chair of the Board of Ministry, the counsel for the Church, and the resident bishop.

3) *When respondent is a layperson* – A vote to adopt any charge or specification shall require five votes. Any bill of charges and specifications adopted by the committee shall be sent within five calendar days to the respondent, the complainant, the recording secretary of the charge conference, counsel for the Church, the pastor(s), and the presiding elder.

c. *Findings other than reasonable grounds by committee or other actions*

1) If the committee on investigation determines that there are no reasonable grounds for charges, it may dismiss the judicial complaint. When deemed appropriate, it may also refer matters of concern to the proper referring Church official (to the president or secretary of the Council of Bishops in the case of a bishop, to the resident bishop in the case of a clergyperson, or to the pastor or co-pastors in the case of a layperson) for administrative or other action. Notification of these actions should be given to the respondent, the complainant, counsel for the Church, and the proper referring Church officials, along with a rationale for the committee's decision.

2) If the committee on investigation determines that the judicial complaint is not based upon chargeable offenses, or for other good cause, the committee may refer the complaint to the proper referring Church official (see ¶ 910.5c(1) above) for administrative or other action. Such referral will not constitute a dismissal or double jeopardy under ¶ 904.8. Notification of these actions should be given to the respondent, the complainant, counsel for the Church, and the proper referring Church officials.

3) Upon recommendation of the counsel for the Church and the counsel for the respondent, the committee may refer the matter to the resident bishop (or president or secretary of the Council of Bishops) as deemed appropriate for a process seeking a just resolution under the provisions of ¶ 903. The bishop shall institute such a process and may use the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s). Such referral shall not constitute a dismissal or double jeopardy under ¶ 904.8. The appropriate persons, including the counsel for the Church, the counsel for the respondent, and the complainant, shall enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. Deadlines shall be suspended during a process seeking resolution.

If resolution is achieved, a written statement affirming such resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the same persons who signed the written agreement outlining the process, and they shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. If the resolution results in a change of ministerial status, the disclosure agreement shall not prevent the disciplinary disclosures required for reporting such change or for readmission. The committee on investigation shall retain jurisdiction for the period of time stated for the implementation of the resolution agreement. The committee shall periodically monitor the progress of the completion of the terms and conditions of the resolution agreement, and shall certify when the terms and conditions of the agreement are completed. When the terms and conditions of the agreement are completed, the committee on investigation shall report its certification, and the status of the respondent as a result of completing the terms and

conditions of the resolution agreement, to the resident bishop.

If the process does not result in resolution, the matter shall be returned to the committee on investigation for further consideration.

Also, decision(s) of a trial court that call for certification as to the completion of terms and conditions of the trial court's decision(s) after the end of a trial are to be assigned to the committee on investigation for monitoring and certification of completion of the decision, unless the trial court specifies otherwise. If the respondent fails to complete the terms and conditions of a trial court decision, the committee shall notify the presiding officer of the trial, who may reconvene the trial court for its further consideration.

6. *Special Investigations*—In the event that jurisdiction in a judicial proceeding is ended as a result of the death of, or surrender of credentials by, the respondent in cases where the chargeable offense includes those listed in ¶ 906.1c, d, or e or ¶ 906.2c, d, or e, the committee on investigation may be convened at the request of the presiding bishop to make pastoral inquiry into the charges. The inquiry shall:

- a. not be judicial in nature;
- b. be empowered to receive witnesses and to consider evidence; and
- c. make a report of the inquiry to the body where the respondent's membership was held, including recommendations if any.

7. *Records of the Committee on Investigation* – At the conclusion of the investigation process, all documents used by the committee on investigation, including transcriptions of its hearings, shall be sent to the secretary of the General Conference (when the respondent is a bishop) or the annual conference (when the respondent is a clergyperson other than a bishop or is a layperson), who shall keep them in custody. Such documents are to be held in a confidential file and shall not be released except for the purposes of trial or appeal and then only to counsel for the Church, the respondent, the presiding officer of the trial court, and the secretary of appellate bodies who may distribute such documents to the members of those appellate bodies. Those receiving the documents shall return them to the secretary of the General or annual conference following the conclusion of the trial and any appeal.

## **¶ 911. GENERAL ORGANIZATION AND PRE-TRIAL PROCEDURES**

1. *Fundamental Principles for Trials* – Church trials are to be regarded as an expedient of last resort. Only after every reasonable effort has been made to correct any wrong and adjust any existing difficulty should steps be taken to institute a trial. No such trial as herein provided shall be construed to deprive the respondent or the Church of legal civil rights, except to the extent that immunity is provided as in ¶ 904.9. All trials shall be conducted according to the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* in a consistent Christian manner by a properly constituted court after due investigation.

2. *Officers of the Court* – Officers shall consist of a presiding officer (see ¶¶ 915.2, 916.2, 917.2), who shall appoint a secretary and such other officers as deemed necessary. The presiding officer may have legal counsel, who shall not be the conference chancellor, at the expense of the annual conference holding the trial, for the sole purpose of advice to the presiding officer during the trial.

3. *Time and Place of Trial* – The official charged with convening the trial shall also fix the time and place for the trial and will notify the presiding officer, the respondent, counsel for the

Church, and the complainant. In all cases, sufficient time shall be allowed for these persons to appear at the given place and time and for the respondent to prepare for the trial. The presiding officer shall decide what constitutes “sufficient time,” but in no case shall this time be less than twenty calendar days.

4. *Pre-Trial Motions and Referrals* – All appeals of any procedural or substantive matters that have occurred prior to referral of the charges to trial must be appealed to the presiding officer of the trial court before the convening of the trial. Otherwise, the right to appeal on such matters is forfeited. All objections to and motions regarding the regularity of the proceedings and the form and substance of charges and specifications must be made before the convening of the trial court. The presiding officer shall rule on all such preliminary objections and motions; in furtherance of truth and justice may permit amendments to the specifications or charges not changing the general nature of the same; and may dismiss all or any part of the bill of charges upon a finding by the presiding officer (1) that all or such part is without legal or factual basis or (2) that, even assuming the specifications to be true, they do not constitute a basis for a chargeable offense. Such determination by the presiding officer shall be appealable.

The presiding officer may refer the matter as deemed appropriate for a process seeking a just resolution under the provisions of ¶ 903 to the resident bishop, or to the president or secretary of the Council of Bishops if the respondent is a bishop, with consent of the counsel for the Church and counsel for the respondent. The bishop shall institute such a process and may use the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s). Such referral will not constitute a dismissal or double jeopardy under ¶ 904.8. If a process seeking a just resolution is used, the appropriate persons, including the counsel for the Church, counsel for the respondent, and complainant should enter into a written agreement outlining such process, including any agreement on confidentiality. If resolution is achieved, a written statement affirming such resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the same persons who signed the written agreement outlining the process, and they shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. If the resolution results in a change of ministerial status, the disclosure agreement shall not prevent the disciplinary disclosures required for reporting such change or for readmission. The committee on investigation shall be charged with maintaining oversight of the fulfillment of the agreement (¶ 910.5c(3)). Such a written statement shall be given to the presiding officer, and the presiding officer shall take action consistent with the agreement. If no resolution results, the matter is returned to the presiding officer for further action.

5. *Change of Venue* – The respondent may request a change of venue. This shall be a written request to the presiding officer of the court within ten calendar days of receipt of notice to appear for trial. The presiding officer shall rule upon the request after hearing arguments by the respondent and the Church. If the motion is approved, the presiding officer shall name the annual conference outside the episcopal area wherein the trial shall be held and shall notify the resident bishop of that conference, who shall convene the court. The cost of prosecution shall be borne by the conference where the case originated.

6. *Notice*

a. All notices required or provided for in relationship to investigations, trials, and appeals shall be in writing, signed by or on behalf of the person or body giving or required to give such notice, and shall be addressed to the person or body to whom it is required to be given. Such

notices shall be served by delivering a copy thereof to the party or chief officer of the body to whom it is addressed in person or sent by other delivery system to the last known residence or address of such party. Proof of notice shall be provided and becomes a part of the record of the case.

b. In all cases wherein it is provided that notice shall be given to a bishop or presiding elder and the charges are against that particular person, then such notice (in addition to being given to the accused) shall be given, in the case of a bishop, to the president or secretary of the Council of Bishops and, in the case of a presiding elder, to the bishop in charge.

7. *Trial Scheduling and Continuances* – If in any case the respondent, after due notice (twenty calendar days) has been given, shall refuse or neglect to appear at the time and place set forth for the hearing, the trial may proceed in the respondent’s absence. However, if in the sole discretion of the presiding officer there is good and sufficient reason for the absence of the respondent or another essential person, the presiding officer may reschedule the trial to a later date.

8. *Counsel* – In all cases, a respondent shall be entitled to appear and to select and be represented by counsel. The respondent and the Church shall be entitled to have counsel heard in oral or written argument or both. The official charged with convening the court (see ¶¶ 915.1, 916.1, 917.1) shall, within thirty calendar days after receiving a copy of the charges and specifications, appoint counsel for the Church, if counsel has not been previously appointed, under the provisions of ¶ 909. The counsel for the Church and for the respondent each shall be entitled to choose one assistant counsel, who may be an attorney, without voice. “Without voice” means without the ability to speak to or within the hearing of the trial court. In no instance and under no circumstances shall the respondent be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent’s use of an attorney.

9. *Witnesses* – Notice to appear shall be given to such witnesses as either party may name and shall be issued in the name of the Church and be signed by the presiding officer of the trial. It shall be the duty of all clergy and lay members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church to appear and testify when summoned. Refusal to appear or to answer questions ruled by the presiding officer to be relevant may be considered as disobedience to the order and discipline of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, except when refusal to answer is based on a good faith claim that answering might tend to incriminate the witness under state or federal criminal law or is based on a claim of confidential communication to a clergy person which is upheld by the presiding officer. A witness, to be qualified, need not be a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

10. *Commissioned Out-of-Court Testimony*—The presiding officer of any court before which a case may be pending shall have power, whenever the necessity of the parties or witnesses shall require, to allow the examination of the witnesses outside of the trial hearing; provided that three calendar days’ notice of the time and place of taking such testimony shall have been given to the adverse party. The party making this request shall have the burden of showing good cause and shall bear the cost of such commissioned out-of-court testimony. The presiding officer or his/her designee shall preside over the testimony. Counsel for both parties shall be permitted to examine and cross-examine the witness or witnesses whose testimony is thus taken. The testimony shall be transcribed for inclusion in the trial record. The testimony may

also be videoed for replay during the trial. The testimony shall be transmitted to the presiding officer and secretary of the court before which the case is pending.

11. *Amendments to Bill of Charges and Specifications* – After consultation with counsels, the presiding officer of the trial may make amendments to the bill of charges or request that the committee on investigation make amendments to the bill of charges; provided that they do not change the nature of the charges and specifications and do not introduce new matter of which the respondent has not had due notice. When an amendment or amendments to a bill of charges is or are denied by the presiding officer, it or they shall not be introduced in the form of testimony in the trial. Charges or specifications previously considered and dropped by the committee on investigation shall not be introduced in the trial in the form of evidence or otherwise.

12. *Open or Closed Trials* – The selection of the trial court and the deliberations of the trial court shall be closed. All other sessions of the trial shall be open. The presiding officer may, in extenuating circumstances, in his or her judgment on motion of counsel for either party or on the presiding officer's own motion, declare a particular session of the court to be closed. At all times, however, in the hearing portion of the trial, the presiding officer, the members of the trial court, the person recording the session, the person(s) making the original complaint, the person representing the Church as well as counsel for the Church, the respondent, and counsel for the respondent shall be present subject to ¶ \_\_\_\_\_.

13. *Combined Trials of Multiple Persons*—In cases in which a number of persons have allegedly engaged in the same offense at the same time and place, their trials may be combined into one trial for that same offense. The presiding officer shall make the determination on combination of trials.

## **¶ 912. TRIAL CONVENING AND ORGANIZATION.**

1. *Convening of the Trial* – The convener shall notify the respondent in writing to appear at a fixed time and place no less than twenty calendar days after service of such notice and within a reasonable time thereafter for selection of the members of the trial court.

2. *Trial Court Composition* – a. At the appointed time, in the presence of the respondent, counsel for the respondent, counsel for the Church, and the presiding officer, thirteen persons shall be selected as a trial court, consisting of nine clergy and four laity (if the respondent is a bishop or clergy person) or nine laity and four clergy (if the respondent is laity), drawn from their respective trial pools as composed below.

b. Special consideration should be given so that the pool includes persons representative of the racial, ethnic, tribal, and gender makeup of the populations from which the pool is drawn. After the pool is randomly composed, if in the judgment of the presiding officer such diversity has not been achieved, the presiding officer shall direct the secretary(ies) of the relevant annual conference(s) to name additional members of the pool to obtain the proper proportion.

c. If the respondent is a bishop, the trial pool shall consist of 25 or more ordained deacons or elders chosen by lot from all the clergy in good standing who are not bishops within the regional conference – where the respondent bishop presides (with a minimum of three annual conferences represented), excluding the annual conference(s) over which the respondent bishop presides. In addition, the trial pool shall consist of 15 or more lay

members chosen by lot from all the lay members of annual conference in good standing in the same annual conferences out of which the clergy pool is chosen. Laity unwilling or unable to serve shall be excused from the pool and other laity chosen by lot.

d. If the respondent is a clergy person, the trial pool shall consist of 25 or more ordained deacons or elders chosen by lot from all the clergy in good standing within the respondent's annual conference. In addition, the trial pool shall consist of 15 or more lay members chosen by lot from all the lay members of annual conference in good standing in the same annual conference. Laity unwilling or unable to serve shall be excused from the pool and other laity chosen by lot.

e. If the respondent is a layperson, the trial pool shall consist of 15 or more ordained deacons or elders chosen by lot from all the clergy in good standing within the respondent's annual conference. In addition, the trial pool shall consist of 25 or more lay members chosen by lot from all the lay members of annual conference in good standing in the same annual conference. Laity unwilling or unable to serve shall be excused from the pool and other laity chosen by lot.

3. *Selection of the Trial Court* – No person shall serve as a member of the trial court who was a member of the cabinet, Board of Ministry, or committee on investigation who considered the case in the process of coming to trial court. The counsel for the Church and the respondent shall each have up to four peremptory challenges, and challenges for cause without limit. If by reason of challenges for cause being sustained the number is reduced to below thirteen, additional appropriate persons shall be nominated in like manner as was the original panel to take the places of the numbers challenged, who likewise shall be subject to any remaining peremptory challenges until exhausted, and challenge for cause. This method of procedure shall be followed until a trial court of thirteen members and two alternate members has been selected.

4. *Alternates* – The two alternate members shall sit as observers of the trial. They shall replace members of the trial court who are not able to continue to serve, so that the trial court shall always consist of thirteen members, unless the respondent and counsel for the Church agree to a lesser number.

5. *Trial Court Questions* – The members of the trial court, including the alternate members, may, subject to the approval of the presiding officer of the court, ask questions on matters on which evidence has been presented.

#### **¶ 913. TRIAL GUIDELINES AND RULES.**

1. *Authority of Presiding Officer* – After the trial is convened the authority of the presiding officer shall include the right to set reasonable time limits, after consultation with counsel for the Church and counsel for the respondent, for the presentation of the case, provided such time is equal for both. The authority of the presiding officer shall be limited to ruling upon proper representation of the Church and the person charged, admissibility of evidence, recessing, adjourning, and reconvening sessions of the trial, charging the members of the trial court as to the Church law involved in the case at the beginning of the trial and just before they retire to make up their verdict, and such other authority as is normally vested in a civil court judge sitting with a jury, but he or she shall not have authority to pronounce any judgment in favor of or against the person charged other than such verdict as may be returned by the trial court, which

body shall have the exclusive right to determine whether the guilt of the person charged has been established by clear and convincing evidence.

2. *Order of Trial* – After selection of the trial court, each counsel may make an opening statement to inform the trial court of what the evidence is expected to be. Evidence shall then be offered by questioning of witnesses and by documents shown to be reliable. Each counsel shall have opportunity to make closing arguments before the trial court begins deliberations. Deliberations of the trial court and receiving of the verdict shall follow.

3. *Oaths* – The administration of oaths shall not be required. At the beginning of the trial, the presiding officer shall remind all parties of the duties and responsibilities of Church membership and/or the clergy covenant.

4. *Entering of the Plea* – At the beginning of the trial, the respondent shall be called upon by the presiding officer to plead to the charge, and the pleas shall be recorded. If the respondent pleads “guilty” to the charges preferred, no trial shall be necessary, but evidence may be taken with respect to the appropriate penalty, which shall thereupon be imposed. If the respondent pleads “not guilty” or if the respondent should neglect or refuse to plead, the plea of “not guilty” shall be entered, and the trial shall proceed. The respondent shall at all times during the trial, except as hereinafter provided, have the right to produce testimony and that of witnesses and to make defense.

5. *Recess and Trial Procedures* – The court may recess from time to time as convenience or necessity may require. During the time of recess, the members of the trial court shall be instructed that under no circumstance will they speak to one another or to others about the trial or observe media reports regarding the case. When, in consultation with counsel for both parties, the presiding officer finds it advisable, the members and reserves shall be sequestered. Threatening or tampering with the trial court or officers of the trial court shall be considered disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church. The presiding officer shall remain and preside until the decision is rendered and the findings are completed and shall thereupon sign and certify them.

6. *Objections and Rulings* – Objections of any party to the proceedings shall be entered on the record. All rulings on pre-trial appeals, objections, and motions shall be entered on the record. All objections and motions from counsels during the proceedings of the trial shall be made in open session before the trial court and entered on the record along with the rulings of the presiding officer on all such objections and motions.

7. *Exclusion of Witnesses*—With the exception of the complainant and respondent, no witness to be examined shall be present during the examination of another witness if the opposing party objects. Witnesses shall be examined first by the party producing them, then cross-examined by the opposite party and may be questioned by members of the trial court, with the approval of the presiding officer. The presiding officer of the court shall determine all questions of relevancy and competency of evidence.

8. *Recording of Proceedings* – A verbatim record of all proceedings of the trial shall be by stenograph or other appropriate means and reduced to writing and certified by the presiding officer or secretary. The record, including all exhibits, papers and evidence in the case, shall be the basis of any appeal that may be taken.

9. *Evidence* – The introduction of any material relating to events happening before the six-year statute of limitation period as evidence, as preface to evidence, or as build-up for evidence in the procedures of the trial proceedings may be permitted when the presiding officer, after consultation with counsel for both parties, rules that such material is relevant and reliable. Documentary evidence deemed by the presiding officer to be relevant and reliable may be in the physical possession of the trial court during deliberations. Relevant evidence means evidence tending to make the existence of any fact of consequence to the determination of the action more probable or less probable than it would be without the evidence.

10. *Instructions and Charges* – The presiding officer shall not deliver a charge reviewing or explaining the evidence or setting forth the merits of the case. The presiding officer shall express no opinion on the law or the facts while the court is deliberating. The presiding officer shall instruct the trial court on applicable Church law. Instructions may be submitted by counsel for the church and counsel for the respondent. The presiding officer shall rule on what instructions shall be given and resolve any conflict in suggested instructions. Instructions may be given at the beginning of the trial, during the trial, before the trial court begins deliberations or a combination of any of these. If requested by the trial court, instructions may be given during deliberations. The presiding officer shall not review or explain the evidence or comment on the merits of the case.

11. All questions of law (inclusive but not limited to questions concerning construction of statutes and other writings, the admissibility of evidence, and other rules of evidence) are to be decided by the Presiding Officer.

#### **¶ 914. POWER OF THE TRIAL COURT.**

1. *Instruction, Disqualification, Voting, and Verdicts* – The trial court shall have full power to try the respondent. The trial court shall be a continuing body until the final disposition of the charge. If any regular or alternate member of the trial court fails to attend any part of any session at which evidence is received or oral argument is made to the trial court by counsel, that person shall not thereafter be a member of the trial court, but the rest of the trial court may proceed to judgment.

2. *Votes* – It shall require a vote of at least nine members of the trial court to sustain the charge(s) and nine votes also shall be required for conviction. Fewer than nine votes for conviction shall be considered an acquittal. The burden of proof for a vote to convict shall be clear and convincing. The trial court shall present to the presiding officer a decision on each charge and each individual specification under each charge. Its findings shall be final, subject to appeal to the committee on appeals.

3. *Penalties – If the Trial Results in Conviction* – Further testimony may be heard and arguments by counsel presented regarding what the penalty should be. The trial court shall determine the penalty, which shall require a vote of at least seven members. The trial court shall have the power to remove the respondent from professing membership, terminate the conference membership, and revoke the credentials of conference membership, ordination, or consecration of the respondent, suspend the respondent from the exercise of the functions of office (with or without pay, if applicable), or to fix a lesser penalty. The penalty fixed by the trial court shall take effect immediately unless otherwise indicated by the trial court. Should any

penalty fixed by a trial court be altered or reduced as a result of the appellate process, the respondent shall be restored and/or compensated as appropriate, provided that in no instance and under no circumstances shall the respondent be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent's use of an attorney.

**¶ 915. TRIAL OF A BISHOP.**

1. The president of the Council of Bishops (or in case the person charged is the president, the secretary of the Council) shall proceed to convene the court under the provisions of ¶ 912.

2. The president of the Council of Bishops (or in the case the person charged is the president, the secretary) may preside or designate another active or former bishop to serve as presiding officer.

3. The trial shall be convened as provided in ¶ 912 with the trial court selected as prescribed in ¶ 912.2.

4. Counsel for the Church shall be a bishop or another clergyperson in full connection.

5. The secretary of the court shall at the conclusion of the proceedings send all trial documents to the secretary of the General Conference, who shall keep them in custody. Such documents are to be held in a confidential file and shall not be released for other than appeal or new trial purposes without a signed release from both the bishop charged and the president of the Council of Bishops (or the secretary if the president is the respondent). If an appeal is taken, the secretary shall forward the materials forthwith to the president of the committee on appeals. After the appeal has been heard, the records shall be returned to the secretary of the General Conference unless a further appeal on a question of law has been made to the Connectional Committee on Appeals, in which case the relevant documents shall be forwarded to the secretary of that body.

6. A bishop may be suspended from office by the trial court either with or without a claim for salary, dwelling, pension, and other related benefits. A bishop suspended from office for the period before or during the trial shall have claim for salary, dwelling, pension, and other related benefits. A bishop removed from office shall have no claim upon for salary, dwelling, pension and other related benefits from the date of such removal.

**¶ 916. TRIAL OF A CLERGY MEMBER.**

1. The resident bishop of the respondent shall proceed to convene the court under the provisions of ¶ 912.

2. The resident bishop shall designate another active or former bishop to be presiding officer.

3. The trial for a clergy member shall be convened as provided in ¶ 912 with the trial court selected as prescribed in ¶ 912.2.

4. Counsel for the Church shall be a clergyperson.

5. The secretary of the court shall at the conclusion of the proceedings send all trial documents to the secretary of the annual conference, who shall keep them in custody. Such documents are to be held in a confidential file and shall not be released for other than appeal or new trial purposes without a signed release from both the clergyperson charged and the resident bishop of the annual conference in which the trial occurred. If an appeal is taken, the

secretary shall forward the materials forthwith to the president of the committee on appeals. After the appeal has been heard, the records shall be returned to the secretary of the annual conference unless a further appeal on a question of law has been made to the Connectional Committee on Appeals, in which case the relevant documents shall be forwarded to the secretary of that body.

6. A clergy person may be suspended from performing the duties and responsibilities of a clergyperson by the trial court either with or without a claim for salary, dwelling, pension, and other related benefits. A clergy person suspended from such duties and responsibilities for the period before or during the trial shall have claim for salary, dwelling, pension, and other related benefits. A clergy person removed from clergy membership through removal of credentials shall have no claim upon for salary, dwelling, pension and other related benefits from the date of such removal.

**¶ 917. TRIAL OF A LAY MEMBER OF A LOCAL CHURCH.**

1. The presiding elder of the respondent shall proceed to convene the court under the provisions of ¶ 912.

2. The presiding elder may be the presiding officer or may designate another clergyperson (who does not have any kind of relationship with the respondent or complainant) to preside.

3. The trial shall be convened as provided in ¶ 912, with the trial court selected as prescribed in ¶ 912.2.

4. Counsel for the Church shall be a professing member or clergyperson of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

5. The person charged may request a change of venue. This shall be a written request to the officers of the court within ten calendar days of receipt of notice to appear for trial. The presiding officer shall rule upon the request after hearing argument for the defense and the Church. If the motion is approved, the presiding officer shall name another district wherein the trial shall be held and shall notify the presiding elder, who shall convene the court. The thirty-five-member pool shall consist of professing members from that district. The cost of prosecution shall be borne by the annual conference.

6. If the trial court finds that the charges are proven by clear and convincing evidence, then it may impose such penalties as it may determine, including that the professing membership of the charged layperson in the \_\_\_\_\_ Church be terminated, provided that the trial court shall first consider other remedies that would fulfill the provisions of ¶¶ 402 and 416.

7. The appropriate officer of the trial shall, at the conclusion of the proceeding, deposit all trial documents with the secretary of the annual conference. Such documents are to be held in a confidential file and shall not be released for other than appeal or new trial purposes without a signed release from both the layperson charged and the resident bishop of the annual conference in which the trial occurred. If an appeal is taken, the secretary shall deliver all documents to the presiding elder or the secretary of the appellate body. After the appeal has been heard, the records shall be returned to the custody of the secretary of the annual conference.

**¶ 918. APPEAL PROCEDURES—GENERAL.**

1. In all cases of appeal, the appellant shall give written notice of appeal within thirty calendar days and at the same time shall furnish to the officer receiving such notice (§§ 919.2 and 920.1) and to the counsel for the opposing party a written statement of the grounds of the appeal. The hearing in the appellate body shall be limited to the grounds set forth in such statement.

2. When any appellate body shall reverse in whole or in part the findings of a committee on investigation or trial court, or remand the case for a new hearing or trial, or change the penalty imposed by the trial court, it shall return to the convening officer a statement of the grounds of its action, which shall also be copied to the respondent, complainant, and counsel for the church.

3. An appeal shall not be allowed in any case in which the respondent has failed or refused to be present in person or by counsel at the investigation and the trial. Appeals shall be heard by the proper appellate body unless it shall appear to the said body that the appellant has forfeited the right to appeal by misconduct, such as refusal to abide by the findings of the trial court; or by withdrawal from the Church; or by failure to appear in person or by counsel to prosecute the appeal. Clergy and lay members should not resort to civil lawsuits except in egregious circumstances and as a last resort, remembering the biblical admonition against taking a dispute “before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord’s people” (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

4. The right of appeal, when once forfeited by neglect or otherwise, cannot be revived by any subsequent appellate body.

5. The right to prosecute an appeal shall not be affected by the death of the person entitled to such right. Heirs or legal representatives may prosecute such appeal as the appellant would be entitled to do if living.

6. The records and documents of the trial, including the evidence, and these only, shall be used in the hearing of any appeal.

7. The appellate body shall determine two questions only:

a. Does the weight of the evidence sustain the charge or charges?

b. Were there such errors of Church law as to vitiate the verdict and/or the penalty?

These questions shall be determined by the records of the trial and the argument of counsel for the Church and for the respondent. The appellate body shall in no case hear witnesses. It may have legal counsel present, who shall not be the conference chancellor for the conference from which the appeal is taken, for the sole purpose of providing advice to the appellate body.

8. In all cases where an appeal is made and admitted by the appellate committee, after the charges, findings, and evidence have been read and the arguments concluded, the parties shall withdraw, and the appellate committee shall consider and decide the case. It may reverse in whole or in part the findings of the committee on investigation or the trial court, or it may remand the case for a new trial to determine verdict and/or penalty. It may determine what penalty, not higher than that affixed at the hearing or trial, may be imposed. If it neither reverses in whole or in part the judgment of the trial court, nor remands the case for a new trial, nor modifies the penalty, that judgment shall stand. The appellate committee shall not reverse the judgment nor remand the case for a new hearing or trial on account of errors plainly not affecting the result. All decisions of the appellate committee shall require a majority vote.

9. In all cases, the right to present evidence shall be exhausted when the case has been heard once on its merits in the proper court, but questions of Church law may be carried on appeal, step by step, to the Connectional Council on Appeals (§ 823.9).

10. The Church shall have no right of appeal from findings of fact of the trial court. The Church shall have a right of appeal to the committee on appeals and then to the Connectional Council on Appeals from findings of the committee on investigation or trial court based on egregious errors of Church law or administration that could reasonably have affected its findings. In this paragraph, “egregious errors of Church law or administration” refers to the misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misapplication, or violation (whether knowing or not) of Church law or judicial process as required by the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, with such errors more likely than not (in the judgment of the appellate body) affecting the findings of the trial court or committee on investigation. The committee on investigation’s decision not to certify a bill of charges does not alone constitute an egregious error of Church law or administration. When the committee on appeals shall find egregious errors of Church law or administration under this part, it may remand the case for a new hearing or trial on verdict and/or penalty, in which event it shall return to the chair of the committee on investigation or presiding officer of the trial court a statement of the grounds of its action. Such new hearing or trial is not double jeopardy.

11. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer or secretary of the appellate body, with the answers shared with all parties. Under no circumstances shall one party in the absence of the other party discuss substantive matters with members of any appellate body while the case is pending (§ 904.4, .6).

#### **§ 919. APPEAL OF A BISHOP OR CLERGY MEMBER.**

1. Each regional conference, upon nomination of its College of Bishops, shall elect a regional committee on appeals composed of five clergy and four laypersons who have been at least six years successively members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, and an equal number of corresponding alternates. This committee shall serve until its successors have been elected. No member shall participate in the hearing of an appeal who is a member of a conference in the episcopal area of the appellant (if respondent is a bishop) or of the annual conference of the appellant (if the respondent is not a bishop). Any vacancy shall be filled by the College of Bishops. Where there is no regional conference, the General Conference shall elect a regional committee on appeals from the annual conferences in the nation not in a regional conference. The Council of Bishops and its president and secretary shall then assume the duties of the College of Bishops in this paragraph.

The committee on appeals shall have full power to hear and determine appeals of bishops or clergy members, including clergy members on honorable or administrative location, from any annual conference within the area covered by the committee on appeals. The committee shall elect its own president and secretary and shall adopt its own rules of procedure, and its decisions shall be final, except that an appeal may be taken to the Connectional Council on Appeals (§ 823.8). A bishop designated by the College of Bishops shall convene the committee at the site of conference where the committee is elected for the purpose of electing officers.

2. In case of conviction by a trial court, a bishop or clergy member, including clergy on honorable or administrative location, shall have the right of appeal to the committee on appeals

above constituted, provided that within thirty calendar days after the conviction, the appellant shall notify the presiding bishop of the conference (or, when the appellant is a bishop, the president and secretary of the Council of Bishops) and the presiding officer of the court in writing of the intention to appeal.

3. When notice of an appeal has been given to the presiding officer of the court, the presiding officer shall give notice of the same to the chair and secretary of the committee on appeals and submit the documents in the case. In case the documents have been sent to the secretary of the annual or General Conference, the presiding officer shall instruct the secretary to send the documents to the president and secretary of the regional committee on appeals. The committee on appeals shall give notice within thirty calendar days to the presiding bishop of the conference from which the appeal is taken (or to the president and secretary of the College of Bishops when the appellant is a bishop), to the appellant, and to counsel for the opposing party of the time and place where the appeal will be heard. Such hearing shall occur within 120 calendar days following receipt of notice to the committee on appeals. The counsels who prosecuted the trial shall continue in the appeals process, unless replaced in accordance with the provisions of ¶ 909.

4. All necessary traveling, sustenance, or other reasonable related expense incurred by the committee on appeals, including any cost for legal counsel retained to advise the committee, in the hearing of an appeal case coming from an annual conference and appearing before any committee on appeals, shall be paid out of the administrative fund of the annual conference (if respondent is clergy) or regional or General Conference (if respondent is a bishop) in which the proceedings arise. The president of the committee on appeals shall approve all expenses. Expenses for counsel for the Church shall be paid by the annual or regional or General Conference. Such expenses for counsel for the respondent shall be paid by the respondent, unless in the interest of fairness, the committee on appeals orders the annual or regional or General Conference to reimburse the respondent.

#### **¶ 920. APPEAL OF A LAY MEMBER.**

1. A lay member convicted by a trial court shall have the right of appeal and shall serve written notice of appeal with the pastor and the presiding elder within thirty calendar days of conviction.

2. The presiding elder shall give written notice to all concerned of the time and place of the convening of a committee on appeals. Notice of the convening shall be given not less than ten nor more than thirty calendar days after the presiding elder has received notice of appeal. The committee on appeals shall convene not less than thirty calendar days nor more than ninety calendar days after notice of appeal is received.

3. The conference committee on appeals shall be constituted when necessary, as there shall be no standing conference committee on appeals. The presiding elder shall appoint a pool of twenty professing members of \_\_\_\_\_ churches within the annual conference who hold office either as lay leader or lay member of the annual conference not in the appellant's district (or the district where the trial was held), and none of whom shall have been members of the trial court. At the convening of the conference committee on appeals, nine of these shall be selected to serve on the committee. The counsel for the appellant and the counsel for the Church shall have the right to challenge for cause, and the decisions on the

validity of such challenges shall be made by the presiding officer, who shall be the presiding elder.

4. The findings of the conference committee on appeals shall be certified by the presiding elder to the pastor of the church of which the accused is a member.

5. Questions of church law arising from the appeal process may be appealed by either party to the regional committee on appeals, and then to the Connectional Council on Appeals.

6. All necessary traveling, sustenance, or other reasonable related expenses incurred by the committee on appeals, including any cost for legal counsel retained to advise the committee, in the hearing of an appeal case coming from a lay member and appearing before any committee on appeals, shall be paid out of the administrative fund of the annual conference. The presiding elder shall approve all expenses. Expenses for counsel for the Church shall be paid by the annual conference. Such expenses for counsel for the respondent shall be paid by the respondent, unless in the interest of fairness, the committee on appeals orders the annual conference to reimburse the respondent.

#### **¶ 921. OTHER APPEALS.**

1. The order of appeals on questions of law shall be as follows: from the decision of the presiding elder presiding in the charge or district conference to the bishop presiding in the annual conference, and from the decision of the bishop presiding in the annual conference to the Connectional Council on Appeals, and from the bishop presiding in a regional conference to the Connectional Council on Appeals.

2. When a question of law is raised in conference, written notice of the same shall be served on the secretary of the body in which the question is raised. It shall be the secretary's duty to see that an exact statement of the question submitted and the ruling of the chair thereon shall be entered on the journal. The secretary shall then make and certify a copy of the question and ruling and transmit the same to the person or body to which an appeal is taken. The person or body who thus receives said certified copy shall present the same in open conference and as soon as practicable lay it before the presiding officer for a ruling thereon, which ruling must be rendered before the final adjournment of that body, that said ruling together with the original question and ruling may be entered on the journal of that conference. The same course shall be followed in all subsequent appeals.

3. The order of appeals on procedures in an administrative process shall be as follows: from the decision of the Board of Ministry committee to the administrative review committee who has original jurisdiction over the administrative matter, and from the administrative review committee to the full Board of Ministry, and from the full Board of Ministry to the clergy session. Questions of law arising from an administrative process should be raised in the clergy session for ruling by the bishop and review by the Connectional Council on Appeals.

4. When an appeal is made on questions of procedure in an administrative process:

a. In all cases of appeal, the appellant shall within thirty calendar days give written notice of appeal and at the same time furnish to the officer receiving such notice a written statement of the grounds of appeal, and the hearing in the appellate body shall be limited to the grounds set forth in such statement.

b. The appellant body shall return to the convening officer of the administrative hearing and to the appellant a written statement of the grounds of its action, which shall also be placed in the appellant's personnel file.

c. An appeal shall not be allowed in any case in which the respondent has failed or refused to be present in person or by counsel during the administrative hearing. Appeals shall be heard by the proper appellate body unless it shall appear to the said body that the appellant has forfeited the right to appeal by misconduct; by withdrawal from the Church; or by failure to appear in person or by counsel to prosecute the appeal. Clergy and lay members should not resort to civil lawsuits except in egregious circumstances and as a last resort, remembering the biblical admonition against taking a dispute "before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people" (I Corinthians 6:1-8).

d. The right to appeal, when once forfeited by neglect or otherwise, cannot be revived by any subsequent appellate body.

e. The right to prosecute an appeal shall not be affected by the death of the person entitled to such right. Heirs of legal representatives may prosecute such appeal as the appellant would be entitled to do if living.

f. The records and documents of the administrative process, including any evidence, and these only, shall be used in the hearing of any appeal.

g. The appellate body shall determine one question only: Were there such errors of Church law as to vitiate the recommendation and/or action of the administrative body? The records of the administrative process and the arguments of the official representatives of all parties shall determine this question. The appellate body shall in no case hear witnesses. It may have legal counsel present for the sole purpose of providing advice to the appellate body.

h. If the appellate body determines that any error has occurred, it may recommend to the appropriate person or body that action be taken promptly to remedy the error, decide the error is harmless, or take other action. The appellate committee shall not reverse the judgment nor remand the case for a new hearing on account of error plainly not affecting the result. All decisions of the appellate committee shall require a majority vote.

i. In all cases, the right to present evidence shall be exhausted when the case has been heard once on its merits in the proper administrative hearing body, but the decision of the administrative hearing body may be appealed as outlined in ¶ 921.3. Questions on Church law may be raised in the clergy session and carried on appeal to the Connectional Council on Appeals (¶ 921.1-2).

j. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer or secretary of the appellate body, with the answers shared with all parties. Under no circumstances shall one party in the absence of the other party discuss substantive matters with members of any appellate body while the case is pending.

## **¶ 922. TIMELINES AND DEADLINES.**

This paragraph summarizes the timelines and deadlines contained in ¶¶ 901-921.

1. All notices shall be delivered to the applicable parties not less than 20 calendar days before a hearing (¶ 904.2, 905.1, 907, 911.3, 911.7, 912.1).

2. Evidence to be used in a hearing shall be available to the respondent not less than ten calendar days prior to the hearing (¶ 904.5).

3. The supervisory response shall be completed within 60 calendar days (with the possibility of a 30-calendar-day extension) (§§ 905.1c and 907.c).
4. The investigative response shall be completed within 60 calendar days (with the possibility of a 30-calendar-day extension) (§ 905.2).
5. The relevant supervising officer shall appoint a counsel for the church within 30 calendar days of the end of a supervisory response regarding a judicial complaint (§§ 909.1a, 909.2a, 909.3a).
6. The counsel for the church shall report on the status of the complaint every 30 calendar days to all parties (§§ 909.1b, 909.2b, 909.3b).
7. A response to a judicial complaint must be made in writing within 30 calendar days of the respondent receiving the complaint (§§ 909.1b, 909.2b, 909.3b).
8. The committee on investigation must be convened within 60 calendar days of the receipt of a judicial complaint (§§ 909.1b, 909.2b, 909.3b).
9. Preliminary rulings by the chair of the committee on investigation shall be released to all parties at least 5 calendar days prior to the committee on investigation hearing (§ 910.3).
10. If witnesses are to be interviewed outside of the hearing, notice shall be given to all parties at least three calendar days before (§§ 910.4b and 911.10).
11. The bill of charges and specifications shall be sent to all parties by the committee on investigation within five calendar days of its decision (§ 910.5b).
12. Any request for a change of venue shall be submitted with 10 calendar days of receiving the notice of the time and place of a trial (§§ 911.5 and 917.5).
13. The convening officer of the trial court shall appoint a counsel for the church within 30 calendar days of receiving the bill of charges and specifications, if one has not been appointed (§ 911.8).
14. Notice of an appeal must be filed within 30 calendar days of the release of a decision (§§ 905.4, 918.1, 919.2, 920.1, 921.4).
15. Notice of a committee on appeals hearing time and place shall be given within 30 calendar days of receiving the appeal (§§ 919.3 and 920.2).
16. The committee on appeals hearing shall be held within 120 calendar days of receiving the appeal (§ 919.3).
17. An ad hoc (local) committee on appeals shall convene within 30 to 90 calendar days of receiving the appeal (§ 920.2).

### **§ 923. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.**

1. When a bishop or clergy member is the respondent to a complaint under §§ 905-906 and desires to withdraw from the Church, the regional or General Conference in the case of a bishop or the annual conference in the case of a clergy member will ask him or her to surrender his or her credentials and will remove his or her name from conference membership; in which case the record shall be "Withdrawn under complaints" or "Withdrawn under charges," whichever is appropriate. If the person desires their credentials to be restored, they would first have to resolve the complaint, with the complaint process picking up at the point at which it ended when they withdrew.
2. When a professing member of the Church is charged with an offense and desires to withdraw from the Church, the charge conference may permit such member to withdraw his or

her name from the roll of professing members, in which case the record shall be “Withdrawn under complaints.” If formal charges have been referred by a committee on investigation, such member may be permitted to withdraw, in which case the record shall be “Withdrawn under charges.” If the person desires to be restored as a professing member (or become a professing member in another local congregation of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church), they would first have to resolve the complaint, with the complaint process picking up at the point at which it ended when they withdrew.

3. For procedural purposes, the judicial process shall be governed by the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* in effect on the date a complaint is forwarded to the counsel for the Church.

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