

Draft of a *General Book of Discipline* 2020

New Part VI

General Organization and Administration

Chapter One

The Local Church

Section I. The Church and Pastoral Charge

¶ 201. *Definition of a Local Church*—The Local Church is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons 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 worship of God, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 201 = 201

¶ 202. *The Function of the Local Church*—The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 202 = 202

¶ 203. *Relation to the Wider Church*—The local church is a connectional society of believers, being within The United Methodist Church and subject to its *Discipline* and is also an inherent part of the church universal, which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and which in the Apostles' Creed we declare to be the holy catholic church.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 203=203

¶ 204. *Responsibility for the Community* —Each local church has a definite evangelistic, nurturing, and witnessing responsibility for its members and the surrounding area and a missional outreach responsibility to the local and global community. It is responsible for ministering to all its members, wherever they live, and for persons who choose it as their church.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 204=204

¶ 205. *Definition of a Pastoral Charge*—1. A pastoral charge shall consist of one or more churches that are organized under and subject to the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church, with a charge conference, and to which an ordained or licensed clergy is or may be duly appointed or appointable as

pastor in charge or co-pastor. Where co-pastors are appointed, the bishop may designate for administrative purposes one as pastor in charge.¹ >VII: 205.001<

2. A lay person assigned by the bishop, upon recommendation of the cabinet, to do the work of ministry, is accountable to the district superintendent or another clergy appointed to oversee the charge, who will make provision for sacramental ministry.-The layperson assigned is also accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned. >VII: 205.002<

GBOD ¶ 205.1=205.1; 205.2=205.4

1. See Judicial Council Decisions 113, 319

Section II. Church Membership

¶ 206. *Eligibility*—The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection (¶ 4).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 206=214

¶ 207. *Definition of Membership*—1. The membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith.

a) The baptized membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in the local congregation or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to the local United Methodist church subsequent to baptism in some other congregation.

b) The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.

2. For statistical purposes, church membership is equated to the number of people listed on the roll of professing members.

3. All baptized or professing members of any local United Methodist church are members of the worldwide United Methodist connection and members of the church universal.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 207.1-3=215.1-4

¶ 208. *Baptismal Covenant* - 1. Christ constitutes the church as his body by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). The church draws new people into itself as it seeks to remain faithful to its commission to proclaim and exemplify the gospel. In baptism water is administered in the name of the Triune God by an authorized person. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation and incorporation into the body of Christ. After baptism, the church provides the nurture that makes possible a comprehensive and lifelong process of growing in grace.

Becoming a professing member requires the answer of faith of the baptized person made visible in a service of profession of Christian faith and confirmation using the vows of the baptismal covenant. In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.

2. *Baptism and Professing membership*- a) Baptized infants and children are to be instructed and nurtured in the meaning of the faith, the rights and responsibilities of their baptism, and spiritual and moral formation. Using the services of the baptismal covenant, youth will profess their faith, commit themselves to a life of discipleship, and be confirmed. Confirmation is both a human act of commitment and the gracious action of the Holy Spirit strengthening and empowering discipleship.

b) Youth and adults who have not been baptized and who are seeking to be saved from their sins and profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are proper candidates for baptism in The United Methodist Church. It is the duty of the congregation, led by the pastor, to instruct them in the meaning of baptism, in the meaning of the Christian faith, and in the history, organization, and teachings of The United Methodist Church. After the completion of the period of nurture and instruction, the sponsor(s) and pastor shall bring the candidates before the congregation and administer the services of Baptismal Covenant, in which people are baptized, confirmed, and received into the Church. >VII: 208.001<

3. *Ongoing Formation in the Baptismal Covenant*- a) Formation in the baptismal covenant and in the call to ministry in daily life is a lifelong process and is carried on through all the activities that have educational value. It focuses attention upon the meaning of discipleship and the need for members to be in mission in all of life's relationships.

b) There are many occasions as people mature in the faith when the Holy Spirit's confirming action may be celebrated, such as in the reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant or other services related to life passages. Unlike baptism, which is a once-made covenant and can only be reaffirmed and not repeated, confirmation is a dynamic action of the Holy Spirit that can be repeated.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 208.1=216.1+214; 208.2=216, 1 a+b; 208.3=216.2

¶ 209. *Professing Membership* - 1. When persons unite as professing members with a local United Methodist church, they profess their faith in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, they make known their desire to live their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. They covenant together with God and with the members of the local church to keep the vows which are a part of the order of confirmation and reception into the Church:

a) To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;

b) To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;

c) To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;

d) To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;

e) To be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;

f) To faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness;

g) To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 209.1-2=217.Intro+1-7

¶ 210. *Growth in Faithful Discipleship*—Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 210=218

¶ 211. *Mutual Responsibility*—Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to respond to conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 211=219

¶ 212. *The Call to Ministry of All the Baptized*—All members of Christ's universal church are called to share in the ministry which is committed to the whole church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, each member of The United Methodist Church is to be a servant of Christ on mission in the local and worldwide community. This servanthood is performed in family life, daily work, recreation and social activities, responsible citizenship, the stewardship of property and accumulated resources, the issues of corporate life, and all attitudes toward other persons. Members are to engage in disciplined, covenant or class meetings to foster their missional involvement and to witness for Christ, serving as a living example in society while addressing injustice and suffering in the world and taking action which helps exemplify the hope and promise of Christ.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 212=220

¶ 213. *Lay Servant Ministries*- Each central conference may create categories of servant ministries for lay persons which are appropriate and needed for the expanding and ongoing mission and ministry of that conference. Educational, spiritual, and psychological qualifications and provisions for appropriate certification may be defined by the central conference. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 213.001-213.004<

GBOD ¶ 213=266+new

¶ 214. *Membership Records*. – 1. Each local church shall accurately maintain:

a) Membership records for each baptized or professing member including:

(1) the person's name, date of birth, address, place of birth, date of baptism, officiating pastor, and sponsors;

(2) date of confirmation/profession of faith, officiating pastor, and sponsors;

(3) if transferred from another church, date of reception, sending church, and receiving pastor;

(4) if transferred to another church, date of transfer, receiving church, and address of receiving church;

(5) date of removal or withdrawal and reason;

(6) date of restoration of professing membership and officiating pastor;

(7) date of death, date and place of funeral/memorial, place of burial, and officiating pastor.

b) Constituency Roll, containing the names and addresses of such persons as are not members of the church concerned, including unbaptized children, youth and adults whose names are not on the membership record, and other nonmembers for whom the local church has pastoral responsibility.

c) Affiliate Membership Roll.

d) Associate Membership Roll.

2. In the case of a union or federated church with another denomination, the governing body of such a church may report an equal share of the total membership to each judicatory, and such membership shall be published in the minutes of each church, with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union or federated church, and with an indication of the total actual membership.

>VII: 214.001-214.003<

GBOD ¶ 214.1a=230.1; 214.1b-d+2=230.3-6

¶ 215. *Transfer from Other Denominations*—A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with The United Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member. Such a person may be received as a baptized member by a proper certificate of transfer from that person’s former church or some certification of Christian baptism and as a professing member upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in our ritual. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. It is recommended that instruction in the faith, ministry, and polity of the Church be provided for all such persons. Persons received from churches that do not issue certificates of transfer or letters of recommendation shall be listed as “Received From Other Denominations.”

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 215=225

¶ 216. *Affiliate and Associate Membership* - 1. A professing member of The United Methodist Church, of an affiliated autonomous Methodist or united church, or of a Methodist church that has a concordat agreement with The United Methodist Church, who resides for an extended period in a city or community at a distance from the member’s home church, may on request be enrolled as an affiliate member of a United Methodist church located in the vicinity of the temporary residence. The home pastor shall be notified of the affiliate membership. Such membership entitles the person to the fellowship of that church, to its pastoral care and oversight, and to participation in its activities, including the holding of office; except such as would allow one to vote in a United Methodist body other than the local church. However, that person is counted and reported as a professing member of the home church only.

2. A member of another denomination may become an associate member under the same conditions, but may not become a voting member of the church council.²

3. Affiliate or associate relationship may be terminated at the discretion of the United Methodist church in which the affiliate or associate membership is held whenever the affiliate or associate member shall move from the vicinity of the United Methodist church in which the affiliate or associate membership is held.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 216.1-3=227

2. See Judicial Council Decision 372.

¶ 217. *Accountability*—1. All members are to be held account-able for faithfulness to their covenant of baptism.

2. If a baptized member neglects faithfulness and discipline in terms of the baptismal covenant, every means of encouraging that member to return and of nurturing him or her to assume the vows of professing membership should be made.

3. If a professing member should be accused of violating the covenant and failing to keep the confirmation vows, then it is the responsibility of the local church, working through its pastor and its

units, to minister to that member in compliance with the provisions of ¶ 220 in an effort to enable the member to faithfully perform the vows and covenant of membership.

>VII: 217.001<

GBOD ¶ 217.1-3=221.1-3

¶ 218. *Annual Membership Report and Audit*—1. The pastor shall report to the charge conference annually the names of persons received into the membership of the church or churches of the pastoral charge and the names of persons removed since the last charge conference, indicating how each was received or removed. The church council shall appoint a committee to audit the membership record, submitting the report annually to the charge conference. >VII: 218.001<

2. In central conferences, the membership records in each local church shall be according to a common format prepared by the General Council on Finance and Administration in cooperation with the central conferences. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 218.002<

GBOD ¶ 218.1=231; 218.2=233/new

Section III. Care of Members

¶ 219. *Care of Children and Youth*—1. Because the redeeming love of God revealed in Jesus Christ extends to all persons, and because Jesus explicitly included the children in his kingdom, it is the responsibility of the pastor of each charge to counsel Christian parents or guardians in the meaning of baptism for children and youth of all ages, and of the significance of the vows for themselves and the local church. This includes active participation in the life of faith in the local church to prepare everyone for lifelong membership in Christ's Church. At least one parent or guardian shall be a member of a Christian church; or sponsor(s) or godparent(s) who are members renewing their own baptismal vows. All members of the local church likewise will assist and encourage the nurture of each child or youth.

2. The pastor of the church shall, at the time of administering the sacrament of baptism, furnish the parent(s), guardian(s), sponsor(s), or godparent(s) of the child who is baptized with a certificate of baptism, which also clearly states that the child is now a baptized member in The United Methodist Church. Appropriate records of the sacrament of baptism shall be maintained and kept at the local church or another appropriate location. >VII: 219.001<

3. The membership record shall be regularly reviewed to identify those who have not become professing members, for purposes of nurturing them toward profession of faith. >VII: 219.002<

GBOD ¶ 219.1=226.1; 219.2=226.2a+b; 219.3=226.3

¶ 220. *Care of Adult Members*— 1. The local church shall endeavor to enlist each member in activities for spiritual growth and in participation in the services and ministries of the Church and its organizations. It is the duty of the pastor and of the members of the church council by regular visitation, care, and spiritual oversight to provide necessary activities and opportunities for spiritual growth through individual and family worship and individual and group study to connect faith and daily living, and continually to aid the members to keep their vows to uphold the Church by their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. The Church has a moral and spiritual obligation to nurture its nonparticipating and indifferent members and to lead them into an active church relationship.

2. The pastor in cooperation with the church council may arrange the membership in groups—with a leader for each group—designed to involve the membership of the Church in its ministry to the

community. Such groups may be especially helpful in evangelistic outreach by contacting newcomers and unreached persons, by visitation, by mobilizing neighbors to meet social issues in the community, by responding to personal and family crises, by holding prayer meetings in the homes, by distributing Christian literature, and by other means.

>VII: 220.001<

GBOD ¶ 220.1=228.1; 220.2=228.2a

¶ 221. *Review in Case of Neglect* – 1. While primary responsibility and initiative rests with each professing member to faithfully perform the vows of the baptismal covenant that have been solemnly assumed, if the member should be neglectful of that responsibility, the following procedures shall be implemented:

2. Membership records are reviewed regarding the active participation of all professing members residing in the community. Inactive members are requested to do one of four things:

a) reaffirm the baptismal vows and return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant in the church where the member's name is recorded,

b) request transfer to another United Methodist church where the member will return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant,

c) arrange transfer to a particular church of another denomination, or

d) request withdrawal.

3. If a professing member whose address is known is residing outside the community and is not participating in the worship or activity of the church, the directives to encourage a transfer of the member shall be followed or that member may request in writing that the name be removed from the roll of professing members.

4.. If the address of a professing member is no longer known to the pastor, every effort shall be made to locate the member. If the member can be located, the directives of either §2 or §3 above shall be followed.

5. If the directives of §2, §3, or §4 above have been followed over a period of two years without success, the member's name may be removed as a professing member by vote of the charge conference on recommendation of the pastor. On the membership record there shall be entered after the name: "Removed by Charge Conference Action"; and if the action is on the basis of §4 above, there shall be added: "Reason: Address Unknown." The record shall be retained in order that upon reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant the person may be restored as a member. Should a transfer of membership be requested, the pastor may, after consultation with the person, issue the certificate of transfer.

>VII: 221.001<

GBOD ¶ 221.1-5=228.2b(1)-(4)

¶ 222. *Transfer of Members* – 1. *Transfer to Other United Methodist Churches*—When a pastor receives a request for a transfer of membership from a member or from the pastor of another United Methodist church or a district superintendent, that pastor shall send the proper certificate directly to the pastor of the United Methodist church to which the member is transferring, or if there is no pastor, to the district superintendent. On receipt of such a certificate of transfer, the pastor or district superintendent shall enroll the name of the person so transferring after public reception in a regular service of worship, or if circumstances demand, public announcement in such a service. The pastor of the church issuing the

certificate shall then be notified, whereupon said pastor shall remove the member from the roll.
>VII: 222.001<

2. *Transfer to Other Denominations*—A pastor, upon receiving a request from a member to transfer to a church of another denomination, shall properly record the transfer of such person on the membership record of the local church. Upon request of the member, the pastor shall hand a certificate of transfer to the member. >VII: 222.002<

3. *Transfer from Discontinued Local Churches*— If a local church is discontinued, the district superintendent shall select another United Methodist church and transfer its members thereto, or to such other churches as the members may select.

GBOD ¶ 222.1=239; 222.2=240; 222.3=229

¶ 223. *Withdrawal Without Notice*—If a pastor is informed that a member has without notice united with a church of another denomination, the pastor shall make diligent inquiry and, if the report is confirmed, shall enter “Withdrawn” after the person’s name on the membership roll and shall report the same to the next charge conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 223=241

¶ 224. *Restoration of Professing Membership*—1. A person whose name has been removed from professing membership by withdrawal, or action by charge conference, or trial court, may ask to be restored to membership in the local church.

2. A person whose membership was recorded as having been withdrawn, for any voluntary reason may be restored to professing membership by reaffirmation of the baptismal vows.

3. A person who withdrew under charges or was removed by trial court may ask to return to the church. Upon evidence of a renewed life, approval of the charge conference, and reaffirmation of the baptismal vows, the person may be restored to professing membership.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 224.1+2=242.1+2; 224.3=242.5

Section IV. Organization of the Local Church

¶ 225. *Primary Tasks*—

In carrying out its primary task, the local church shall be organized so that adequate provision is made for these basic responsibilities:

- (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation;
- (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership;
- (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church;
- (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the district and annual conference;
- (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and
- (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 225=243

¶ 226. *Organization*— 1. The basic organizational plan for the local church shall include provision for the following units: a charge conference, a church council, a committee on nominations and leadership development, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a committee on finance, a board of trustees unless otherwise required by civil law, and such other elected leaders, commissions, councils, committees, and task forces as the charge conference may determine. Every local church shall develop a plan for organizing its administrative and programmatic responsibilities. >VII: 226.001<

2. The church council and all other administrative and programmatic structures of the local church shall be amenable to the charge conference. The church council shall function as the executive unit of the charge conference.

3. When circumstances so require, the charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the district superintendent, modify the organizational plans, provided that the provisions of ¶ 225 are observed. >VII: 226.002<

4. Members of the church council or alternative structure shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the church, are loyal to the ethical standards of The United Methodist Church set forth in the Social Principles, and are competent to administer its affairs. It shall include youth and young adult members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All persons with vote shall be members of the local church, except where central conference legislation provides otherwise. The pastor shall be the administrative officer and, as such, shall be an ex officio member of all conferences, boards, councils, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless otherwise restricted by the *Discipline*.³

5. Central conferences shall establish provisions, or delegate such authority to their respective annual conferences, for organizing a new church or a new charge, provided that the organizing of a new local church within a charge shall be subject at least to the agreement of the superintendent and of said charge conference, and that the organizing of a new charge shall be subject at least to the agreement of the cabinet of the annual conference. All such newly organized churches shall be in accordance with local laws and other provisions of the *Discipline*.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 226.003<

6. Central conferences may establish provisions for ministry groups, units or institutional work on the level of the local church as it best serves the mission of the church, or delegate such authority to their respective annual conferences. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 226.004-226.007<

GBOD ¶ 226.1-2=244Intro+1; 226.3=247.2; 226.4=244.3; 226.5=259; 226.6=new

3. See Judicial Council Decisions 469, 500.

¶ 227. *Transfer of a Local Church* - A local church may be transferred from one annual conference to another in which it is geographically located by a two-thirds vote of the professing members who are present and voting in each of the following: (1) the charge conference, (2) a congregational meeting of the local church affected, and (3) each of the two annual conferences involved. Upon announcement of the required majorities by the bishop or bishops involved, the transfer shall immediately be effective. The votes required may originate in the local church or either of the annual conferences involved and shall be effective regardless of the order in which taken.

>VII: 227.001<

GBOD ¶ 227=260

Section V. The Charge Conference

¶ 228. *General Provisions*—1. Within the pastoral charge the basic unit in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church is the charge conference. The charge conference shall therefore be organized from the church or churches in every pastoral charge as set forth in the Constitution (¶ 43). It shall meet at least annually.

2. The membership of the charge conference shall be all members of the church council or other appropriate body, together with retired ordained clergy who elect to hold their membership in said charge conference and any others as may be designated in the *Discipline*, and other persons as elected by the charge conference. If more than one church is on the pastoral charge, all members of each church council shall be members of the charge conference.

3. The district superintendent shall fix the time of meetings of the charge conference. The charge conference shall determine the place of meeting.

4. The district superintendent shall preside at the meetings of the charge conference or may designate an elder to preside.

5. The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

6. Special sessions may be called by the district superintendent after consultation with the pastor of the charge. The purpose of such special session shall be stated in the call, and only such business shall be transacted as is in harmony with the purposes stated in the call. Any such special session of the charge conference may be convened as a church conference (GBOD ¶ 230).

7. Notice of time and place of a regular or special session of the charge conference shall be given at least ten days in advance.

8. A joint charge conference for two or more pastoral charges may be held at the same time and place, as the district superintendent may determine.

>VII: 228.001<

GBOD ¶ 228.1+2=246.1+2; 228.3-7=246.4-8; 228.8=246.10

¶ 229. *Powers and Duties*—1. The charge conference shall be the connecting link between the local church and the general Church and shall have oversight of the church council(s).

2. The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church (¶¶ 120-124), receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church. The charge conference receives the report of the pastor in charge. >VII: 229.001<

3. The charge conference recording secretary shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings, and with the presiding officer, shall sign the minutes. A copy of the minutes shall be provided for the district superintendent, and a permanent copy shall be retained for church files. >VII: 229.002<

4. The charge conference shall examine and recommend candidates for licensed or ordained ministry to the Board of ordained ministry, faithfully adhering to the provisions of ¶ 309.2.c. >VII: 229.003<

5. The charge conference shall examine and recommend renewal of candidates for the ordained ministry, faithfully adhering to the provisions of ¶ 309.2.c.

6. The charge conference shall inquire annually into the gifts, labors, and usefulness of persons in specific lay servant ministries (¶ 213) and recommend persons who have met the standards set forth for such ministries. >VII: 229.004<

7. The charge conference is responsible to fulfill the apportionment according to the rules set by the annual conference and the general church. Payment of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church. >VII: 229.005<

8. The charge conference shall receive and act on the annual report from the pastor concerning the membership.

9. In those instances where there are two or more local churches on a pastoral charge, the charge conference may provide for a charge or local church council, a charge or local church treasurer, and such other officers, commissions, committees, and task groups as necessary to carry on the work of the charge.

10. The charge conference shall promote awareness of and concurrence with the Doctrinal Standards and General Rules of the United Methodist Church, and with policies relative to Socially Responsible Investments ([BOD] ¶ 717), the Social Principles (¶¶ 160-166), and *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*.

11. If any charge conference initiates, joins, monitors, or terminates a boycott, the guidelines in *The Book of Resolutions* should be followed. The General Conference is the only body that can initiate, empower, or join a boycott in the name of The United Methodist Church. >VII: 229.006<

12. The charge conference shall have such other duties and responsibilities as the General, central, jurisdictional, or annual conference may duly commit to it. >VII: 229.007<

GBOD ¶ 229.1=247.1; 229.2-3=247.3-4; 229.4-5=247.8-9; 229.6=247.11; 229.7-8=247.14-15; 229.9=247.17; 229.10-11=247.20-21; 229.12=247.23

¶ 230. *The Church Conference*— To encourage broader participation by members of the church, the charge conference may be convened as a church conference, extending the vote to all professing members of the local church present at such meetings, subject to the authorization of the district superintendent.

>VII: 230.001<

GBOD ¶ 230=248

¶ 231. *Elections*—Out of the professing membership, the charge conference, or church conference authorized by the district superintendent, shall elect upon recommendation by the committee on nominations and leadership development, or by nomination from the floor, at least the following:

>VII: 231.001<

1. The church council and its chairperson (see ¶ 234).

a) The church council chairperson shall be entitled to attend meetings of all boards and committees of the church unless specifically limited by the *Discipline*. >VII: 231.002<

2. The committee on nominations and leadership development, chaired by the pastor in charge. Among its members shall be the pastor, the lay leader, and a lay member of the annual conference, and representation of each local church.

a) Throughout the year, the committee shall identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian leadership for the local congregation.

b) It shall recommend to the charge conference the names of officers and leaders to be elected.

>VII: 231.003<

3. The committee on pastor-parish relations and its chairperson. It is composed of not fewer than five nor more than nine professing members of the local church, including the lay leader, a lay member of the annual conference, and representation of each local church. No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee.

a) It shall assist the pastor and staff of the local church in assessing their gifts, maintaining health holistically, setting priorities for leadership and service, and provides evaluation at least annually and where needed develop job descriptions.

b) It shall discern persons for ordained ministry and bring recommendations to the charge conference for candidacy.

c) The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself. The committee may be called to meet without the pastor and/or staff under consideration only by and in presence of the district superintendent who shall notify the pastor and/or staff prior to the meeting and bring them into consultation immediately thereafter.

d) The committee shall meet in closed session, and information shared in the committee shall be confidential. Its relationship to the district superintendent and the bishop is advisory only.⁴
>VII: 231.004<

4. The committee on finance and its chairperson. Among its members shall be the pastor, the lay leader, and a lay member of the annual conference.

a) It shall give stewardship of financial resources, submit a budget to the church council, and make provisions for an annual audit. >VII: 231.005<

5. The Board of Trustees as provided in chapter six on *Church Property*, unless otherwise required by civil law. >VII: 231.006<

6. The lay leader of the charge who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church and shall have the following responsibilities:

a) fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;

b) meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;

c) the lay leader may also be elected as lay member of annual conference. >VII: 231.007<

7. The lay member(s) of the annual conference and alternates who shall be professing members for at least two years and shall have been active participants for at least four years next preceding their election (see ¶ 32), except in a newly organized church, which shall have the privilege of representation at the annual conference session, and other exceptions allowed by ¶ 32.⁵

a) The lay member(s) of the annual conference and alternates shall, along with the pastor, serve as interpreter(s) of the actions and programs of the annual conference and the general Church.

b) If the charge's lay member of the annual conference shall cease to be a member of the charge or shall for any reason fail to serve, an alternate member in the order of election shall serve in place.
>VII: 231.008<

8. To insure for appropriate financial accountability for offerings and other income funds, there shall be elected both a financial secretary and a treasurer, if not paid employees of the local church.

a) The financial secretary records and deposits donated funds, as well as other financial assets of the congregation at the direction of the church council. The treasurer disperses funds to authorized expenditures, at the direction of the church council. Thus no one person will oversee both income and expenditures of the local church accounts.

b) No immediate family members of any appointed clergy may serve as treasurer, finance chair, financial secretary, counter, or serve in any paid or unpaid position under the responsibilities of the committee on finance, as described herein. These restrictions would apply only to the church or charge where the clergy serves. >VII: 231.009<

9. The recording secretary.

10. Additional members of the charge conference (see ¶ 228.2).

11. It is recommended that the charge conference elect a church historian in order to preserve the history of each local church.

12. All local church offices and all chairs of organizations within the local church may be shared between two persons, with the following exceptions: trustee, officers of the board of trustees, treasurer, lay member of annual conference, member and chairperson of the committee on pastor-parish relations. When two persons jointly hold a position that entails membership on the church council, both may be members of it.

13. The term of office is according to the provisions of the annual conference. It is recommended that no officer serve more than three consecutive terms in the same office.

GBOD ¶ 231 Intro+1=249 Intro+1+251.3; 231.2=249.2+258.1; 231.3= 249.3+258.2;

231.4=249.4+258.4; 231.5=249.4+258.3; 231.6=251.1; 231.7=249.5+251.2; 231.8=249.4+258.4;

231.9=249.6; 231.10 (new); 231.11=247.5; 231.12=249.8; 231.13=247.7

4. See Judicial Council Decision 701.

5. See Judicial Council Decisions 170, 305, 342, 469, 495.

¶ **232. *Removal of Officers and Filling of Vacancies***—If a leader or officer who has been elected by the charge conference is unable or unwilling to perform the duties reasonably expected of such a leader or officer, the district superintendent may call a special session of the charge conference. The purpose of such special session shall be stated as “Consideration for the removal of person(s) from office and the election of person(s) to fill vacancy(ies).”

>VII: 232.001<

GBOD ¶ 232=250

¶ **233. *Missional Potential***- In central conferences, the charge conference may organize ministries according to missional needs and potential. It may elect a coordinator or ministry group chairperson for any or all of its areas of ministry. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 233.001-233.005<

GBOD ¶ 233=253+254

Section VI. The Church Council

¶ **234. *The Church Council***- 1. *Purpose*—The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church.

2. *Mission and Ministry*—Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:

a) The nurturing ministries include: education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship.

b) The outreach ministries include: local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy.

c) The witness ministries include: developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; and communications.

>VII: 234.001<

3. *Meetings* — The council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings. >VII: 234.002<

4. *Responsibilities* — It will be the responsibility of the church council to:

- a) give adequate consideration to the missional purpose of the church; encourage, plan and set the goals of the local church; determine activities and work; receive reports and evaluate the ministry;
- b) review the membership of the local church;
- c) fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the annual charge conference;
- d) establish the budget on recommendation of the committee on finance and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;
- e) recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations) if these are not set by the annual conference; >VII: 234.003<

5. *Membership*—The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. The membership shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) the chairperson of the church council;
- b) the lay leader;
- c) a lay member to annual conference;
- d) the pastor(s).
- e) the secretary of the charge conference;
- f) other members as elected by the charge conference. >VII: 234.004<

6. *Quorum*—The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

7. The church council may appoint additional committees as it deems advisable.

>VII: 234.005-234.008<

GBOD ¶ 234.1+2a-c=252.1+2a-c; 234.3=252.3a; 234.4a=247.3; 234.4b-e=252.4a-d; 234.5a-d=252.5a+b+g+l; 234.5e-f=247.4+new; 234.6=252.6; 234.7=258.5

Chapter Two

The Ministry of the Ordained

Section I. The Meaning of Ordination and Conference Membership

¶ 301. *Ministry in the Christian Church*- 1. Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God's gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. All Christian ministry is grounded in the covenant of baptism by which we are initiated into the body of Christ and called to a life of discipleship. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion ground the ministry of the whole church. They are celebrated in the Christian community as a means of grace. Thus, the whole church receives and accepts this call, and all Christians participate in this continuing ministry (see ¶¶ 120-140).

2. Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart ministers, ordained and licensed. (¶ 302) Individuals discern God's call as they relate with God and their communities, and the Church guides and confirms those calls. Calls—and the discernment and confirmation of them—are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 301.1+2 = 301.1+2

¶ 302. *Ordination and Apostolic Ministry*—The pattern for this response to the call is provided in the development of the early church. The apostles led in prayer, teaching and preaching, ordered the spiritual and temporal life of the community, established leadership for the ministry of service, and provided for the proclamation of the gospel to new persons and in new places. The early church, through the laying on of hands, set apart persons with responsibility to preach, to teach, to administer the sacraments, to nurture, to heal, to gather the community in worship, and to send them forth in witness. The church also set apart other persons to care for the physical needs of others, reflecting the concerns for the people of the world. In the New Testament (Acts 6), we see the apostles identifying and authorizing persons to a ministry of service. These functions, though set apart, were never separate from the ministry of the whole people of God. Paul states (Ephesians 4:1-12) that different gifts and ministries are given to all persons. The Wesleyan tradition has, from the beginning, encouraged a culture of call and a community of discernment, which affirms and supports the ministry of all Christians and identifies and authorizes persons into ministries of the ordained.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 302 = 302

¶ 303. *Orders in Relation to the Ministry of All Christians*—1. Within the people of God, some persons are called to the ministry of deacon. The words deacon, deaconess, and diaconate all spring from a common Greek root—*diakonos*, or “servant,” and *diakonia*, or “service.” Very early in its history the church, as an act of worship and praise of God, instituted an order of ordained ministers to personify or focus the servanthood to which all Christians are called. These people were named deacons. This ministry exemplifies and leads the Church in the servanthood every Christian is called to live both in the church and the world. Those called to the ministry of deacon are called to witness to the Word in their words and actions, and to embody and lead the community's service in the world for the sake of enacting God's compassion and justice.

2. Within the people of God, other persons are called to the ministry of elder. The elders carry on the historic work of the *presbyteros* in the life of the Church. Beginning in some of the very early Christian communities, the *presbyteros* assisted the bishop in leading the gathered community in the

celebration of sacraments and the guidance and care of its communal life. Those called to the ministry of the elder are called to bear authority and responsibility to preach and teach the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church so it can be faithful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 303.1-2 = 305

¶ 304. *Purpose of Ordination*—1. Ordination to ministry is a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. As such, those who are ordained make a commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved.

2. Ordination is fulfilled in leadership of the people of God through ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion, and Justice. The Church's ministry of service is a primary representation of God's love. Those who respond to God's call to lead in service, word, compassion, and justice and equip others for this ministry through teaching, proclamation, and worship and who assist elders in the administration of the sacraments are ordained as deacons. Those whose leadership in service includes preaching and teaching the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, ordering the Church for its mission and service, and administration of the discipline of the Church are ordained as elders.

3. Ordained persons exercise their ministry in covenant with all Christians, especially with those whom they lead and serve in ministry. They also live in covenant of mutual care and accountability with all those who share their ordination, especially in The United Methodist Church, with the ordained who are members of the same annual conference and part of the same Order. The covenant of ordained ministry is a lifetime commitment, and those who enter into it dedicate their whole lives to the personal and spiritual disciplines it requires.

4. The effectiveness of the Church in mission depends on these covenantal commitments to the ministry of all Christians and the ordained ministry of the Church. Through ordination and through other offices of pastoral leadership, the Church provides for the continuation of Christ's ministry, which has been committed to the church as a whole. Without creative use of the diverse gifts of the entire body of Christ, the ministry of the church is less effective. Without responsible leadership, the focus, direction, and continuity of that ministry is diminished. Every local church should intentionally nurture candidates for ordained ministry and provide spiritual and financial support for their education as servant leaders for the ministry of the whole people of God.

5. In keeping with ancient Christian teaching and our Wesleyan tradition, we affirm that ordination for the same, or equivalent order, is not repeatable.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 304.1-5 = 303.1-5

¶ 305. *Qualifications for Ordination*—1. Those whom the Church ordains shall be conscious of God's call to ordained ministry, and their call shall be acknowledged and authenticated by the Church. God's call has many manifestations, and the Church cannot structure a single test of authenticity. Nevertheless, the experience of the Church and the needs of its ministry require certain qualities of faith, life, and practice from those who seek ordination as deacons and elders. In order that The United Methodist Church may be assured that those persons who present themselves as candidates for ordained ministry are truly called of God, the Church expects persons seeking ordination to:

- 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.
- c) Teach and model generous Christian giving with a focus on tithing as God's standard of giving.

- d) Acknowledge a call by God to give themselves completely to ordained ministry following Jesus' pattern of love and service.
- e) Communicate persuasively the Christian faith in both oral and written form.
- f) Make a commitment to lead the whole Church in loving service to humankind.
- g) Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry, evidence of God's grace in their lives, and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the Church.
- h) Be persons in whom the community can place trust and confidence.
- i) Accept that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation through faith in God through Jesus Christ; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history, and Church polity; possess the skills essential to the practice of ordained ministry; and lead in making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- j) Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and *Discipline* and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers.

2. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of the influence of an ordained clergy on the lives of other persons both within and outside the Church, the Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life. To this end, they agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals¹ are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.²

4. The United Methodist Church entrusts those persons who are in the ordained ministry with primary responsibility for maintaining standards of education and preparation for ordination. Having been originally recommended by a charge conference or equivalent body (§ 309.2c) and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference, persons are elected to membership in the annual conference and ordained by the bishop.

5. In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements only.

6. In central conferences, the annual conference, upon recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry, may create an executive committee of the Board, district committees on ordained ministry, or other appropriate structure, as it serves the need to carry out the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and assign and delegate to such structures the appropriate tasks and responsibilities it chooses.

With regard to mandated sub-units of the Board of Ordained Ministry and their respective tasks and responsibilities, jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 305.1-5 = 304.1-5; 305.6=new

¹ "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that person is a practicing homosexual. Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984, 1020.

² See Judicial Council Decisions 984, 985, 1027, 1028.

¶ 306. *Order of Deacons and Order of Elders*— All persons ordained as clergy-upon election to full membership in the annual conference shall be members of and participate in an order appropriate to their election. An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for, and hold

accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers, and for a deepening relationship with God.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 306 = 306

¶ 307. *Changing Orders* — 1. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session of the annual conference, elders may be received as deacons in full connection, and deacons in full connection may be received as elders, provided they are in good standing and have:

- a) informed the bishop and district superintendent of their intention,
- b) applied in writing to the Board of Ordained Ministry,
- c) articulated to the Board of Ordained Ministry their call to the ministry of the deacon or the elder.
- d) completed all requirements for admission to the order for which they apply, ¶¶ 320 and 324, and
- e) completed at least two years, and no more than eight years, under appointment while licensed for the ministry of the order to which they are transitioning.

2. Such persons shall retain their credentials and full membership in the annual conference through the transition period from one order to the other. When ordained to the order to which they are transitioning, they shall surrender to the conference secretary the credentials of the order from which they are leaving.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 307.1+2 = 309.2+3

¶ 308. *General Provisions*-1. The annual conference is the basic body of The United Methodist Church. The clergy membership of an annual conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection (¶¶ 325, 333), provisional members (¶ 323), associate members (¶ 317), affiliate members (¶ 340.4), and local pastors (¶ 313). All clergy are amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their duties in the positions to which they are appointed.³

2. Both men and women are included in all provisions of the *Discipline* that refer to the ordained ministry.⁴

3. There shall be an annual meeting of this covenant body, called “clergy session”, in executive session of all clergy members in full connection with the annual conference, with voting rights as specified by the *Discipline*, at the site of the regular session of the annual conference, or at an alternative time and location determined by the bishop after consultation with the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, to consider questions relating to matters of ordination, character, and conference relations.⁵

4. A special session of the annual conference may be held at such time and at such place as the bishop shall determine, after consultation with the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry. A special clergy session shall have only such powers as stated in the call.

>VII: 308.001<

GBOD ¶ 308.1-4 = 369.1-2+5-6

³ See Judicial Council Decisions 327, 371.

⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 155, 317.

⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 406, 555, 1009.

Section II. Candidacy for Licensed and Ordained Ministry

¶ 309. *Candidacy and Certification for Licensed and Ordained Ministry*—1. The licensed or ordained ministry is recognized by The United Methodist Church as a called-out and set-apart ministry. Therefore, it is appropriate that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry be examined regarding the authenticity of their call by God to set-apart ministry. >VII: 309.001<

2. Those beginning candidacy for licensed or ordained ministry:

a) shall be a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for a minimum of one (1) year;

b) shall request a meeting of the committee on pastor-parish relations or equivalent body to consider the statement of call and to be evaluated in light of Wesley's historic questions;

(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 they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit.

c) Upon recommendation of the candidate by the committee on pastor-parish relations or equivalent body approved by the Board on ordained ministry, the charge conference shall meet to recommend the candidate in written ballot by two thirds majority to the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 309.002<

3. Candidates recommended by the charge conference and seeking to become certified for licensed or ordained ministry shall meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry may require the candidate to provide written material and reports according to its guidelines. These shall include, but are not limited to, written answers to questions about call, experience of faith and ministry and understanding of the Christian faith; psychological reports, criminal background, an official statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse. >VII: 309.003; 309.004; 309.005<

GBOD ¶ 309.1 = 310.Intro; 309.2=310.1; 309.3=310.2a+b

¶ 310. *Continuation of Certified Candidates*—1. The progress of certified candidates shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Ordained Ministry which may continue the candidacy when the following conditions have been met satisfactorily,⁶ but for no more than twelve years following certification:

2. The certified candidate has received the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference.

3. The certified candidate is making satisfactory progress in his or her studies.

4. The certified candidate continues to evidence gifts, fruits and God's grace for the work of ministry.

>VII: 310.001<

GBOD ¶ 310.1-4 = 313.Intro+5; +1-3

⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 1263

¶ 311. *Discontinuance and Reinstatement of Certified Candidates* —Certified candidates may be discontinued on their own request, upon severing their relationship with the United Methodist Church, or upon action by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall keep a permanent record of the circumstances relating to discontinuance.

Certified candidates whose status has been discontinued by the Board of Ordained Ministry shall only be reinstated by the same Board.

In jurisdictional conferences, this paragraph shall also be implemented by their respective committees on ordained ministry.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 311 = 314.2

Section III. License for Pastoral Ministry

¶ 312. *License for Pastoral Ministry*—1. All persons not ordained as elders who are appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor shall have a license for pastoral ministry.

The Board of Ordained Ministry may recommend to the clergy session of the annual conference the licensing of those persons who have provided the reports and statements required by the Board, and who are in one of the following categories:

2. Provisional elders to be commissioned by the annual conference,
3. Local pastors who have completed the conditions for candidacy certification, and the studies for the license as a local pastor.
4. Associate members of the annual conference;
5. Deacons in full connection, seeking to qualify for ordination as an elder;
6. Licensed or ordained clergy from other denominations who have training equivalent to the studies for license as a local pastor.

>VII: 312.001<

GBOD ¶ 312.1-6 = 315.Intro+.1-5

¶ 313. *Responsibilities and Duties of Those Licensed for Pastoral Ministry*—1. Provisional elders approved annually by the Board of Ordained Ministry and local pastors approved annually by the Board of ordained ministry may be licensed by the bishop to perform all the duties of a pastor (¶334), including the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as the service of marriage (where state laws allow),⁷ burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry. For the purposes of these paragraphs the charge or extension ministry shall be defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served.” Those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to extension ministry settings when approved by the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. Licensed clergy shall be amenable to the clergy session of the annual conference in the performance of their pastoral duties and shall attend the sessions of the annual conference.

3. The membership of local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment is in the annual conference where they shall have the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General, central, or jurisdictional conference, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

Licensed clergy who fulfill the requirements of ¶ 35 may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and central or jurisdictional conferences.⁹

>VII: 313.001<

GBOD ¶ 313.1 = 316.1; 313.2=316.5; 313.3=316.6

⁷ See Judicial Council Decision 694.

⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 1181 and ¶35.

¶ 314. *Categories of Local Pastor*— Each central conference shall establish what categories of Local Pastor will be recognized, as well as educational or other requirements necessary for each category.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 314.001<

GBOD ¶ 314=318Intro

¶ 315. *Continuance as a Local Pastor* - 1. Upon successful continuance or completion of required studies, and other qualifications, a local pastor may be recommended for continuance by the Board of Ordained Ministry to the clergy session of the annual conference for annual approval.⁹

2. None of the provisions in this legislation shall be interpreted to change or limit authorizations to local pastors ordained as deacon prior to 1996.¹⁰

>VII: 315.001<

GBOD ¶ 315.1-2=319.2+5

⁹Judicial Council Decision 1076.

¹⁰Judicial Council Decision 1076.

¶ 316. *Exiting, Reinstatement, and Retirement of Local Pastors* 1. *Discontinuance of Local Pastors*—Whenever a local pastor retires or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference, whenever any local pastor severs relationship with The United Methodist Church, whenever the appointment of a local pastor is discontinued by the bishop, or whenever the Board of Ordained Ministry does not recommend continuation of license, license shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference.

After consultation with the district superintendent and the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of local pastor status.

2. *Withdrawal Under Complaints and Charges*—When a local pastor is accused of a chargeable offense under ¶ 2702 and desires to withdraw from the Church, the procedures described in Judicial Administration shall apply.

3. *Reinstatement of Local Pastor Status*—Local pastors who have been discontinued from an annual conference of The United Methodist Church may be reinstated only by the annual conference that previously approved them, or its legal successor, only upon recommendation by the respective Board of ordained ministry, and the cabinet. Persons seeking reinstatement shall provide evidence that they have been members of a local United Methodist church for at least one year prior to their request for reinstatement and have been recommended by its charge conference. When approved by the clergy session of the annual conference their license and credentials shall be restored, and they shall be eligible for appointment.

4. *Retirement of Local Pastor*—Upon retirement, a local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but not vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge.

>VII: 316.001<

GBOD ¶ 316.1-4 = 320.1-2+4—5

Section IV. Associate Membership

¶ 317. *Eligibility and Rights of Associate Members*—1. Associate members of an annual conference are in the itinerant ministry of the Church (see ¶ 334) and are available on a continuing basis for appointment by the bishop. They shall be amenable to the annual conference in the performance of their ministry.¹¹

2. Associate members shall have a right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following: (a) constitutional amendments; (b) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

3. Associate members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of an annual conference. They shall not be eligible for election as delegates to the General or central or jurisdictional conferences.

4. Associate members shall be subject to the provisions for ordained elders governing sabbatical leave, leave of absence, location, retirement, minimum salary, and pension.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 317.1-4 = 321.Intro+.1-3

¹¹ See Judicial Council Decision 1226.

¶ 318. *Requirements for Election as Associate Members* – 1. Local pastors may be elected to associate membership by a three-fourth majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference, upon recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry, when they have met the following conditions:

They shall have: (1) served four years as full-time local pastors; (2) completed the educational requirements for the Course of Study; (3) have reached the age requirements; and (4) fulfilled the requirements stated in ¶ 320.4-8, applicable to associate membership. >VII: 318.001<

2. Each central conference shall establish provisions for such requirements or delegate it to its annual conferences. Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

GBOD ¶ 318.1 = 322.1; 318.2=new

¶ 319. *Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members*—Each annual conference shall organize a Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members or, where numbers are too small, combine activities with the clergy orders.

>VII: 319.001<

GBOD ¶ 319 = 323Intro

Section V. Provisional Membership

¶ 320. *Qualifications for Election to Provisional Membership* – 1. A person shall be eligible for election to provisional membership in the annual conference by a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy session on recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry after meeting the following qualifications.¹²

>VII: 320.001<

2. *Candidacy Requirement*: Each candidate shall have been a certified candidate for at least one year. Those appointed as local pastors are clergy members of the annual conference and are no longer certified candidates.

3. *Service Requirement*: Each candidate shall have demonstrated his or her gifts for ministries of service and leadership to the satisfaction of the Board of Ordained Ministry as a condition of provisional membership.

4. Each candidate shall file with the board a written, concise, autobiographical statement regarding age, health, family status, Christian experience, call to ministry, educational record, formative Christian experiences, and plans for service in the Church. >VII: 320.002<

5. Each candidate shall submit documentation that shall include but is not limited to psychological reports, criminal background, an official statement detailing any convictions for felony or misdemeanor or written accusations of sexual misconduct or child abuse.

6. *Educational Requirement*: Candidates shall have completed theological studies in the Christian faith. These studies shall include United Methodist doctrine, polity and history. Each central conference shall establish provisions for its educational requirements.

Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 320.003<

7. Local pastors may fulfill the educational requirements for provisional membership as elders when they have

a) completed four years of full-time service or the equivalent

b) completed the Course of Study and the Advanced Course of Study.

c) Each central conference shall establish provisions for its educational requirements for local pastors seeking provisional and full membership.¹³ Annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 320.004<

8. Each candidate shall respond to a doctrinal examination administered by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The examination shall cover the following:

a) Describe your personal experience of God and the understanding of God you derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.

b) What is your understanding of evil as it exists in the world?

c) What is your understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace?

d) How do you interpret the statement Jesus Christ is Lord?

e) What is your conception of the activity of the Holy Spirit in personal faith, in the community of believers, and in responsible living in the world?

f) What is your understanding of the kingdom of God; the Resurrection; eternal life?

g) How do you intend to affirm, teach, and apply Part III of the *Discipline* (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) in your work in the ministry to which you have been called?

h) The United Methodist Church holds that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?

i) Describe the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary tasks today?

j) Discuss your understanding of the primary characteristics of United Methodist polity.

k) Explain your understanding of the distinctive vocations of the Order of Elder and the Order of Deacons. How do you perceive yourself, your gifts, your motives, your role, and your commitment as a provisional deacon or provisional elder in The United Methodist Church?

l) Describe your understanding of *diakonia*, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.

m) What is the meaning of ordination in the context of the general ministry of the Church?

n) Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.

o) You have agreed as a candidate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of the influence as a clergy, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of this agreement?

p) Explain the role and significance of the sacraments in the ministry to which you have been called.

9. Each candidate shall have a personal interview with the Board of Ordained Ministry to complete his or her candidacy.

10. Each candidate shall have been recommended to the clergy session based on at least a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

GBOD ¶ 320.1 = 324Intro; 320.2=324.1; 320.3=324.2; 320.4=324.13; 320.5=324.12; 320.6=324.5; 320.7=324.6; 320.8=324.9; 320.9=324.11; 320.10=324.14

¹² See Judicial Council Decision 318.

¹³ See Judicial Council Decision 823, 1077.

¶ 321. *Commissioning*—Commissioning is the act of the church that publicly acknowledges God’s call and the response, talents, gifts and training of the candidate. The church invokes the Holy Spirit as the candidate is commissioned to be a faithful servant leader among the people, to lead the church in service, to proclaim the Word of God and to equip others for ministry. Commissioning of provisional members for ministry as elders by a Bishop implies the authority of a license for pastoral ministry for the time of provisional membership.

>VII: 321.001<

GBOD ¶ 321 = 325

¶ 322. *Service of Provisional Members*— All persons who are provisional members shall be appointed by a bishop (¶ 406) and serve as a provisional member of the annual conference for a minimum of two years following the completion of education requirements for full connection.

>VII: 322.001<

GBOD ¶ 322 = 326.Intro

¶ 323. *Eligibility and Rights of Provisional Membership*—1. Provisional members are on probation as to character, servant leadership, and effectiveness in ministry in preparation for membership in full connection in the annual conference as deacons or elders. They are accountable to the annual conference, through the clergy session. Annually, the Board of Ordained Ministry shall review and evaluate their relationship and make recommendation to the clergy session of the annual conference regarding their continuance. No member shall be continued on provisional membership beyond the eighth regular session following their admission to provisional membership.

2. Provisional members shall have the right to vote in the annual conference on all matters except the following:

a) constitutional amendments;

b) all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

3. Provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements may vote to elect clergy delegates to General and central or jurisdictional conferences.¹⁴

4. Provisional members may serve on any board, commission, or committee of the annual conference except the Board of Ordained Ministry.

5. *Discontinuance from Provisional Membership*

a). Provisional members may request discontinuance of this relationship or may be discontinued by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

(1) Voluntary Discontinuance – When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their action shall be considered a request for discontinuance of their relationship and their credentials shall be surrendered to a district superintendent.

(2) Involuntary Discontinuance – In the case of discontinuation without consent, prior to any final recommendation, a provisional member will be advised of the right to a fair process hearing before the committee on conference relations of the Board of Ordained Ministry. A report of the action will be made to the full board for final action. The provisions of fair process (¶ 352.2) shall be observed.

(3) Discontinuance Due to Time Limit - No member shall be continued on provisional membership beyond the eighth regular session following their admission to provisional membership.

b) When this relationship is discontinued, they shall no longer be permitted to exercise ministerial functions and shall return their credentials to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership shall be transferred by the district superintendent to the local church they designate after consultation with the pastor.

c) The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop and the secretary of the conference a permanent record of the circumstances relating to discontinuance as a provisional member.

d) After discontinuance, provisional members may be classified and approved as local pastors in accordance with the provisions of BOD ¶313.

6. Provisional members may not be retired under the provisions of ¶ 349. Provisional members who have reached the mandatory retirement age shall be automatically discontinued. Provisional elders may be classified as retired local pastors under the provisions of BOD ¶ 320.5. >VII: 323.001<

>VII: —<

¶ 324. *Requirements for Ordination as Deacon or Elder and Admission into Full Connection-* 1. Provisional members who are applying for admission into full connection and who have been provisional members for at least two years following the completion of educational requirements as specified in ¶324.4 may be admitted into membership in full connection in an annual conference upon recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Ordained Ministry and elected by a three-fourths majority vote of the clergy session.¹⁵ This process shall be informed by guidelines in Part III of the *Discipline* and shall focus upon the covenantal ministry of all Christians and the particular ministry to which the person has been ordained. Qualification requirements are:

2. *Membership requirement-* Each candidate for ordination and full membership shall have been previously elected as a provisional member.

3. *Service requirements-* They shall have served under episcopal appointment for at least two full annual conference years following the completion of the educational requirements. >VII: 324.001<

4. *Educational Requirements* – Prior to ordination and election to full membership all provisional members shall have fully completed the educational requirements.

5. The following questions are guidelines for the preparation of the examination:

a) Theology

(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God

(b) Humanity

(c) The need for divine grace

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

(f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments

(g) The kingdom of God

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

(3) What are its primary challenges today?

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

b) Vocation

(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon?

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry?

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained clergy, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?¹⁶

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

(5) Will your regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

6. A deacon shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Deacons (§ 405.5). The bishop shall be assisted by other deacons and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating deacons and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

7. An elder shall be ordained by a bishop by the laying on of hands, employing the Order of Service for the Ordination of Elders (§ 405.5). The bishop shall be assisted by other elders and may include laity designated by the bishop representing the Church community. Bishops in other communions may join the ordaining bishop in laying hands on the head of the candidate, while participating elders and laity may lay hands on the back or shoulders of the candidate.

8. Following election, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference, and following ordination, a certificate of ordination.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 324 = 330+335

GBOD ¶ 324.7 = new; 324.8=330.7; 324.9=333.3; 324.10=330.6/333.2

¹⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 157, 344, 1199.

¹⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 542.

¶ 325. *Historic Examination for Admission into Full Connection* – The bishop as chief pastor shall engage those seeking to be admitted in serious self-searching and prayer to prepare them for their examination before the conference. At the time of the examination the bishop shall also explain to the conference the historic nature of the following questions and seek to interpret their spirit and intent. The questions are these and any others that may be thought necessary:

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 it?
5. Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work?
6. Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
7. Will you keep them?
8. Have you studied the doctrines of The United Methodist Church?
9. After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?
10. Will you preach and maintain them?
11. Have you studied our form of Church discipline and polity?
12. Do you approve our Church government and polity?

13. Will you support and maintain them?
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.¹⁷

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 325 = 330.5.d + 336

¹⁷ These are the questions that every Methodist preacher from the beginning has been required to answer upon becoming a full member of an annual conference. These questions were formulated by John Wesley and have been little changed throughout the years.

Section VI. The Order of the Deacon

¶ 326. *The Ministry of a Deacon*—1. From among the baptized, deacons are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop. Deacons give leadership in the Church's life: in teaching and proclaiming the Word; in contributing to worship, and in assisting the elders in administering the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, or in presiding at the celebration of the sacraments when contextually appropriate and duly authorized; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in embodying the church's mission to the world; and in leading congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. For the sake of extending the mission and ministry of the church and offering the means of grace to the world, the resident bishop of the annual conference in which the deacon is appointed may authorize the deacon to preside at the celebration of the sacraments.

2. Deacons are accountable to the annual conference and the bishop for the fulfillment of their call to servant leadership.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 326 = 328

¶ 327. *Authority, and Responsibilities of Deacons in Full Connection* – 1. Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two.

2. The deacon in full connection shall have the right of voice and vote in the annual conference where membership is held; shall be eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions, or committees of the annual conference and hold office on the same; and shall be eligible for election as a clergy delegate to the General, central, or jurisdictional conference. The deacon in full connection shall attend all the sessions of the annual conference and share with elders in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy (¶ 330.1).

3. As members of the Order of Deacons, all deacons in full connection are in covenant with all other such deacons in the annual conference and shall participate in the life of their order.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 327.1-3 = 329.1-3

¶ 328. *Appointment of Deacons and Provisional Deacons to Various Ministries*—1. Deacons and provisional deacons may be appointed to serve in the following settings.

2. *Deacons and Provisional Deacons Appointed Beyond the Local Church.* – Deacons and provisional deacons may be appointed to settings not connected to either The United Methodist Church or ecumenical agencies when the appointment is approved by the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry as a ministry beyond the local church that is a witness and service of Christ’s love and justice in the world.

3. *Charge Conference Membership of Deacons and Provisional Deacons.*

a) Deacons and provisional deacons who are appointed to a local congregation, charge, or cooperative parish, shall be members of that charge conference.

b) Deacons and provisional deacons who are appointed to settings beyond the local church shall, after consultation with the pastor in charge, and the district superintendent designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference in which they shall hold membership and to which they shall submit an annual report.

4. Each central conference shall determine the process for deacons’ appointments, equitable compensation, pension and health benefits, and the procedures when a deacon is not appointed.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 328.001<

GBOD ¶ 328.1 = 331.1; 328.2=331.4; 328.3=331.9; 328.4 (new)

Section VII. The Order of the Elder

¶ 329. *Elders in Full Connection*—Elders in full connection with an annual conference by virtue of their election and ordination are bound in special covenant with all the ordained elders of the annual conference. In the keeping of this covenant they perform the ministerial duties and maintain the ministerial standards established by those in the covenant. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve, after consultation, as the appointive authority may determine.¹⁸

>VII: 329.001<

GBOD ¶ 329 = 333.1

¹⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 492.

¶ 330. *Ministry, Authority, and Responsibilities of an Elder in Full Connection*—1. An elder in full connection is authorized to give spiritual and temporal servant leadership in the Church in the following manner:

2. Elders in full connection shall have the right to vote on all matters in the annual conference except in the election of lay delegates to the general and central or jurisdictional conferences and shall share with deacons in full connection responsibility for all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. This responsibility shall not be limited by the recommendation or lack of recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry, notwithstanding provisions which grant to the Board of Ordained Ministry the right of recommendation.¹⁹ They shall be eligible to hold office in the annual conference and to be elected delegates to the general and central or jurisdictional conferences under the provision of the Constitution (¶ 35). Every effective elder in full connection who is in good standing shall be continued under appointment by the bishop.²⁰

3. There are professional responsibilities (¶334) that elders are expected to fulfill and that represent a fundamental part of their accountability and a primary basis of their continued eligibility for annual appointment.²¹

Each central conference shall establish regulations on the evaluation process for fulfilling these professional responsibilities.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 330.001<

4. When an elder's effectiveness is in question, the bishop shall complete the procedures in place (¶ 349). Each central conference may establish its provisions. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

GBOD ¶ 330.1-4 = 334.Intro+1-3

¹⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 690.

²⁰ See Judicial Council Decisions 462, 492, 534, 555.

²¹ See Judicial Council Decision 492.

¶ 331. *General Provisions for Appointments of Elders, Provisional Elders, Associate Members, and Licensed Ministers*—1. All elders in full connection who are in good standing in an annual conference shall be continued under appointment by the bishop unless they are granted a leave, retirement, or have failed to meet the requirements for continued eligibility.²² (¶ 330).>VII: 331.001<

2. In addition to ordained elders, persons who have been granted a license for pastoral ministry may be appointed to local churches as pastors in charge.²³ All clergy members and licensed local pastors to be appointed shall assume a lifestyle consistent with Christian teaching as set forth in the Social Principles.

3. Elders in effective relationship, associate members, provisional elders, and persons licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed to ministry settings that extend the ministry of The United Methodist Church and the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world beyond the local church. Persons in these appointments remain within the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. Institutions, agencies, or clergy desiring such appointment shall consult with the clergy person's bishop and/or district superintendent prior to any interviews relative to such an appointment. >VII: 331.002<

GBOD ¶ 331.1-3 = 337.1-3

GBOD ¶ 331.3 see also 343.1 (+references in 326 Intro, 331.4) and 343.2+3+344.1(d)

²² See Judicial Council Decisions 380, 462, 492, 524, 702, 985, 1226.

²³ See Judicial Council Decision 1226

¶ 332. *The Itinerant System*—1. The itinerant system is the accepted method of The United Methodist Church by which ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor.²⁴ All ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members shall accept and abide by these appointments.²⁵ Bishops and cabinets shall commit to and support open itineracy and the protection of the prophetic pulpit and diversity. The nature of the appointment process is specified in ¶ 406. >VII: 332.001<

2. When an elder, provisional elder, or associate member is appointed to full-time service, that person's entire vocational time, as defined by the district superintendent in consultation with the pastor and the committee on pastor-parish relations, is devoted to the work of ministry in the field of labor to which one is appointed by the bishop. >VII: 332.002<

3. At the initiative of the bishop and cabinet, or when an elder, provisional elder, or associate member requests, or declares in writing that itineracy is limited, he or she may be appointed to a less than full-time appointment. >VII: <332.003

4. Elders and associate members in appointments extending the ministry of the local United Methodist church are full participants in the itinerant system. Therefore, a conference member in an appointment beyond the local United Methodist church must be willing upon consultation to receive an appointment in a pastoral charge.

GBOD ¶ 332.1 = 338.Intro; 332.2-3=338.1-2; 332.4=344 Intro

²⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 713.

²⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 492.

¶ 333. *Definition of a Pastor*—A pastor is an elder, associate member, provisional elder, or local pastor approved by vote of the clergy session of the annual conference and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a local church or extension ministry. >VII: 333.001<
GBOD ¶ 333 = 339

¶ 334. *Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors*— 1. The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops. Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment.

2. The responsibilities and duties of elders and licensed pastors are:

a) *Word and ecclesial acts:*

(1) To preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness.

(a) To ensure faithful transmission of the Christian faith.

(b) To lead people in discipleship and evangelistic outreach that others might come to know Christ and to follow him.

(2) To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles.

(3) To perform the ecclesial acts of marriage and burial.

(a) To perform the marriage ceremony after due counsel with the parties involved and in accordance with the laws of the state and the rules of The United Methodist Church. The decision to perform the ceremony shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor.

(b) To conduct funeral and memorial services and provide care and grief counseling.

(4) To visit in the homes of the church and the community, especially among the sick, aged, imprisoned, and others in need.

(5) To maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

b) *Sacrament:*

(1) To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ's ordinance.

(a) To prepare the parents and sponsors before baptizing infants or children, and instruct them concerning the significance of baptism and their responsibilities for the Christian training of the baptized child.

(b) To encourage reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant and renewal of baptismal vows at different stages of life.

(c) To encourage people baptized in infancy or early childhood to make their profession of faith, after instruction, so that they might become professing members of the church.

(d) To explain the meaning of the Lord's Supper and to encourage regular participation as a means of grace to grow in faith and holiness.

(e) To select and train deacons and lay members to serve the consecrated communion elements.

(2) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace.

c) *Order:*

(1) To be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for.

(a) To give pastoral support, guidance, and training to the lay leadership, equipping them to fulfill the ministry to which they are called.

(b) To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.

(c) To be responsible for organizational faithfulness, goal setting, planning and evaluation.

(d) To search out and counsel men and women for the ministry of deacons, elders, local pastors and other church related ministries.

(2) To administer the temporal affairs of the church in their appointment, the annual conference, and the general church.

(a) To administer the provisions of the *Discipline*.

(b) To give an account of their pastoral ministries to the charge and annual conference. Central conferences may establish provisions for this. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 334.001<

(c) To provide leadership for the funding ministry of the congregation. To ensure membership care including compliance with charitable giving documentation requirements and to provide appropriate pastoral care, the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.

(d) To model and promote faithful financial stewardship and to encourage giving as a spiritual discipline by teaching the biblical principles of giving.

(e) To lead the congregation in the fulfillment of its mission through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.

(f) To care for all church records and local church financial obligations, and certify the accuracy of all financial, membership, and any other reports submitted by the local church to the annual conference for use in apportioning costs back to the church.

(3) To participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities.

(a) To seek out opportunities for cooperative ministries with other United Methodist pastors and churches.

(b) To be willing to assume supervisory responsibilities within the connection.

(4) To lead the congregation in racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

d) *Service*:

(1) To embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership.

(2) To give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world.

(3) To build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community, extending the ministry of Christ to the world.

(4) To participate in community, ecumenical and inter-religious concerns and to encourage the people to become so involved and to pray and labor for the unity of the Christian community.

GBOD ¶ 334.1-2 = 340.1-2

¶ 335. *Unauthorized Conduct*—1. Pastors shall first obtain the written consent of the district superintendent before engaging for an evangelist any person who is not a general evangelist in the connection, a clergy member of an annual conference, a local pastor, or a certified lay servant in good standing in The United Methodist Church.

2. No pastor shall discontinue services in a local church between sessions of the annual conference without the consent of the charge conference and the district superintendent.

3. No pastor shall arbitrarily organize a pastoral charge.

4. No pastor shall hold a religious service within the bounds of a pastoral charge other than the one to which appointed without the consent of the pastor of the charge, or the district superintendent. >VII: 335.001<

5. All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.²⁵

6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.²⁶

7. No pastor shall re-baptize. The practice of re-baptism does not conform with God's action in baptism and is not consistent with Wesleyan tradition and the historic teaching of the church. Therefore, the pastor should counsel any person seeking re-baptism to participate in a rite of re-affirmation of baptismal vows.

GBOD ¶ 335.1-7 = 341.1-7

²⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 936.

²⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 1115.

Section VIII. Clergy From Other Annual Conferences, Other Methodist and Christian Denominations

¶ 336. *Provisions for Clergy from Outside the Annual Conference*—1. Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences and Christian denominations may receive an appointment in the annual conference in the following manner:

2. *Ordained Clergy or Provisional Members from Other Annual Conferences and Other Methodist Denominations*—With approval and consent of the bishops or other judicatory authorities involved, ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences or other Methodist churches may receive appointments while retaining their home conference membership or denominational affiliation. >VII: 336.001<

3. *Elders or Ordained Clergy from Other Denominations*—On recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session of the annual conference may approve annually clergy in good standing from other Christian denominations to receive appointments within the bounds of the annual conference while retaining their denominational affiliation, provided they meet all requirements for certified candidates, except church membership, present suitable credentials, have given evidence of their agreement with and willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity, and have been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

When the Board of Ordained Ministry certifies that their credentials are at least equal to those of United Methodist elders, the clergy session of the annual conference may grant them the same rights in the annual conference as provisional members. While under appointment, they are subject to the provisions of the *Discipline*, but are not part of the itinerant system. >VII: 336.002<

GBOD ¶ 336.1-3 = 346.Intro+1-2

¶ 337. *Transfers*—1. *From Other Annual Conferences*—Ordained clergy or provisional members from other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church may be received by transfer into provisional or full membership with the consent of the bishops involved. Recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approval of the clergy session shall take place prior to the transfer.

Transfers are conditioned on the passing of their character by the conference to which they are amenable. Members on transfer shall not vote twice on the same constitutional amendment, nor be counted twice, nor vote twice for delegates to the same general, jurisdictional, or central conferences.

Whenever clergy members are transferred to another annual conference, either in connection with a transfer of the pastoral charge to which they are appointed or by reason of the dissolution or merger of

the annual conference, they shall have the same rights and obligations as the other members of the conference to which they are transferred.

2. *From Other Methodist Denominations*— Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Methodist churches may be received by transfer into provisional or full conference membership or as local pastors, with the consent of the bishops or other authorities involved, without going through the process required for ministers from other denominations. Prior consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be held in order to determine that the clergy meets the educational requirements and standards for conference membership established by the *Discipline* and the annual conference.

3. *From Other Denominations*—a) On recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy session of the annual conference may recognize the orders of ordained clergy from other denominations and receive them as provisional members or local pastors. They shall present their credentials for examination by the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry. They shall give assurance of their Christian faith and experience, and their willingness to support and maintain United Methodist doctrine, discipline, and polity. They shall meet the educational requirements and standards for conference membership.

b) Ordained elders or ordained clergy from other Christian denominations shall serve as provisional members for at least two years and complete all the requirements, including courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, before being admitted into full conference membership.

c) Following the provisional member's election to full conference membership as a deacon or elder, the bishop and secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference.

4. The Board of Ordained Ministry of an annual conference is required to ascertain from an ordained clergy person seeking admission into its membership on credentials from another denomination whether or not membership in the effective relation was previously held in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors, and if so, when and under what circumstances the ordained clergy's connection with such annual conference was severed.

5. Ordained clergy seeking admission into an annual conference on credentials from another denomination who have previously withdrawn from membership in the effective relation in an annual conference of The United Methodist Church or one of its legal predecessors shall not be admitted or readmitted without the consent of the annual conference from which they withdrew or its legal successor, such consent to be granted upon recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry.

6. After the orders of an ordained minister of another church shall have been duly recognized, and the minister has been approved for full membership, the certificates of ordination by said church shall be returned to the minister with the following inscription written plainly on the back:

These orders are recognized by the _____ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, this _____ day of _____, _____ [year].

_____, *President*

_____, *Secretary*

GBOD ¶ 337.1 = 347.1+604.6+7; 337.2=347.2a; 337.3-6=347.3-6

Section IX. Mentoring, Evaluation, Continuing Education, and Sabbatical Leave

¶ 338. *Mentors*— 1. Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. An effective mentor has a mature faith, models effective ministry, and possesses the necessary skill to help individuals discern their call in ministry. Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry, local pastors and provisional members of an annual conference. Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.

2. Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, selected, trained and held accountable by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Each central conference shall establish a mentoring program for candidates and provisional members, and for local pastors who have not completed educational requirements. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 338.001<

GBOD ¶ 338.1+2 = 348.2+ 1Intro

¶ 339. *Evaluation*—1. Evaluation is a continuous process for formation in servant ministry and servant leadership that must take place in a spirit of understanding and acceptance. Evaluation serves as a process for clergy to assess their effectiveness in ministry and to discern God’s call to continue in ordained ministry.

2. The district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor-parish relations committee, will evaluate the clergy’s effectiveness for ministry, using criteria, processes, and training developed by the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 339.001<

GBOD ¶ 339.1-2 = 349Intro+1

¶ 340. *Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth*—Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ.

>VII: 340.001<

GBOD ¶ 340.1-5 = 350-3+5-6

¶ 341. *Sabbatical Leave*—A sabbatical leave should be allowed for a program of study or travel approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry. Clergy members in full connection, or in associate membership, who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years or in a less than full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, from the time of their reception into full or associate membership, may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year.²⁷ The appointment to sabbatical leave is to be made by the bishop holding the conference, upon the vote of the annual conference after recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

>VII: 341.001<

GBOD ¶ 341 = 351

²⁷ See Judicial Council Decision 473.

Section X. Changes of Conference Relationship

¶ 342. *General Provisions for Changes in Conference Relationship*— 1. When a change in conference relationship is deemed necessary or desirable by a clergy in full connection, or a provisional or associate member, whether for a short or long term, the person requesting the change shall make written request to the Board of Ordained Ministry stating the reasons for the requested change of relationship.

>VII: 342.001<

2. *Conference Relationship in Voluntary Leaves and Retirement* - In voluntary leaves of absence, maternity or paternity leaves, medical leaves, and any form of retirement, clergy members remain members of the annual conference, and eligible for membership on annual conference units, and eligible to serve as delegates to General or central or jurisdictional conferences.²⁸ With regard to their respective charge conference, the following regulations shall be followed:

a) *Voluntary Leaves of Absence* – With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference. Their ministerial activities

shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. With the permission of the bishop and under the supervision of the respective district superintendent, they may exercise ministerial activities outside of their charge.²⁹

b) *Retirement* – All retired clergy members in full or associate membership who are not appointed as pastors of a charge, after consultation with the pastor in charge and the district superintendent, shall have a seat in the charge conference and all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold such membership except as set forth in the *Discipline*. They shall submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference.

If they reside outside the bounds of the annual conference, they shall forward their report to the charge conference where membership is held, signed by the pastor in charge of the affiliate charge conference where they reside. >VII: 342.002<

3. *Conference Relationship in Honorable Location* - In honorable location, clergy members shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference. With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, located clergy members shall designate the local church in which they shall hold membership. They shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference, and forward the report to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Failure to submit the report for two consecutive years may result in termination of orders upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session.

The ministerial activities of located clergy shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. With the permission of the bishop and under the supervision of the respective district superintendent, they may exercise ministerial activities outside of their charge. When approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry, a clergy on honorable location may be appointed *ad interim* by the bishop as a local pastor. >VII: 342.003<

4. *Conference Relationship in Involuntary Leave* - In involuntary leaves of absence, clergy members remain members of the annual conference, but shall not be members on annual conference units, nor elect delegates or be eligible as delegates to General or central or jurisdictional conferences.

With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, clergy members shall designate a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference. Their ministerial activities shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge.

5. *Conference Relationship in Administrative Location* - In administrative location, clergy members shall not continue to hold membership in the annual conference. With the written consent of the pastor in charge and the staff-parish relations committee, and the approval of the district superintendent, located clergy members shall designate the local church in which they shall hold membership. They shall relate and submit an annual report of their ministerial activities to the charge conference, and forward the report to the Board of Ordained Ministry. Failure to submit the report for two consecutive years may result in termination of orders upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry and vote of the clergy session.

The ministerial activities of located clergy shall be limited to that charge conference, under the supervision of its pastor in charge. >VII: 342.004<

GBOD ¶ 342.1 = 352; 342.2=353.7+8+357.5; 342.3=358.2; 342.4=354.8+7; 342.5=359.3

²⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 473.

²⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 581.

¶ 343. *Voluntary Leave of Absence*—

1. Members in full connection, or provisional or associate members of the annual conference who for sufficient reason choose to temporarily take leave from their ministerial appointment may

request in writing with a copy to the bishop and their district superintendent a voluntary leave through the Board of Ordained Ministry. The leave is granted or renewed annually by vote of the clergy session of the annual conference upon recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry.

2. Each central conference shall determine a procedure for granting voluntary leaves of absence. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 343.001<
GBOD ¶ 343.1 = 353.1; 344.2=new

¶ 344. *Involuntary Leave of Absence*— 1. The bishop and the district superintendents may request an involuntary leave of absence without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member. They shall give to the clergy member and the Board of Ordained Ministry in writing specific reasons for the request. The request shall be referred to the Board of Ordained Ministry. The fair process for administrative hearings as set forth in ¶ 352.2 shall be followed in any involuntary leave of absence procedure.

2. Involuntary leave of absence shall be approved by two-thirds vote of the clergy session of the annual conference,³⁰ renewable annually for a maximum of three years.

3. Between sessions of the annual conference, the bishop and cabinet may request that an involuntary leave of absence be granted or terminated by the Board of Ordained Ministry. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of the annual conference at its next session.

4. Each central conference shall determine a procedure for granting voluntary leaves of absence. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 344.001<
GBOD ¶ 344.1 = 354.1; 344.2-3=354.4-5; 344.3=new

³⁰ See Judicial Council Decision 782.

¶ 345. *Maternity or Paternity Leave*—Maternity or paternity leave, will be available and shall be granted by the bishop and the cabinet, and the Board of Ordained Ministry to any local pastor, provisional member, associate member, or clergy member in full connection who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption, subject to keeping minimum standards of civil law. >VII: 345.001<

GBOD ¶ 345 = 355.Intro

¶ 346. *Medical Leave Due to Medical and Disabling Conditions that Prevent Performance of Ministerial Duties*—1. When clergy who are members of an annual conference (¶ 308) are unable to perform their ministerial duties because of medical and disabling conditions, upon recommendations of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the appropriate board of pensions, and by a majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference who are present and voting, they may be granted annual medical leave without losing their relationship to the annual conference; provided, however, that such leave may be granted or renewed upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case by the appropriate committee, or in its absence by the Board of Ordained Ministry. >VII: 346.001<

2. When clergy who are members of an annual conference are unable to perform their ministerial duties between sessions of the annual conference on account of medical conditions, with the approval of a majority of the district superintendents, after consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry a medical leave may be granted by the bishop for the remainder of the conference year; provided, however, that such leave may be granted upon reasonable and appropriate investigation of the case. >VII: 346.002<

3. The policies for termination of medical leave shall follow procedures in compliance with local and national civil laws. >VII: 346.003<

4. Any person eligible to receive an appointment from a bishop and able to perform ministerial duties may not be placed on involuntary medical leave solely because of a medical condition. All reasonable accommodations should be made to enable qualified clergy with disabilities to serve in ministry settings compatible with their gifts and graces.

GBOD ¶ 346.1-2 = 356.1-2; 346.3=356.3+new; 346.4=356.5

¶ 347. *Honorable Location*—An annual conference may grant clergy members in full or associate membership certificates of honorable location at their own request, provided that the Board of Ordained Ministry shall have first examined their character and found them in good standing, and provided that the clergy session shall also pass on their character after the request is made, and provided further, that this relation shall be granted only to one who intends to discontinue service in the itinerant ministry. Upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, an annual conference may offer transition assistance.

>VII: 347.001<

GBOD ¶347 = 358.1

¶ 348. *Administrative Location*—1. When the effectiveness of a clergy in associate or full membership is in question, the bishop shall complete the following procedure:

- a) Identify the concerns on failed professional responsibilities or vocational ineffectiveness.
- b) Hold supervisory conversations with the clergyperson that identifies the concerns and designs collaboratively with the clergyperson a corrective plan of action.
- c) Evaluate whether the plan of action has produced fruit that gives a realistic expectation of future effectiveness.

2. If the process defined above (§1) has been completed and has failed to produce sufficient improvement, the bishop and the district superintendents may request that an associate or full member be placed on administrative location without the consent of the clergy member. They shall provide to the clergy member and the Board of Ordained Ministry, in writing, specific reasons for the request. The conference relations committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall conduct a fair process hearing as set forth in ¶ 352.2 in any administrative location procedure. The committee shall report the result of the hearing to the full Board of Ordained Ministry for its action. Any recommendation to administrative location shall be presented from the Board of Ordained Ministry at the next following meeting of the clergy session for final action. Between sessions of the annual conference, an associate or full member may be placed on administrative location by the Board of Ordained Ministry. This interim action shall be subject to the approval of the clergy session of the annual conference at its next session.³¹

>VII: 348.001<

GBOD ¶348.1-2 = 359.1-2

³¹ See Judicial Council Decision 695.

¶ 349. *Retirement*—1. Retired clergy members are those who have been placed in the retired relation either at their own request or by action of the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry.³² Requests for retirement shall be stated to the bishop, cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry at least one hundred twenty days prior to the date on which retirement is to be effective unless waived by the bishop and cabinet. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall provide guidance and counsel to the retiring member and family as they begin a new relationship in the local church.³³ >VII: 349.001<

2.. *Mandatory Retirement*—Every clergy member of an annual conference who will have attained age seventy-two on or before the end of the month in which the conference session is concluded shall automatically be retired.³⁴ Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.>VII: 349.002<

3. *Voluntary Retirement— With Twenty Years of Service*—Any clergy members of the annual conference who have completed twenty years or more of service under appointment as ordained clergy or as local pastors may request the annual conference to place them in the retired relation.³⁵ Each annual conference within central conferences may establish further provisions for when and how voluntary retirement can take place. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 349.003<

4. *Involuntary Retirement*—By a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, the clergy session of the annual conference may place any clergy members in the retired relation with or without their consent and irrespective of their age if such relation is recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the cabinet.³⁶ The procedures for fair process shall be followed in any involuntary retirement procedure. Written notice of the intended action shall be given to such member by the Board of Ordained Ministry at least 180 days prior to annual conference. >VII: 349.004<

5. *Appointment of Retired Clergy*—All retired clergy member in full or associate membership shall be eligible to receive an appointment when requested by the bishop and cabinet.³⁷ >VII: 349.005<

6. *Return to Effective Relationship*—A clergy member in full or associate membership who has retired under the provisions of § 2 may at his or her own request be made an effective member upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the bishop and cabinet, and by majority vote of the clergy session of the annual conference and thereby be eligible for appointment so long as he or she remains in the effective relation or until § 1 applies. Each clergy member requesting return to effective relationship after voluntary retirement must meet the following conditions: (1) presentation of their certificate of retirement; (2) a satisfactory certificate of good health. >VII: 349.006<

GBOD ¶349.1-2 = 357Intro+1; 349.3=357.2a; 349.4=357.3; 349.5-6=357.6-7

³² See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 88, 531.

³³ See Judicial Council Decision 995.

³⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 7, 165, 413, 578.

³⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 717.

³⁶ See Judicial Council Decisions 522, 769.

³⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 87, 531, 558.

¶ 350. *Withdrawal*—1. *Withdrawal to Unite with Another Denomination*.³⁸—When ordained members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination, their certification of conference membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.

2. *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office*—Ordained members of an annual conference in good standing who desire to leave their ministerial office and withdraw from the conference may be allowed to do so by the annual conference at its session. The clergy's certifications of ordination and conference membership, and their written request to withdraw, shall be given to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and his or her membership may be transferred to a church which he or she designates, after consultation with the pastor, as the local church in which he or she will hold membership.³⁹

3. *Withdrawal Under Complaints or Charges*—When clergy members are named as respondents to a complaint under ¶ 353 and desire to withdraw from the membership of the annual conference, it may permit them to withdraw under the provisions of ¶ 2703.2 The clergy member's certifications of ordination and conference membership shall be surrendered to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and their membership may be transferred to a local church that they designate, after consultation with the pastor.⁴⁰ Withdrawn under complaint or withdrawn under charges shall be written on the face of the credentials.

4. *Withdrawal Between Conferences*—In the event that withdrawal by surrender of the ministerial office, to unite with another denomination, or under complaints or charges, should occur in the interval between sessions of an annual conference, the clergy member's credentials, under the provisions of §1 and §3, shall be surrendered to the bishop or district superintendent along with a letter of withdrawal from the ordained ministry, for deposit with the secretary of the conference. This action shall be reported by the Board of Ordained Ministry to the annual conference at its next session.⁴¹ The effective date of withdrawal shall be the date of the letter of withdrawal.⁴²

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶350.1-4 = 360.1-4

³⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 696.

³⁹ See Judicial Council Decisions 552, 695, 1055.

⁴⁰ See Judicial Council Decision 691.

⁴¹ See Judicial Council Decision 552.

⁴² See Judicial Council Decision 691.

¶ **351. *Readmission to Provisional Membership*** – Each central conference shall establish procedures for readmission to conference relationship for each of the following categories: termination of provisional membership, honorable or administrative location, leaving the ministerial office, termination by action of the annual conference, and involuntary retirement. All readmission procedures shall require readmission in the conference in which clergy membership was previously held or, in the case of readmission for transfer to a new conference, consultation with the bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry for each conference involved in the readmission procedure. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 351.001-351.005<

GBOD ¶ 351 = 364

Section XI. Administrative Fair Process and Complaint Procedure

¶ **352. *Involuntary Status Change and Fair Process***—1. When there is a request for an involuntary status change, the bishop and cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry shall take action in a timely manner. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline* in regards to the conference relations committee. >VII: 352.001<

2. *Fair Process*—As a part of the holy covenant that exists within the membership and organization of The United Methodist Church, each central conference shall develop a method for the disposition of requests for involuntary status changes, excluding complaints, for the protection of the rights of individuals and for the protection of the Church. These procedures shall be written and applied consistently to all requests for involuntary status change, and shall include but not be limited to the following:

a) In any administrative proceeding the bishop or the bishop's designee and the respondent (the person against whom involuntary action [excluding complaints] is directed) shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken.

b) Notice of any hearing shall advise the respondent 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 days prior to the hearing.

c) The respondent shall have a right to be accompanied to any hearing by a clergyperson who is a member in full connection of the respondent's annual conference, in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary provisions. The clergyperson accompanying the respondent shall have the right to voice.⁴³

d) In any administrative hearing, under no circumstances shall one party, in the absence of the other party, discuss substantive issues with members of the pending hearing body. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer of the hearing body.

e) The respondent shall have access, at least seven days prior to the hearing, to all records relied upon in the determination of the outcome of the administrative process.⁴⁴

f) In the event that a clergyperson fails to appear for supervisory interviews, refuses mail, refuses to communicate personally with the bishop or district superintendent, or otherwise fails to respond to supervisory requests or requests from official administrative 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. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the additional procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 352.002<

3. *Immunity from Prosecution*—In order to preserve the integrity of the Church’s administrative process and ensure full participation in it at all times, the bishop, cabinet, Board of Ordained Ministry, witnesses, advocates, administrative review committee, clergy in full connection voting in executive session, and all others who participate in the Church’s administrative process shall have immunity from prosecution of complaints brought against them related to their role in a particular administrative 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.

GBOD ¶ 352.1 = 361.2; 352.2a-d=362.2Intro+a+c+d+f; 352.3=362.3

⁴³ See Judicial Council Decisions 921, 972.

⁴⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 974.

¶ 353. *Complaint Procedures*— 1. *Review* - Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is a sacred trust. The qualifications and duties of local pastors, associate members, provisional members, and full members are set forth in the *Discipline*, and we believe they flow from the gospel as taught by Jesus the Christ and proclaimed by his apostles. 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.

A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution may be pursued. 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 complaint is a written and signed statement claiming misconduct as defined in ¶ 2702 When a complaint is received by the bishop, both the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is made will be informed in writing of the process to be followed at that stage. When and if the stage changes, those persons will continue to be informed in writing of the new process in a timely fashion. >VII: 353.001<

2. *Supervision*—In the course of the ordinary fulfillment of the superintending role, the bishop or district superintendent may receive or initiate complaints about the performance or character of a clergyperson. The person filing the complaint and the clergyperson shall be informed by the district superintendent or bishop of the process for filing the complaint and its purpose.

3. *Supervisory Response*—The supervisory response of the bishop shall begin upon receipt of a formal complaint. The response is pastoral and administrative and shall be directed toward a just resolution among all parties. It is not part of any judicial process. Each central conference shall develop a method for the disposition of judicial complaints. These procedures shall be written and applied consistently to all judicial complaints. The person against whom the complaint was made may choose another person to accompany him or her with the right to voice; the person making the complaint shall have the right to choose a person to accompany him or her with the right to voice.

The supervisory response shall be carried out by the bishop or the bishop's designee in a timely manner, with attention to communication to all parties regarding the complaint and the process. When the supervisory response is initiated, the bishop shall notify the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry that a complaint has been filed, of the clergyperson named, of the general nature of the complaint, and, when concluded, of the disposition of the complaint.

Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the additional procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.
>VII: 353.002<

4. *Suspension*—When deemed appropriate, to protect the well-being of the person making the complaint, the congregation, annual conference, other context for ministry, and/or clergy, the bishop, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, may suspend the person from all clergy responsibilities, but not from an appointment, for a period not to exceed ninety days. With the agreement of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the bishop may extend the suspension for only one additional period of thirty days.⁴⁵ >VII: 352.003<

GBOD ¶ 353.1 = 362.1Intro; 353.2=362.1a; 353.3=362.1b; 353.4=362.1d

⁴⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 776.

Chapter Three

The Superintendency

Section I. The Nature of Superintendency

¶ 401. *Nature* – 1. From apostolic times, persons have been entrusted with particular tasks of oversight within the body of Christ. In The United Methodist Church, this oversight, or superintendency, resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendent for the purpose of equipping the Church in its disciple-making ministry for the transformation of the world. Bishops possess distinct and collegial responsibilities, working together to order the life of the Church, to enable the gathered Church to worship and evangelize faithfully, and to facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for extending the service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. The office of bishop is a particular ministry, not a separate order. Bishops are elected from the group of elders in full connection who are ordained to the ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. They participate in the servant ministry of Christ, in sharing a royal priesthood that has apostolic roots (1 Peter 2:9; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 401.1 = 401; 401.2=402

Section II. The Council of Bishops and the Role of a Bishop

¶ 402. *The Council of Bishops*. – 1. By virtue of their election and consecration, bishops are members of the Council of Bishops and are bound in special covenant with all other bishops. In keeping with this covenant, bishops fulfill their servant leadership and express their mutual accountability. The Council of Bishops is a faith community of mutual trust and concern responsible for the faith development and continuing wellbeing of its members.

2. The Council of Bishops is thus the collegial expression of episcopal leadership in the Church and through the Church into the world. The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships.

3. In order to exercise meaningful leadership, the Council of Bishops is to meet at stated intervals. The Council of Bishops is charged with the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the whole Church, to be executed in regularized consultation and cooperation with other councils and service agencies of the Church.

4. The Council of Bishops may assign one of its members to visit another episcopal area or Methodist-related church. When so assigned, the bishop shall be recognized as the accredited representative of the Council of Bishops, and when requested by the resident bishop or president in that area or Church, may exercise therein the functions of episcopacy.

5. The Council of Bishops may provide, if and when necessary, for episcopal visitation of mission fields not included in central or provisional central conferences.

6. Retired bishops may participate in the Council of Bishops and its committees, but without vote. Further provisions shall be according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R 412).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 402.1-4 = 422.1-4; 402.5=567; 402.6=409

¶ 403. *Role of a Bishop*. – 1. Bishops undertake a ministry of servant leadership, general oversight and supervision. They are authorized to guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and *Discipline* of the Church.

2. Additionally, the role of a bishop includes the following:

a) To faithfully practice, model and lead the spiritual disciplines of our faith and to call and inspire the clergy and laity within the Church to practice the Christian disciplines in their individual lives through the Wesleyan tradition of personal holiness. The bishop is to lead in public worship, in the celebration of the sacraments and in the commendation of our faith.

b) To continue to learn and to teach how to make disciples and lead faithful and fruitful congregations using scripture, spiritual disciplines, our Wesleyan heritage, and the history and doctrines of the Church.

c) To work in partnership with the Council of Bishops, the cabinet and lay and clergy leadership of the annual conference, and the professing members of the church, to urge the whole church to move toward the vision of sharing Christ with the world in fulfillment of our mission, faithful discipleship and “an even better way” of being Christ’s people in the world.

d) To be a prophetic voice for justice in a suffering and conflicted world through the Wesleyan tradition of social holiness, encouraging and modeling the mission of witness and service in the world through proclamation of the gospel and alleviation of human suffering.

e) To have a passion for the unity of the church in being the shepherd of the whole flock and thereby providing leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation and unity within the Church – The United Methodist Church and the church universal.

f) To uphold the *Discipline* and order of the Church by consecrating, ordaining, commissioning, supervising and appointing persons in ministry to the Church and the world. As the presiding officer of the annual conference, the resident bishop provides order and leads in new opportunities for ministry within the annual conference. The bishop shares with other bishops the oversight of the whole church through the Council of Bishops and is held accountable through the Council of Bishops in collaboration with committees on episcopacy.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 403Intro = 403.1; 403.a-f=403.1a-1f

Section III. The Responsibilities of a Bishop

¶ 404. *Leadership Responsibilities.* – 1. To lead and oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of The United Methodist Church in a manner that acknowledges the ways and the insights of the world critically and with understanding, while remaining cognizant of and faithful to the mandate of the Church.

2. To guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically.

3. To teach and uphold the theological traditions of The United Methodist Church.

4. To travel through the connection at large as the Council of Bishops to implement strategy for the concerns of the Church.

5. To promote and support the evangelistic witness of the whole Church.

6. To provide liaison and leadership in the quest for Christian unity in ministry, mission, and structure and in the search for strengthened relationships with other faith communities.

7. To strengthen the local church, giving spiritual leadership to both laity and clergy; and to build relationships with people of local congregations of the area.

8. To convene the Order of Deacons and the Order of Elders and work with the elected chairperson of each order.

9. To promote, support, and model generous Christian giving, with special attention to teaching the biblical principles of giving.

10. To discharge such other duties as the *Discipline* may direct.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 404.1 = 414.1+401; 404.2=414.3; 404.3=414.5; 404.4=414.4; 404.5=414.8; 404.6=414.6; 404.7=414.2; 404.8=414.10; 404.9=414.11; 404.10=414.9

¶ 405. *Presidential Responsibilities*. – 1. To preside in the General, jurisdictional, central, and annual conferences.¹

2. To provide general oversight for the fiscal and program operations of the annual conference(s). This may include special inquiry into the work of agencies to ensure that the annual conference and general church policies and procedures are followed.

3. To ensure fair process for clergy and laity as set forth in ¶ 2701 in all involuntary administrative and judicial proceedings through monitoring the performance of annual conference officials, boards, and committees charged with implementing such procedures.²

4. To form the districts after consultation with the district superintendents and after the number of the same has been determined by vote of the annual conference.³

>VII: 405.001<

5. To consecrate bishops, to ordain elders and deacons, to commission deaconesses, home missionaries and missionaries. As these services are acts of the whole Church, the text and rubrics approved by General Conference shall be used. (see ¶ 512.6 for central conferences).

GBOD ¶ 405.1-4 = 415.1-4; 405.5=415.6

¹ See Judicial Council Decision 395.

² See Judicial Council Decision 524.

³ See Judicial Council Decision 422.

¶ 406. *Appointment-making Responsibilities*. – 1. Through appointment-making, the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible. The bishop is empowered to make and fix all appointments of clergy in the episcopal area.

The United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of an inclusive church (¶ 4) with the formation of open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic or tribal origin, gender, being differently abled, marital status, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement.

Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy.⁴

2. A change in appointment of pastors may be initiated by a pastor, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a district superintendent, or a bishop.

3. A change in appointment of deacons may be initiated by a deacon, an agency seeking their service, a district superintendent, or a bishop. The appointment shall reflect the particular nature of the ministry of a deacon.

4. Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-parish relations committees, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age. The concept of itineracy is important, and sensitive attention should be given in appointing clergy with physical challenges to

responsibilities and duties that meet their gifts and graces. Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments.

5. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments to a congregation in which the majority of its constituency is different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background. They are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity. When such appointments are made, cabinets and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergy persons so appointed and for their congregations.

6. As part of the appointment-making process, the bishop is responsible for:

a) Dividing or uniting a circuit(s), station(s), or mission(s) as judged necessary for missional strategy and then to make appropriate appointments.

b) Appointing the district superintendents annually.

c) Fixing the charge conference membership of all ordained clergy appointed to ministries other than the local church in keeping with ¶ 331.3.

d) Fixing the appointments of deaconesses, home missionaries, and missionaries.

e) Transferring, upon the request of the receiving bishop, clergy member(s) of one annual conference to another, provided said member(s) agrees to said transfer.⁵>VII: 406.001<

7. The process of consultation shall be mandatory in every annual conference.⁶ Consultation is the process whereby the bishop and /or district superintendent confer with the pastor and committee on pastor-parish relations, taking into consideration a performance evaluation, needs of the appointment under consideration, and mission of the Church. The role of the committee on pastor-parish relations is advisory. [JC Decisions 492,1174?] Each central conference shall establish its minimum standards for the consultation process. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 406.002<

GBOD ¶ 406.1 = 425.1+3; 406.2=428.1; 406.3=430; 406.4=425.1+4

406.5=425.4; 406.6a=416.2; 406.6b=415.5; 406.6c=416.4; 406.6d=416.3; 406.6e=416.5;

406.7=426.1+Intro

⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 492.

⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 114, 254, 554.

⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 701

Section IV. Election, Assignment, and Termination of Bishops

¶ 407. *Provisions for Episcopal Areas.* – The number of bishops shall be determined by the General Conference on recommendation of the proper committees, the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters or jurisdictional conferences, according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R 407).⁷

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 407 = 404

⁷ See Judicial Council Decision 1312.

GC-R ¶ 407. Provisions for Episcopal Areas— 1. In Central Conferences -In central conferences, the number of bishops shall be determined on the basis of missional potential, as approved by the General Conference on recommendation of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. Before recommending changes in the number of episcopal areas, the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters shall:

a) consider these criteria in the following order of priority:

- (1) the number of charge conferences and the number of active clergy in episcopal areas;
- (2) the geographic size of episcopal areas, measured by the square miles / square km, and the numbers of time zones and nations;
- (3) the structure of episcopal areas, measured by the number of annual conferences, and the overall church membership in all annual, provisional annual, and missions in episcopal areas.

b) conduct a further analysis of the context and missional potential of changes in episcopal areas.

2. *In Jurisdictions* -In the jurisdictions, the number of bishops shall be determined on the following basis:

a) Each jurisdiction having 300,000 church members or fewer shall be entitled to five bishops and each jurisdiction having more than 300,000 church members shall be entitled to one additional bishop for each additional 300,000 church members or major fraction thereof.

b) If the number of church members in a jurisdiction shall have decreased by at least ten percent below the number of church members which had previously entitled the jurisdiction to its number of bishops, then the number of bishops to which it shall be entitled shall be determined on the basis of missional needs, as approved by the General Conference on the recommendation of the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy, provided however that said jurisdiction shall be entitled to no less than the number of bishops to which it would be entitled under subparagraph a) above. It shall be the responsibility of the affected jurisdiction, through its Committee on Episcopacy, to request consideration of its missional need for an exception, and in the absence of such a request, there shall be no obligation on the part of the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy to consider such an exception nor to make any report on such an exception to General Conference. In no case shall there be any constraint on General Conference's power to act in the absence of such a recommendation or to reject any recommendation that might be received.

c) If a jurisdiction, as a result of the provisions of this paragraph, shall have the number of bishops to which it had previously been entitled reduced, then the reduction in the number of bishops to which it is entitled shall be effective as of September 1 of the calendar year in which said reduction has been determined by the General Conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 407.1-2 = 404.1-2

¶ 408. *Election and Consecration of Bishops.* – 1. Each central conference – in cooperation with their committee on episcopacy shall fix a procedure for the election of their bishops according to their own context. It may fix the tenure and term of office. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

The following minimum standards shall be followed in central and jurisdictional conferences:

a) Balloting shall not be limited to nominees of annual conferences nor shall any delegate be bound to vote for any specific nominee.

b) Delegates, in electing bishops, shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of The United Methodist Church.

c) The conferences are authorized to fix the percentage of votes necessary to elect a bishop. It is recommended that at least 60 percent of those present and voting be necessary to elect. >VII: 408.001<

2. It is strongly urged that the consecration service also include representatives from other Christian communions.

3. *Expiration of Terms in Central Conferences* - In a central conference where term episcopacy is in practice, bishops whose term of office expires prior to the time of their retirement and who are not reelected by the central conference shall be returned to membership as traveling elders in the annual

conference (or its successor) of which they ceased to be a member when elected bishop. Outgoing bishops are entitled to participate as a bishop in the consecration of their successor.

The credentials of office as bishop shall be submitted to the secretary of the central conference, who shall make thereon the notation that the bishop has honorably completed the term of service for which elected and has ceased to be a bishop of The United Methodist Church.⁸

GBOD ¶ 408.1 = 405.1-2b; 408.2=405.2c; 408.3=411

⁸ See Judicial Council Decisions 61, 236, 370.

¶ 409. *Assignment Process* – 1. The central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy, after consultation with the College of Bishops, shall recommend the assignment of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the central or jurisdictional conference. >VII: 409.001<

2. Special assignments shall be done according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R 409).

GBOD ¶ 409 = 406

GC-R ¶ 409. *Assignment Process for Special Assignments* – The Council of Bishops may, with consent of the bishop and the concurrence of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy, assign one of its members for one year to some specific churchwide responsibility deemed of sufficient importance to the welfare of the total Church. In this event, a bishop shall be released from the presidential responsibilities within the episcopal area for that term. Another bishop or bishops, active or retired, and not necessarily from the same central or jurisdictional conference, shall be named by the Council of Bishops on recommendation of the College of Bishops of the jurisdiction involved to assume presidential responsibilities during the interim. In the event that more than one retired bishop is assigned to fulfill presidential responsibilities in one episcopal area, the Episcopal Fund shall be responsible only for the difference between the pensions paid the retired bishops and the remuneration of one active bishop. This assignment may be renewed for a second year by a two-thirds vote of the Council of Bishops and majority vote of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy, and the consent of the bishop and the College of Bishops involved. The bishop so assigned shall continue to receive regular salary and support.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 409 = 406.3

¶ 410. *Review and Evaluation of Bishops* – The central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy shall establish and implement processes that provide, at least once each quadrennium, for each active bishop, a full and formal evaluation which will include self-evaluation, assessment by episcopal peers, and comment by persons affected by his or her superintendency. >VII: 410.001<

GBOD ¶ 410 = ¶412

¶ 411. *Leaves* – 1. *Renewal Leave* – Every bishop in the active relationship shall take up to three months' leave from his or her normal episcopal responsibilities for purposes of reflection, study, and self-renewal during each quadrennium. The College of Bishops, in consultation with the respective central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy, shall coordinate details pertaining to such leaves.

2. *Generalities for Leaves Exceeding Three Months* – Leaves exceeding three months may be granted for a justifiable reason for not more than six months in consultation with the area committee on episcopacy and with the approval of the College of Bishops, the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy, and the executive committee of the Council of Bishops. During the period for

which the leave is granted, the bishop shall be released from all episcopal responsibilities. Another bishop chosen by the executive committee of the Council of Bishops shall preside in the episcopal area.

3. *Leave of Absence of Up To Six Months* – a) Salary and other benefits shall be continued through the Episcopal Fund.

b) Such leave may be granted including for medical reasons. If, due to impaired health, the bishop is still unable to perform full work after the six-month period is over, disability benefits through the benefit program provided to the bishop should be applied for.

4. *Sabbatical Leave* – A bishop who has served for at least two quadrennia may be granted a sabbatical leave of not more than one year for a program of study or renewal. The bishop shall receive one-half salary and, where applicable, housing allowance for the period of the leave.

>VII: –<

GBOD ¶ 411.1 = 410.2; 411.2=410.1+3+4; 411.3a=410.1; 411.3b=410.4; 411.4=410.3

¶ 412. *Retirement of Bishops.* – 1. An elder who served as a bishop up to the time of retirement shall have the status of a retired bishop.⁹

2. A retired bishop is a bishop of the Church in every respect and continues to function as a member of the Council of Bishops in accordance with the Constitution and other provisions of the Discipline.

3. A retired bishop may be considered a member of an annual conference, without vote, for purposes of appointment to a local charge within the said conference.

4. *Mandatory Retirement* –a) In jurisdictional conferences, a bishop shall be retired on August 31 next following the regular session of the jurisdictional conference if the bishop's sixty-eighth birthday has been reached on or before July 1 of the year in which the jurisdictional conference is held.

b) In central conferences, a bishop shall be retired at the end of the month following the scheduled session of the central conference if the bishop's sixty-eighth birthday is reached on or before the opening day of the scheduled session of the central conference.¹⁰

5. *Voluntary Retirement* –Bishops who have attained age sixty-two or have completed thirty years of service under full-time appointment as an elder or a bishop may request the central or jurisdictional conference to place them in the retired relation. They shall notify their respective committee on episcopacy and the president of the Council of Bishops at least six months prior to the General Conference.

6. *Involuntary Retirement* –A bishop may be placed in the retired relation regardless of age by a two-thirds vote of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy if, after not less than a thirty-day notice in writing is given to the affected bishop and hearing held, such relationship is found by said committee to be in the best interests of the bishop and / or the Church. The reason for the action must be clearly stated in the report of the committee. The provisions for fair process in administrative hearings (¶¶ 349.4 & 352.2) shall apply to this administrative process. >VII: 412.001<

7. *Resignation* – A bishop may voluntarily resign from the episcopacy at any time, by submitting his or her resignation to the Council of Bishops. The consecration papers of a bishop in good standing so resigning shall be properly inscribed by the secretary of the Council of Bishops and returned, together with a certificate of resignation, which shall entitle him or her to membership as a traveling elder in the annual conference (or its successor) in which membership was last held. Notification of this action shall be given by the secretary of the Council of Bishops to the chairperson and secretary of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy.

8. *Further Provisions* – All further provisions shall be according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R 412).

GBOD ¶ 412.1 = 408Intro; 412.2=409Intro; 412.3=409.2; 412.4a=408.1a; 412.4b=408.1b(BOD2012); 412.5=408.2c+d; 412.6=408.3; 412.7=408.4; 412.8=NEW

⁹ See Judicial Council Decisions 361, 407.

¹⁰ See Judicial Council Decisions 1248, 1370.

GC-R ¶ 412 Retirement of Bishops. – 1. General Provisions

a) Pension, as provided under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply, shall be payable as provided in such plan or program following the close of the central or jurisdictional conference.

b) If, however, the retired bishop accepts any one of the following assignments of churchwide responsibility, the General Council on Finance and Administration, after consultation with the Council of Bishops, shall set a level of compensation not to exceed a maximum determined by the General Conference on recommendation of the General Council on Finance and Administration, with the compensation costs borne by the Episcopal Fund: (1) assignment of a special nature with direct relationship and accountability to the Council of Bishops, or (2) assignment to a general agency or United Methodist Church-related institution of higher education. Assignment of retired bishops to United Methodist Church-related institutions of higher education must be at the initiative of the institutions, with service not to exceed the mandatory retirement ages of the institutions.

If a bishop is assigned to a general agency or United Methodist Church-related institution of higher education, that agency or United Methodist Church-related institution of higher education will pay 50 percent of the compensation established by GCFA for the position. The general agency or United Methodist Church-related institution of higher education shall further assume all responsibility for the bishop's operational and travel expenses related to the assignment.

Compensation for any special assignment shall cease after the bishop has reached the mandatory age of retirement for all ordained ministers (¶ 412.3) or completes the assignment, whichever comes first, except that retired bishops elected by the Council of Bishops as Executive Secretary and Ecumenical Officer may continue to be compensated for such special assignment(s) throughout the terms of office. No assignment to a jurisdiction, central conference, annual conference, or non-United Methodist agency shall qualify for additional compensation from the Episcopal Fund under the provisions of this paragraph. The status of a retired bishop on special assignment shall, for purposes of housing and other benefits, be that of a retired bishop.

2. Voluntary Retirement-

a) Bishops who have completed twenty years or more of service under full-time appointment as ordained ministers or as local pastors with pension credit prior to the opening date of the session of the central or jurisdictional conference, including at least one quadrennium as bishop, may request the central or jurisdictional conference to retire them with the privilege of receiving their pension to the extent permitted under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply.

b) *Vocational Retirement*-A bishop who has served at least eight years in the episcopacy may seek retirement for vocational reasons and may be so retired by the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy on recommendation by the involved College of Bishops. Such bishops shall receive their pensions as provided in §2a) above. If the employing entity provides or makes health insurance available to employees, then the bishop who retires under this provision will be insured under that program, whether or not the bishop is required to pay the premium for that coverage, and the Episcopal Fund will assume no future obligation to provide health insurance for the bishop or the bishop's family. If the employing entity does not provide or make health insurance available to employees, either

while employed or in retirement, then the bishop retiring under this provision will be provided with health and welfare benefits for retirees as specified from time to time by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

c) Bishops who have attained age sixty-two or have completed thirty years of service under full-time appointment as an elder or a bishop may request the central or jurisdictional conference to place them in the retired relation with the privilege of receiving their pension to the extent permitted under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply.

d) Any bishop who seeks a voluntary retired status shall notify the president of the Council of Bishops at least six months prior to the General Conference.

e) A bishop may seek voluntary retirement for health reasons and shall be so retired by the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy upon recommendation by the involved College of Bishops and upon presentation of satisfactory medical evidence. Such bishops shall receive their pensions to the extent permitted under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply.

3. *Involuntary Retirement*--A bishop, for health reasons, may be retired between sessions of the central or jurisdictional conference by a two-thirds vote of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy upon the recommendation of one third of the membership of the involved College of Bishops. The affected bishop, upon request, shall be entitled to a review of his or her health condition by a professional diagnostic team prior to action by the involved College of Bishops. Notification of action to retire shall be given by the chairperson and secretary of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy to the secretary of the Council of Bishops and the treasurer of the Episcopal Fund. Appeal from this action may be made to the Judicial Council with the notice provisions being applicable as set forth in ¶ 2712. Upon such retirement, the bishop shall receive a pension to the extent permitted under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply.

4. *Resignation*— Pension benefits will be payable to the resigned bishop to the extent permitted under the Clergy Retirement Security Program or the Global Episcopal Pension Program (or, in either case, any successor bishop pension or retirement plan or program), as either may apply.

5. *Status of Retired Bishops* a) Retired bishops may participate in the Council of Bishops and its committees, but without vote. They may preside over sessions of an annual conference, provisional annual conference, or mission if requested to do so by the bishop assigned to that conference, or in the event of that bishop's incapacity, by the president of the College of Bishops to which the conference is related. Retired bishops elected by the Council of Bishops may serve as the executive secretary and the ecumenical officer of the Council. In emergency situations, where the resident bishop is unable to preside, the College of Bishops shall assign an effective or retired bishop to preside over the sessions of the annual conference (¶ 48). They may not make appointments or preside at the central or jurisdictional conference. However, when a retired bishop is appointed by the Council of Bishops to a vacant episcopal area or parts of an area, that bishop may function as a bishop in the effective relationship.¹¹

b) A bishop retired under ¶ 412.4, .5 may be appointed by the Council of Bishops upon recommendation of the involved College of Bishops to presidential responsibility for temporary service in an area in the case of death, resignation, disability, or procedure involving a resident bishop (¶ 2705.1). This appointment shall not continue beyond the next central or jurisdictional conference.

c) Colleges of Bishops are encouraged to work with prospective retirees and institutions across the Connection on possible retirement assignments (e.g. bishop-in-residence), particularly assignments expressive of the office's residential, presidential and missional nature.

6. *Retirement After Term Episcopacy* - An ordained minister who has served a term or part of a term as a bishop in a central conference where term episcopacy has prevailed shall, upon retirement from the effective relation in the ministry, be paid an allowance from the General Episcopal Fund in such sum as the General Council on Finance and Administration shall determine for the years during which the ordained minister served as a bishop.¹²

7. *On Becoming an Autonomous or United Church* -When former central conferences of The United Methodist Church become or have become autonomous churches or entered into church unions, retired bishops therein shall continue to have membership in the Council of Bishops if the retired bishops involved so desire.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 412.1a+b = 408.1c+d; 412.2=408.2; 412.3=408.3b; 412.4=408.4; 412.5=409.1+3+4; 412.6=548.1; 412.7=548.2

¹¹ See Judicial Council Decision 248.

¹² See Judicial Council Decision 394.

¶ 413. *Complaints Against Bishops*. – 1. Episcopal leadership in The United Methodist Church shares with all other ordained persons the sacred trust of their ordination. Whenever a bishop violates this trust or is unable to fulfill appropriate responsibilities, continuation in the episcopal 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.

2. Any complaint concerning the effectiveness, competence, or one or more of the offenses listed in ¶ 2702 shall be submitted in a written statement to the president of the College of Bishops in that central or jurisdictional conference. If the complaint concerns the president, it shall be submitted to the secretary of the College of Bishops or, if non existing in a central conference, to the chair of the central conference committee on episcopacy. The bishop to whom the complaint has been submitted shall inform the chair of the central or jurisdictional conference committee on episcopacy within ten days.¹³

3. Each central conference shall make provisions for complaint procedures, including suspension, supervisory response, just resolution, administrative complaint, and reporting, as well as a protocol for the caring of the affected episcopal area. Such provisions shall follow, as appropriate, the complaint procedures for ordained clergy (¶ 353) and shall define the role of the central conference committee on episcopacy in complaints against a bishop. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 413.001<

GBOD ¶ 413.1-2 = 413.1-2; 413.3=413.3-5

¹³ See Judicial Council Decision 1149.

¶ 414. *Vacancy in the Office of Bishop* – A vacancy in the office of bishop due to death, leave of absence, medical leave, retirement, resignation, or judicial procedure, shall be filled by the Council of Bishops on nomination of the active bishops of the respective College of Bishops, after consultation with the respective committee(s) on episcopacy.

>VII: 414.001<

GBOD ¶ 414 = 407

Section V. Cabinet and District Superintendency

¶ 415. *The Cabinet.* —1. Oversight, or superintendency, resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendency for the purpose of equipping the Church in its disciple-making ministry. Like bishops, district superintendents possess distinct and collegial responsibilities, working together with bishops to order the life of the Church, to enable the gathered Church to worship and evangelize faithfully, and to facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for extending the service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

2. Like the office of bishop, the district superintendency is a particular ministry, not a separate order. Bishops appoint superintendents from the group of elders in full connection who are ordained to the ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. >VII: 415.001<

3. Under the leadership of the bishop, the cabinet is the expression of superintending leadership in and through the annual conference. It is expected to speak to the conference and for the conference to the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region encompassed by the conference.

4. As all ordained ministers are first elected into membership of an annual conference and subsequently appointed to pastoral charges, so district superintendents become through their selection members first of a cabinet before they are subsequently assigned by the bishop to service in districts. District superintendents appointed and assigned to districts are also to be given conference-wide responsibilities as members of the cabinet. The cabinet is thus also the body in which the individual district superintendents are held accountable for their work, both for conference and district responsibilities.

5. In order to exercise meaningful leadership, the cabinet is to meet at stated intervals. The cabinet is charged with the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of a conference, to be executed in regularized consultation and cooperation with other councils and service agencies of the conference. Central conferences may determine how best to implement the ministry of the cabinet according to their regional contexts. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 415.002<

GBOD ¶ 415.1 = 401; 415.2=402.1; 415.3=424.2; 415.4=415.1; 415.5=424.4

¶ 416. *Selection and Term of District Superintendents* —1. *Selection*—District superintendents are elders in full connection appointed by the bishop in consultation with the cabinet. They serve under the supervision of the resident bishop. In the selection of superintendents, bishops shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of The United Methodist Church (¶ 4). >VII: 416.001<

2. *Term of Service.* —The central conference shall determine the maximum term for district superintendents. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.¹⁴ >VII: 416.002<

GBOD ¶ 416.1 = 417; ¶416.2=418+new

¹⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 368, 512.

¶ 417. *Duties.* – 1. The district superintendent shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy (including clergy in extension ministry and ministry beyond the local church) and of the churches in the communities of the district in their missions of witness and service in the world. This oversight requires the superintendent to use his or her gifts and skills related to spiritual and pastoral leadership, personnel leadership, administration, and program.

2. Superintendents are the chief missional strategists of their respective districts. They shall be committed to living out the values of the Church, including a mandate of inclusiveness, modeling, teaching, and promoting generous Christian giving, cooperating to develop Christian unity, and

ecumenical, multicultural, multiracial, and cooperative ministries. Superintendents work with persons across the Church, including clergy in settings beyond the local church, to develop programs of ministry and mission that extend the witness of Christ into and across the world. >VII: 417.001<

3. Superintendents shall work with the bishop and cabinet in the process of appointment and assignment for ordained and licensed clergy, or assignment of qualified and trained lay servant ministries. Within their district, they are the acting administrator of any pastoral charge in which a pastoral vacancy may develop, or where no pastor is appointed. They shall establish working relationships with pastor-parish relations committees, clergy, and lay leadership, to develop faithful and effective systems of ministry within the district.

4. Superintendents shall work with the Board of Ordained Ministry to develop an effective process for recruitment, mentoring and examination of candidates for ordained or licensed ministry. >VII: 417.002<

5. In the framework of their supervisory responsibility, superintendents shall offer support, care, and counsel to clergy. >VII: 417.003<

6. Superintendents shall maintain appropriate records of all clergy on the district, including clergy in extension ministry, as well as records dealing with property, endowments, and other tangible assets of The United Methodist Church within the district.

7. Superintendents shall interpret and decide all questions of Church law and discipline raised by the churches in the district, subject to review by the resident bishop of the annual conference.

8. Superintendents shall serve at the pleasure of the bishop and assume other leadership responsibilities as the bishop determines for the health and effectiveness of the district and annual conference.

9. Central conferences may establish further provisions, including renewal and study leaves for superintendents. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 417.004<

GBOD ¶ 417.1 = 419Intro; 417.2=419.1; 417.3=419.2+Intro+4; 417.4=419.3; 417.5=419.6; 417.6=419.8; 417.7=419.10; 417.8=419.12; 417.9=new.

Section VI. Ecumenical Relationships

¶ 418. *Council of Bishops, Ecumenical Officer, and Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships* – 1. The Council of Bishops shall be the primary liaison in formal relations with other churches and/or ecclesial bodies.

2. In pursuit of its responsibilities and in order to deepen and expand the ecumenical and interreligious ministries of The United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops shall receive the input of the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (OCUIR).

3. Funding for the ecumenical and interreligious ministries of the Church shall be provided by the Council of Bishops in one or more clearly identified line items in the Episcopal Fund budget request to General Conference.

4. OCUIR shall be organized according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 418).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 418 = 436; 418.2=437; 418.3=440; 418.4=new

GC-R 418. Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (OCUIR) —1. Responsibilities and Powers—The responsibilities and powers of OCUIR shall be assigned by the Council of Bishops.

2. *Membership*—The OCUIR shall be composed of one episcopal member from a jurisdictional conference and one episcopal member from a central conference, one of whom shall be the ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops, and of one person from each jurisdiction and one person from each of the following regions: Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. The bishop who is not the ecumenical officer shall be counted as one of these eight persons. In aiming at inclusiveness, each central or jurisdictional conference will nominate two candidates, and the Council of Bishops will elect seven members from this pool of nominees. Two additional members with voice and vote will be from churches in Full Communion, nominated by them.

3. *Staff*—a) There shall be an ecumenical staff officer of The United Methodist Church to be selected by the Council of Bishops. The work of the OCUIR shall be facilitated by the ecumenical staff officer who shall be in charge of the day-to-day work of the OCUIR. The ecumenical staff officer shall be the OCUIR's principal administrative and executive officer and report to the Ecumenical Officer of the Council of Bishops. b) Additional staff shall be selected in number and responsibility as determined by the Council of Bishops and serve at the pleasure of the ecumenical staff officer. c) The staff of the OCUIR shall be positioned in locations to be determined by the Council of Bishops.

4. *Interdenominational Cooperation Fund*—The OCUIR shall consult with the Council of Bishops in establishing the guidelines for the administration of the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund. Financial support of ecumenical organizations, ecumenical dialogues, and multilateral conversations, approved by the Council of Bishops, shall be remitted from this fund in accordance with ¶ 814.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R 418.1 = 441; 418.2=438; 418.3=439; 418.4=431.3+432;

¶ 419. *Ecumenical Agreements and Full Communion*—1. The Council of Bishops shall have the authority to enter into ecumenical agreements with other Christian bodies. However, all proposed denominational level agreements of formal “full communion” relationships and permanent membership in ecumenical organizations must be approved and ratified by General Conference, before coming into effect.

2. A formal “full communion” relationship is one that exists between two or more Christian churches that:

- a) recognize each other as members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, the Body of Christ, as described in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the church's historic creeds;
- b) recognize the authenticity of each other's sacraments and welcome one another to partake in the Eucharist;
- c) affirm the authenticity of each church's Christian ministry;
- d) recognize the validity of each other's offices of ministry.

3. A formal “full communion” relationship commits the churches to working together as partners in mission toward fuller visible unity. The Council of Bishops is charged to implement this relationship.

4. A formal “full communion” relationship does not mean there are no differences or distinctions between churches; but does mean that these differences are not church dividing.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 419.1 = 431.1a; 419.2-4=431.1b, c, +e

¶ 420. *Methodist Unity*—1. *World Methodist Council*—a) The United Methodist Church is a member of the World Methodist Council, its predecessor Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches having been charter members of such body. The council is a significant channel for United Methodist relationships with other Methodist churches and with autonomous Methodist churches, affiliated

autonomous Methodist churches, affiliated united churches formerly part of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations, and other churches with a Wesleyan heritage.

b) Each affiliated autonomous Methodist church and each affiliated united church that is a member of the World Methodist Council may choose to send delegates either to the General Conference or to the World Methodist Council (receiving from the General Administration Fund the expense of travel and per diem allowances thereto for one of the two events in a quadrennium).

2. *Pan-Methodist Commission*—Given the relationship and shared history of the denominations of the Wesleyan tradition in the United States, there shall be a Pan-Methodist Commission established jointly among The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, The African Union Methodist Protestant Church, The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, and The United Methodist Church. >VII: 420.001<

3. *Conference of Methodist Bishops* - There may be a conference of Methodist bishops, composed of all the bishops elected by the central and jurisdictional conferences and one bishop or chief executive officer from each affiliated autonomous Methodist or united church, which shall meet on call of the Council of Bishops after consultation with other members of the conference of Methodist bishops. The travel and other necessary expense of bishops of affiliated autonomous Methodist or united churches related to the meeting of the Conference of Methodist Bishops shall be paid on the same basis as that of bishops of The United Methodist Church.

4. *Striving Toward Union*—As a result of our heritage as a part of a people called Methodist, The United Methodist Church commits itself to strive toward closer relationship with other Methodist or Wesleyan churches wherever they may be found (§ 6).

GBOD ¶ 420.1 = 433.1; 420.2=433.2Intro; 420.3=433.3;

¶ 421. *Relationships with churches of the Wesleyan tradition and United Churches* - 1. *Autonomous Methodist Churches* – Autonomous Methodist churches are self-governing churches of the Wesleyan tradition which may or may not have entered into the Act of Covenanting with The United Methodist Church. They are not entitled to send delegates to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church.

2. *Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches* –Affiliated autonomous Methodist churches are self-governing churches in whose establishment The United Methodist Church or one of its predecessor churches has assisted and which by mutual agreement has entered into a Covenant of Relationship (in effect from 1968 to 1984) or an Act of Covenanting (GC-R 421.5) with The United Methodist Church.

3. *Affiliated United Churches*- Affiliated united churches are self-governing churches formed by the uniting of two or more denominations, at least one of which was related to The United Methodist Church or one of its predecessor churches.

4. *Covenanting Churches* – A covenanting relationship, whose elements were adopted by the 1992 General Conference in an action called an “Act of Covenanting Between Christian Churches and The United Methodist Church” may be established between autonomous Methodist churches, affiliated autonomous Methodist churches, affiliated united churches, or other Christian churches and The United Methodist Church.

5. *Methodist Churches with Concordat Agreements* – A Methodist church which has Methodist heritage in common with The United Methodist Church or one of its predecessor churches and which has entered into concordat agreements with the purpose of manifesting the common Methodist heritage, affirming the equal status of the two churches and expressing mutual acceptance and respect, and creating

opportunities for closer fellowship between the two churches, especially on the leadership level becomes a concordat church.

6. Relationships with these churches shall be organized according to the provisions of General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 421).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 421.1-3 = 570.1-3; 421.4=573.1; 421.5=570.5; 421.6=New

GC-R ¶ 421. *Relationships with churches of the Wesleyan tradition and United Churches—* 1. *Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches—* Each affiliated autonomous Methodist church shall be entitled to send two delegates, one clergy and one layperson to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, and to one additional delegate, if the church has more than 70,000 full members. They shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of delegates, including membership on committees, except the right to vote. At least one of the three delegates shall be a woman. The bishop or the president of the affiliated autonomous Methodist churches may be invited by the Council of Bishops to the General Conference.

2. *Affiliated United Churches—* Each affiliated united church shall be entitled to send two delegates, one clergy and one layperson, to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, and to one additional delegate, if the church has more than 70,000 full members.. They shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of delegates, including membership on committees, except the right to vote. At least one of the three delegates shall be a woman. The bishop or the president of the affiliated united churches may be invited by the Council of Bishops to the General Conference.

3. *Transfers and Cooperation With Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches, and Affiliated United Churches-* a) Certificates of church membership given by clergy in one church shall be accepted by clergy in the other church.

b) When the requirements of such a Methodist church for its ordained ministry are comparable to those of The United Methodist Church, clergy may be transferred between its properly constituted ministerial bodies and the annual and provisional annual conferences of The United Methodist Church and their ordination(s) recognized as valid, with the approval and consent of the bishops or other appointive authorities involved in compliance with ¶ 331.

c) A program of visitation may be mutually arranged by the Council of Bishops in cooperation with the equivalent leadership of the autonomous Methodist church, affiliated autonomous Methodist church, and/or affiliated united church.

d) The Council of Bishops, in consultation with the General Board of Global Ministries and the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, shall work out plans of cooperation with these churches. The General Board of Global Ministries shall serve as the agent of The United Methodist Church for a continuing dialogue looking to the establishment of mission priorities with special reference to matters of personnel and finance.¹⁵

4. *Covenanting Churches—* a) The purpose of an Act of Covenanting with another Christian church is to encourage a new sense of global common cause, mutual support, mutual spiritual growth, common study of Scripture and culture, creative interaction as ministers in the mission of God's church, cross-fertilization of ideas about ways to be in that mission, sharing of resources, and exploration of new forms of service directed at old and emerging needs.

b) An Act of Covenanting will include recognition of our respective baptisms as different facets of the one baptism; recognition of one another as authentic expressions of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Jesus Christ; recognition of the ordained ministries of the two churches; commitment to systematic participation in full eucharistic fellowship; and commitment to function in new ways of partnership, visitations, and programs.

c) For The United Methodist Church, oversight of the covenantal relationships is the responsibility of the Council of Bishops, while participation in specific projects is the responsibility of the appropriate general agency or agencies.

d) The Council of Bishops shall represent The United Methodist Church in developing an Act of Covenanting with a prospective partner church. It shall make recommendations to General Conference as to the specific covenanting agreements. When approved by General Conference and by the chief legislative body of the partner church, the Act of Covenanting becomes effective when signed by the president of the Council of Bishops and the secretary of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church and by the authorized persons in the covenanting church. The text of each Act of Covenanting as adopted shall be printed in the appropriate General Conference journal or equivalent.¹⁶

e) The Act of Covenanting does not warrant that the covenanting churches shall be entitled to delegates at the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, or at the equivalent body of the covenant partner.

6. *Methodist Churches With Concordat Agreements*—a) Concordat agreements may be initiated by a Methodist church or by The United Methodist Church through the Council of Bishops. The Council of Bishops ~~who~~ shall, in cooperation with the Methodist church in question, ascertain that all disciplinary conditions are met and then prepare the necessary enabling legislation for adoption by the General Conference.

b) When such concordat agreement has been approved by the General Conference, the Council of Bishops shall prepare a statement of the concordat agreement to be signed by the president of the Council of Bishops, the secretary of the General Conference, and two representatives of the Methodist church with whom the concordat agreement is made. Such concordats shall be printed shall be printed in the appropriate General Conference journal or equivalent.

c) Such concordat agreement shall entitle the two churches to the following rights and privileges:

(1) A program of mutual visitation may be arranged by the Council of Bishops in cooperation with the equivalent leadership of the other concordat church. The Council of Bishops may assign one or more of its members for episcopal visitation to concordat churches.

(2) Clergy may be transferred between the two churches in accordance with ¶ 337.2.

d) Concordat churches, with the exception of The Methodist Church of Great Britain (see ¶ 13.3), shall be entitled to two delegates, one clergy and one lay, to be seated in each other's General Conference or equivalent bodies with all rights and privileges. The agreements with the Methodist Church of Mexico and the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas shall be honored. The host church shall make provisions for hospitality, including room and board, for the delegates of the other concordat church. Travel and other expenses shall be the responsibility of the visiting church.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 421.1 = 570.2b; 421.3=570.3b; 421.3=571; 421.5=573+570.4b; 421.6=574+570.5b

¹⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 692.

¹⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 692.

¶ 422. *Ecumenical Relationships*—The United Methodist Church strives toward greater Christian unity through its participation in councils of churches and/or covenantal relationships. Permanent membership in ecumenical organizations shall be approved and ratified by the respective conference, worldwide by General Conference, regional by Central Conferences, and where within the boundaries of one single annual conference by the respective annual conference.

1. *The World Council of Churches*—The United Methodist Church is a member of the World Council of Churches, its predecessor Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches having been charter members of such body.

2. *Other Worldwide Ecumenical Organizations*— The Council of Bishops shall lead the church in sending observers or prepare membership in other worldwide ecumenical organizations.

3. The Council of Bishops shall be in dialogue with United Methodists in whatever countries they may reside, and shall coordinate, explore, and advocate United Methodist participation in regional ecumenical and interreligious organizations. >VII: 422.001<

4. Further regulations shall be organized according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (see GC-R ¶ 422).

GBOD ¶ 422Intro = 434Intro+434.2b; 422.1=434.3a; 422.2=434.3b+c; 422.3=434.2b; 422.4=New

GC-R ¶ 422. *Ecumenical Relationships* – 1. The United Methodist representatives to ecumenical organizations shall be selected by the Council of Bishops and reflect consideration of balances required both by The United Methodist Church and the respective ecumenical organization.

2. When proxies are needed to substitute for United Methodist representatives to a specific ecumenical organization, the ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops is authorized to name such proxies and shall report their names at the next meeting of the Council of Bishops.

3. The Council of Bishops shall receive reports of the ongoing partnership of The UMC in the central conferences that are in full communion with Lutheran Churches and other denominations in order to learn from each other how to “provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation and unity within the Church-the United Methodist Church and the church universal” (¶ 403.2e).

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 422.1-2 = 431.4; 422.3=442.2

VII. Committee on Faith and Order

¶ 423. *Committee on Faith and Order* – 1. There shall be a Committee on Faith and Order related and amenable to the Council of Bishops. This relationship shall be collaborative, with attention paid in particular to working with the persons designated by the Council of Bishops.

2. *Purpose*- The Committee on Faith and Order shall give leadership to The United Methodist Church in reflecting upon, discerning and living out matters of faith, doctrinal teaching, order, and discipline in the midst of mission and ministry in the church and world. The committee shall be a visible expression of the commitment of the United Methodist Church to carry on informed theological reflection for the present time in dynamic continuity with the historic Christian faith, our common heritage as Christians grounded in the apostolic witness, and our distinctive Wesleyan heritage. The committee shall be charged with three broad responsibilities:

a) Upon request of the Council of Bishops, to support and provide resources to the council in its responsibility to “guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically”.

b) To lead and coordinate studies commissioned by the General Conference in matters related to faith, doctrine, order and discipline of the church.

c) To prepare and provide resources and study materials to The United Methodist Church as deemed appropriate.

3. *Responsibilities* – The Committee on Faith and Order shall have the authority and power to fulfill all the responsibilities according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 423).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 423.1 = 443; 423.2=444; 423.3=446=>445

GC-R ¶ 423. Responsibilities—The responsibilities of the Committee on Faith and Order shall be:

1. To provide a venue and context for ongoing conversation on matters of faith, doctrine, order and discipline.

2. To draw upon scholars and scholarship in biblical studies, biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, Christian ethics, Wesleyan studies, practical theology, missiology, and other areas thereby providing expertise and knowledge to lead and assist the church in addressing matters of faith and order critical to the life, ministry and mission of the church.

3. To provide research and resourcing for the Council of Bishops upon their request in matters related to faith, doctrine, order and discipline.

4. To receive and administer mandates from the General Conference for studies on matters that require significant inquiry into and application of the faith and order of the church.

5. To bring studies, materials, or publications as appropriate to the Council of Bishops or to the General Conference for approval and action.

6. To make provision for the preparation and dissemination of study documents and materials for the Church upon request of the Council of Bishops, or the General Conference.

7. To coordinate and provide for effective interaction and communication among various study committees, commissions, and teams when multiple studies have been mandated.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 423=445

¶ 424. Organization—1. The Committee on Faith and Order (CFO) shall be composed of sixteen persons.

2. It shall be organized according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (see GC-R ¶ 424).

3. In collaboration with the Council of Bishops, it shall propose its budget as part of the Episcopal Fund, to be approved by General Conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 424.1 = 447Intro; 424.2=>447, 448, 449; 424.3=450

GC-R ¶ 424 Organization of the Committee on Faith and Order- 1. Membership-a) Nominations to the CFO shall be made by the CFO Executive Committee, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, and sent to the Council of Bishops and to the entire Committee on Faith and Order for their review.

(1) Four bishops shall serve as members one of whom shall be the ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church and three other bishops as assigned by the Council of Bishops. At least one of the bishops shall be from central conferences.

(2) New members of the committee shall be elected by the Council of Bishops at its spring meeting in the year of the General Conference. Election shall be for a term of eight (8) years, and no person shall serve as a member of the Committee on Faith and Order for more than sixteen (16) years in succession. The classes of membership shall be established so that the terms of service of 50 percent of the membership expire when their successors are seated at the organizational meeting of the committee following each General Conference.

b) The composition of the committee, and all sub-committees and teams, shall attend to lay and clergy status, racial/ethnic and gender diversity, and regional representation. It shall model effective representation of the theological diversity of The United Methodist Church. The Council of Bishops shall

exercise oversight in the nomination and election of members with regard to inclusiveness, diversity, and representation. Vacancies occurring during any quadrennium shall be filled by the CFO Executive Committee in consultation with the Council of Bishops.

c) The committee may, in consultation and collaboration with the Council of Bishops, carry out any mandated study internally or may create such sub-committees and teams using members from within the committee and others beyond the committee as may be required by the volume and complexity of work.

d) Membership on the board of directors of any other general agency, or serving as a staff member of a general agency, does not make one ineligible to serve as a member of this committee, ¶¶ 710.5 and 715.6 to the contrary notwithstanding, and the limitations specified in ¶ 710.4 for membership on general agencies shall not apply to anyone as a result of membership on this committee.

2. *Organization and Meetings*-a) The committee shall elect from its episcopal membership a chairperson and from its total membership other officers as it may determine.

b) There shall be an executive committee of the CFO with powers as determined by the CFO.

c) The committee shall meet for organizational purposes each quadrennium prior to the end of the first quarter of the year following the year in which the General Conference is held.

d) The committee shall meet at least annually and at such other times as it shall deem necessary. A majority of members of the committee shall constitute a quorum.

3. *Staffing*- Staff for the work of the Committee on Faith and Order shall be provided as determined by the Council of Bishops in consultation with the Executive Committee of the Committee on Faith and Order. The Council of Bishops may request staff assistance and consultation from agencies and other bodies of the Church.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 424.1 = 447.1-6; 424.2=448; 424.3=449

Chapter Four

The Conferences

The United Methodist Church is a connectional structure maintained through its chain of conferences.

Section I. The General Conference

¶ 501. *Purpose*—The General Conference serves God’s mission for the Church on its worldwide, connectional level. It gathers the delegates, as representatives of the church, for worship, prayer, fellowship, and legislative action in a spirit of Christian conferencing.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶501 = new

¶ 502. *Powers*—1. The General Conference has full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional (¶ 16). It has no executive or administrative power.

2. Only General Conference has the authority to speak officially for The United Methodist Church. Any written public policy statement issued by a general Church agency shall clearly identify either at the beginning or at the end that the statement represents the position of that general agency and not necessarily the position of The United Methodist Church.¹

3. Any individual member called to testify before a legislative body to represent The United Methodist Church shall be allowed to do so only by reading, without elaboration, the resolutions and positions adopted by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶502.1 = 501; 502.2+3=509.1+2

¹ See Judicial Council Decision 458.

¶ 503. *Membership*—1. The voting membership of the General Conference shall consist of:

a) An equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences as provided in the *Discipline*. The missionary conferences and provisional annual conferences shall be considered as annual conferences for the purposes of this paragraph. Annual conferences are urged to seek inclusiveness in the election of delegates.²

b) Delegates from The Methodist Church in Great Britain and other autonomous Methodist churches with which concordat agreements have been established providing for mutual election and seating of delegates in each other’s highest legislative conferences.

2. The number of delegates to which an annual conference is entitled shall be computed on a two-factor basis: the number of clergy members of the annual conference, and the number of members of local churches in the annual conference.³

3. Delegates to the General Conference shall be elected at the session of the annual conference held not more than two annual conference sessions before the calendar year preceding the session of the General Conference.⁴

4. Procedures shall be according to provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 503).⁵

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 503.1-3 = 502.1-3; 503.4=new

² See Judicial Council Decisions 435, 592.

³ See Judicial Council Decisions 327, 333, 1051.

⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 435, 592.

⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 435, 592.

GC-R ¶ 503. Membership— 1. At least thirty days prior to the beginning of the earliest possible calendar year for election of delegates, the secretary of the General Conference shall notify the bishop and the secretary of each annual conference of the number of delegates to be elected by that annual conference.⁶

2. The secretary of each annual conference, using the certificate of election form supplied, shall report to the secretary of the General Conference the names, addresses, and such other information as may be required for delegates and reserves elected by the annual conference.

3. The secretary of the General Conference shall prepare and send to each annual conference secretary credentials to be signed and distributed to the delegates and reserves elected by the annual conference.

4. The secretary, in cooperation with the General Commission on the General Conference, shall initiate procedures to prepare delegates from central conferences for full participation in the General Conference by providing information concerning both the operation of the General Conference and materials it will consider. As far as possible, the materials should be provided in the languages of the delegates.

5. After consultation with the Council of Bishops, the secretary of the General Conference shall issue invitations to ecumenical representatives.

GBOD GC-R ¶ 503.1-3 = 502.3-5; 503.4-5=504.3

⁶ See Judicial Council Decisions 435, 592.

¶ 504. Conference Session—1. *Rules of Order*- The Plan of Organization and Rules of Order of the General Conference shall be as approved by the preceding General Conference until they have been modified by the action of the General Conference.

2. *Commission on the General Conference*- There shall be a Commission on the General Conference, hereinafter called the commission.

a) It shall select the site and set the dates of the General Conference up to four quadrennia in advance.

b) It shall plan the General Conference program, including the opening day, special events and orders of the day.

c) It shall, in cooperation with the United Methodist Publishing House, make all necessary arrangements for the publication of the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

d) It shall organize a Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order from within its membership. The committee shall study any proposed amendments to the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order to be presented to the commission for approval and submission to the General Conference.

e) The voting members of the commission shall be elected quadrennially by the General Conference from the elected delegates to the General Conference for a term of eight years. They shall consist of twenty-five members as follows: one person from each US jurisdiction, one person from each central conference, one young adult, one youth, the chairperson of the host committee, and ten additional members. The additional members shall be allocated to reflect the proportionate jurisdictional membership based upon combined clergy and lay membership of the Church.

3. *Presiding Officers*— The bishops shall be the presiding officers at the General Conference.

4. *Secretary-Designate*— The General Conference elects a secretary-designate.

5. *Petitions to General Conference*- Any organization, clergy member, or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference according to the prescribed format.

6. The General conference session shall be organized according to provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 504).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 504.1 = 505; 504.2Intro=511Intro; 504.2a=511.4a; 504.2b=511.4b; 504.2c=511.4c; 504.2d=511.3b; 504.2e=511.1a-b; 504.3=503; 504.4=504.2; 504.5=507Intro; 504.6=new

GC-R ¶ 504. *Conference session—* 1. *Commission on the General Conference—*a) *Membership—* (1) Members shall be nominated from the elected delegates to the General Conference by the Council of Bishops prior to General Conference and elected by the General Conference for a term of eight years. Additional persons who meet the qualifications may be nominated from the floor of General Conference. The commission shall reflect a balance of clergymen and clergywomen, laywomen and laymen, and the diverse character of The United Methodist Church. Approximately half of the commission shall be elected by the General Conference each quadrennium.

(2) If vacancies occur, the Council of Bishops shall elect geographically appropriate successors to serve through the next session of the General Conference and then nominate for election by the General Conference persons to serve any remainder term.

(3) The Secretary of the General Conference, the Treasurer of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the Business Manager of the General Conference, and a bishop named by the Council of Bishops shall have the right to the floor without the privilege of voting. The Business Manager of the General Conference shall be the chief administrative officer of the commission.

b) *Officers—* The officers of the commission shall be a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and a secretary, all of whom shall be elected by the commission at the quadrennial organizational meeting. They shall serve until the adjournment of the next succeeding quadrennial session of the General Conference and until their successors are duly elected and qualified.

c) *Committees—* (1) *Executive Committee—* There shall be an executive committee of the commission, consisting of the officers of the commission, the chairperson of the host committee, the bishop serving on the commission, the Secretary of the General Conference, the Business Manager of the General Conference, and the chairperson and secretary of the Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order.

(2) *Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order—* The commission shall organize a Committee on the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order from within its membership. The committee shall be organized at the initial meeting of the commission following General Conference. It shall elect its own chairperson and secretary, who will serve on the commission's executive committee. The committee shall study any proposed amendments to the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order to be presented to the Commission on the General Conference for approval and submission to the General Conference. Any other matters relating to parliamentary order or procedure in the business of the General Conference may be referred to this committee.

d) *Responsibilities—* (1) The commission shall select the site and set the dates of the General Conference up to four quadrennia in advance and shall send an official notice to all elected delegates announcing specifically the opening day and hour of the General Conference and anticipated time of adjournment.

(2) The commission shall advise the delegates in advance of all special events and orders of the day in order that the delegates may have an overview of the General Conference program.

(3) The commission, in cooperation with the United Methodist Publishing House, shall make all necessary arrangements for the publication of the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate* and quadrennial reports of the Connectional Table and the general agencies of the church in English, French, Portuguese, and Kiswahili, and for all delegates to have timely (90-day period) and convenient access to the most linguistically appropriate translation of these documents. The commission shall also make arrangements for daily schedules, petition lists, nominations information, and other high-importance information published in the English version of the *Daily Christian Advocate* to also be made available in each of these languages in a timely and convenient way.

(4) The commission shall take necessary measures to assure full participation of all General Conference delegates including but not limited to providing accommodation for languages and physical challenges of the delegates, and access to approved licensed childcare during the session at or near the site of the General Conference for children of General Conference delegates.

(5) The commission shall recommend to the General Conference the per diem allowance to be paid to the elected delegates for housing and meals.

(6) The commission shall set the number of legislative committees and the assignment of legislative materials to those committees in consultation with the Secretary of the General Conference and the Business Manager of the General Conference.

e) The secretary of the General Conference shall calculate the number of delegates to be elected by each annual conference, based on the factors specified in ¶ 503.2, using the most recent clergy and professing lay membership figures reported by the local congregation to the annual conference and from the annual conference to the General Council on Finance and Administration through their conference journals, as follows:

(1) One clergy delegate for the first 375 clergy members of the annual conference and one clergy delegate for each additional 375 clergy members or major fraction thereof,⁷ and

(2) One clergy delegate for the first 26,000 members of local churches of the annual conference and one clergy delegate for each additional 26,000 local church members or major fraction thereof, and

(3) A number of lay delegates equal to the total number of clergy delegates authorized as above.

(4) Every annual conference shall be entitled to at least one clergy and one lay delegate.

(5) This formula is designated to comply with the Constitution (¶ 13), which defines the minimum and maximum number of delegates to a General Conference. Should the computations provided in the paragraph result in a figure below the prescribed minimum or above the prescribed maximum for delegates, the Commission on the General Conference shall be authorized to remedy the situation by adjusting up or down the numbers of clergy members and members of local churches of the annual conference necessary to entitle an annual conference to elect delegates, any such adjustment to be proportionally the same for the two factors.⁸

2. *Quorum*—When the General Conference is in session, it shall require the presence of a majority of the whole number of delegates to the General Conference to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; but a smaller number may take a recess or adjourn from day to day in order to secure a quorum, and at the final session may approve the journal, order the record of the roll call, and adjourn *sine die*.

3. *Secretary-Designate* — a) The Council of Bishops shall present a nomination from the ordained ministry or lay membership of The United Methodist Church for secretary-designate. Other nominations shall be permitted from the floor. The election, if there be two or more nominees, shall be by ballot.

b) *Assumption of Office*— The secretary-designate shall assume the responsibilities of the office of secretary as soon after the adjournment of the General Conference as all work in connection with the session has been completed, including the corrections to the *Daily Christian Advocate*, which serves as the official journal of the General Conference. Upon publication, all translations of the *Daily Christian Advocate* shall be made available as a daily downloadable file, free of charge, on the denominational website. The exact date of the transfer of responsibility to the secretary-designate shall be determined by the Commission on the General Conference, but shall not be later than December 31, following the adjournment of the General Conference.

4. *Petitions to General Conference*—A petition to the General Conference shall be submitted in the following manner:

a) It must be sent in writing according to the format officially approved by the secretary of the General Conference.

b) Each petition must address only one issue if the *Discipline* is not affected; if the *Discipline* is affected, each petition must address only one paragraph of the *Discipline*, except that, if two or more paragraphs in the *Discipline* are so closely related that a change in one affects the others, the petition may call for the amendment of those paragraphs also to make them consistent with one another. Petitions dealing with more than one paragraph in the *Discipline* that do not meet these criteria are invalid. Petitions that meet these criteria (composite petitions) shall not be separated into pieces.

c) Each petition must be signed by the person submitting it, accompanied by appropriate identification and return address, according to the prescribed format.

d) All petitions submitted to the General Conference, except those submitted by individual members of The United Methodist Church and local church groups, which call for the establishment of new programs or the expansion of existing programs will be invalid unless accompanied by supporting data that address the issue of anticipated financial requirements of the program.

e) Petitions must be postmarked by a national postal service no later than 230 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference. If petitions are transmitted by a means other than a national postal service, they must be in the hands of the petitions secretary no later than 230 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference.

f) Exceptions to the time limitations shall be granted for petitions originating from an annual conference session held between 230 and 45 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference, and for other petitions at the discretion of the Committee on Reference.

g) Petitions adopted and properly submitted by annual conferences, central and jurisdictional conferences, the Division on Ministries With Young People, or general agencies or councils of the Church, and petitions properly submitted by individual members (either clergy or lay) of The United Methodist Church and local church groups, provided that they have been received by the petitions secretary or secretary of the General Conference no later than 230 days before the opening of General Conference, shall be printed in the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

h) Petitions and/or resolutions not printed in the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate* shall be printed or copied and provided to all delegates. Where the content of petitions is essentially the same, the petition will be printed once, with the first author named and the number of additional copies received printed. Upon publication, all translations of the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate* shall be made available as a downloadable file, free of charge, on the denominational website

i) The secretary of the General Conference shall arrange for electronic access to all petitions, including General Conference action and the resulting impact on the, throughout the General Conference session. This access shall be available until the publication of the new edition of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. Following General Conference 2020, the new *General Book of Discipline* shall be published in all languages used in the publication of the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

Implementation shall be according to guidelines established by the Committee on Plan of Organization and Rules of Order.

j) All petitions that have been approved by a legislative committee shall receive a vote by the plenary session at that year's General Conference.

k) All petitions that have been submitted to the General Conference shall receive a vote of a legislative committee.

5. *Legislation Effective Date*—All legislation of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church shall become effective January 1 following the session of the General Conference at which it is enacted, unless otherwise specified for central conferences.

GBOD GC-R ¶ 504.1 = 511; GC-R 504.2=506; GC-R 504.3=504.1-2; GC-R 504.4=507; GC-R 504.5=508;

⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 327, 558.

⁸ See Judicial Council Decisions 687, 1274.

¶ 505. *Records and Archives*— 1. The Secretary of the General Conference shall be responsible for the permanent record of the General Conference, according to provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 505).

2. All original documents of a General Conference shall be filed with the General Commission on Archives and History.

>VII: —<

¶ 505.1 = 510Intro; 505.2=510.4

GC-R ¶ 505. *Records and Archives*—The permanent record of the General Conference shall include:

1. Corrections to the *Daily Christian Advocate*. The editor will file with the Commission on Archives and History two bound copies of the *Daily Christian Advocate* and corrections as the official record of General Conference. Bound copies shall also be made available at cost by The United Methodist Publishing House.

2. A *Book of Resolutions* to be edited by The United Methodist Publishing House. The book shall contain all valid resolutions of the General Conference. The preface of the *Book of Resolutions* shall include the guidelines for writing resolutions.

a) All valid resolutions of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church shall be published in each edition of the *Book of Resolutions*. There shall be a complete subject index and index of Scripture passages to all valid resolutions of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in each edition of the *Book of Resolutions*. Resolutions are official expressions of The United Methodist Church for eight years following their adoption, after which time they shall be deemed to have expired unless readopted. Those that have expired shall not be printed in subsequent editions of the *Book of Resolutions*. The *Book of Resolutions* shall be made available on the official website of The United Methodist Church.

b) The program boards and agencies shall review all valid resolutions and recommend to the General Conference the removal of time-dated material.

c) Resolutions to be an official part of the *Book of Resolutions* will require a 60 percent affirmative vote at General Conference.

3. The Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate* and the *Daily Christian Advocate*.

GBOD GC-R ¶ 505.1-3 = 510.1-3

¶ 506. *Conference Agencies*— Chapter 5 *Administrative Order* makes provisions for General Conference agencies.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 506 = new

¶ 507. *Property*— Chapter 6 *Property* makes provisions for Church property in The United Methodist Church.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 507 = new

Section II. Jurisdictional Conferences

¶ 508. Within the boundaries of the United States, there shall be Jurisdictional Conferences and Interjurisdictional Committees according to legislation enacted by General Conference in its *Discipline*, Part VII.

>VII: 508.001-508.007<

GBOD ¶ 508 = new

¶ 509. *Missionary Conferences*— Within the boundaries of the United States, there may be Missionary Conferences, according to legislation enacted by General Conference in its *Discipline*, Part VII.

>VII: 509.001-509.007<

GBOD ¶ 509 = new

Section III. Central Conferences

¶ 511. *Purpose*—1. The purpose of the central conference is to connect regionally Annual Conferences, Provisional Annual Conferences, and Missions, for common mission and ministry, to establish episcopal supervision as an expression of the General Superintendency, and to facilitate worldwide connections.

2. The General Conference, by a two-thirds vote, may organize annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions into central conferences, subject to the provisions of the Constitution. Thus, The United Methodist Church shall have central conferences with territorial boundaries and numbers of bishops as listed in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 511).⁹

3. A provisional central conference may become a central conference upon the fulfillment of the necessary requirements and upon the authorization of the General Conference, including the number of bishops to be elected according to the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 407.1).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 511.1 = new; 511.2=540.1; 511.3=540.4

⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 371.

GC-R ¶ 511. *Boundaries of Central Conferences and Numbers of Bishops*—General Conference, by a two-thirds vote, has organized the following central conferences, and has authorized, by majority vote, the election of the following number of bishops:

1. *Africa Central Conference*: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Swaziland, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe; with the authority to elect five bishops.

2. *Central and Southern Europe Central Conference*: Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Tunisia; with the authority to elect one bishop.

3. *Congo Central Conference*: Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Zambia; with the authority to elect four bishops.

4. *Germany Central Conference*: Germany; with the authority to elect one bishop.

5. *Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference*: Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan; with the authority to elect two bishops.

6. *Philippines Central Conference*: Philippines; with the authority to elect three bishops.

7. *West Africa Central Conference*: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone; with the authority to elect four bishops.

GBOD GC-R ¶ 511.1-7 = 540.3

¶ 512. *Powers and Duties*— 1. Central conferences are organized with such duties, privileges, and powers as hereinafter conferred by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference.

2. To a central conference shall be committed, for supervision and promotion, the missionary, educational, evangelistic, industrial, publishing, medical, and other connectional interests within its boundaries. It shall provide suitable organizations for such work and elect the necessary officers for the same.

3. a) A central conference shall fix the boundaries of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions within its boundaries, proposals for changes first having been submitted to the annual conferences concerned, and provided that only General Conference can establish provisional annual conferences.¹⁰

b) In central conferences no annual conference shall be organized with fewer than thirty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium, which shall not reduce the number below twenty-five. Nor shall an annual conference be continued with fewer than twenty-five clergy members except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium.

4. A central conference may elect bishops from among the ordained elders in full connection of The United Methodist Church, according to the number of bishops determined by the General Conference. It shall have power to fix the tenure of bishops elected by the said central conference and shall assign bishops to their respective residences.¹¹

5. a) A central conference shall have authority to engage in dialogue with other Christian bodies within its boundaries, to enter into interim ecumenical agreements with them, and to negotiate unions, provided that all proposed ecumenical agreements are submitted to the Council of Bishops for approval, and all proposals for church union are submitted to the General Conference for approval before consummation.¹²

b) When conferences outside the United States that are parts of The United Methodist Church desire to become an autonomous Methodist, affiliated autonomous Methodist, or affiliated united church, approval shall first be secured from the central conference involved and this decision be ratified by the annual conferences within the central conference by two-thirds majority of the aggregate votes cast by the annual conferences, and shall respect the provisions in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 512).¹³

6. a) Upholding the *General Book of Discipline*, Parts I - VI, a central conference shall have authority to establish and publish legislation and provisions pertaining to the annual, district, and charge conferences within its boundaries, including educational requirements of clergy and specialized lay ministries, and forms of organization according to the laws of the country. In establishing such legislation and provisions, it is authorized to make such changes and adaptations of the *Discipline*, Part VII, as the special conditions and the mission of the church in the area require, provided that no action shall be taken that is contrary to the *General Book of Discipline*, Parts I - VI. Subject to this restriction, a central conference may delegate to an annual conference within its boundaries the power to make one or the other of the changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon request of such annual conference.¹⁴

b) The central conference is authorized to interpret Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion so as to recognize the governments of the country or countries within its boundaries.

c) In a central conference using a language other than English, changes in the *General Book of Discipline*, Parts I – VI, passed by the General Conference shall take effect at the latest on July 1st of the year following the General Conference year in order to afford the necessary time for translation.

7. a) A central conference is authorized to edit a simplified, revised, and translated Ritual as it may deem necessary, such changes to require the approval of the resident bishop or bishops of the central conference.

b) It is authorized to conform the detailed rules, rites, and ceremonies for the solemnization of marriage to the statute laws of the country or countries within its boundaries.

8. A central conference shall have authority to adopt rules of procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church and to provide the necessary means and methods of implementing the said rules; provided, however, that clergy shall not be deprived of the right of trial by a clergy committee, and lay members of the Church of the right of trial by a duly constituted committee of lay members; and provided also, that the rights of appeal shall be adequately safeguarded.¹⁵

9. A central conference is authorized to establish a judicial court, which in addition to other duties that the central conference may assign to it shall hear and determine the legality of any action, and of any decision of law by the presiding bishop, pertaining to legislation and provisions as mentioned in §6.

10. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall determine the apportionment amounts for the annual conferences of the central conferences for the succeeding quadrennium based on calculation methodology approved by the General Conference upon recommendation by the Council. This determination shall be informed by consultation with the Council of Bishops.

11. Each central conference within the boundaries of which the General Board of Global Ministries has work shall maintain a cooperative and consultative relationship with the said general board; but the legal distinction between the General Board of Global Ministries and the organized church on the field shall always be kept clear.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 512.1 = 540.1; 512.2=543.1+6; 512.3=543.8; 512.4=543.2+3; 512.5=543.20+21+572 Intro; 512.6=543.7+9+16+10+15+18+17; 512.7=543.13+14; 512.8=543.12; 512.9=547.3; 512.10=543.4; 512.11=542.6

¹⁰ See Judicial Council Decisions 525, 541, 549.

¹¹ See Judicial Council Decisions 311, 430.

¹² See Judicial Council Decision 350.

¹³ See Judicial Council Decisions 548, 1062.

¹⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 313.

¹⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 310, 595.

GC-R ¶ 512. *Becoming an autonomous Methodist, affiliated autonomous Methodist, or affiliated united church from central conferences*— 1. The conference(s) involved shall prepare a historical record with reasons why affiliation and/or autonomy is requested and shall consult with the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters (BOD¶ 2201) on proceedings for affiliation and/or autonomy.

2. The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters and the conference(s) involved shall mutually agree on the confession of faith and the constitution of the new church. These shall be prepared with care and shall be approved by the conference(s) involved.

3. Preparation of its *Discipline* is the responsibility of the conference(s) desiring affiliation and/or autonomy.

4. Upon recommendation of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, when all disciplinary requirements for affiliated and/or autonomous relationship have been met, the General Conference through an enabling act shall approve of and grant permission for the conference(s) involved to become an autonomous Methodist, affiliated autonomous Methodist or affiliated united church.

5. Then the central conference involved shall meet, declare the present relationship between The United Methodist Church and the conference(s) involved dissolved, and reorganize as an autonomous Methodist, affiliated autonomous Methodist or affiliated united church in accordance with the enabling act granted by the General Conference. The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters shall assist in this process and, when the plans are consummated, report to the Council of Bishops. The proclamation of affiliated and/or autonomous status shall then be signed by the president of the Council of Bishops and the secretary of the General Conference.

6. A plan of cooperation shall be developed in accordance with ¶421.2d.

GBOD ¶ GC-R 512 = 572.1-6

¶ 513. *Membership*— 1. a) The membership of a central conference shall consist of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual and provisional annual conferences.

b) By ballot, the clergy members shall be elected by the clergy members of the annual or provisional annual conferences and the lay members by the lay members thereof.

c) Each annual and provisional annual conference shall be entitled to at least two clergy and two lay delegates, and no other selection of delegates shall be authorized that would provide for more than one clergy delegate for every six clergy members of an annual or provisional annual conference; except that a majority of the number fixed by a central conference as the ratio of representation shall entitle an annual or provisional annual conference to an additional clergy delegate and to an additional lay delegate.¹⁶

d) Delegates to the central conferences shall be elected at the session of the annual conference held not more than two annual conference sessions preceding the session of the General Conference. The secretary of the central conference shall notify the bishop and the secretary of each annual conference of the number of delegates to be elected by that annual conference.

2. Each mission is authorized to elect and send one lay and one clergy to the central conference concerned as its representative, with voice but not vote.

3. No central conference shall be established with less than thirty clergy and thirty lay delegates on the basis of representation as set forth in § 1, except as provided by an enabling act for the quadrennium.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 513.1-1c = 541.1; 513.1d=new; 513.2=541.1; 513.3=540.2

¹⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 371.

¶ 514. *Conference Session* – 1. *Convening Date*-a) Each central conference shall meet within the year succeeding the session of the General Conference at such time and place as the central conference itself or its bishops may determine.

b) *Special Session* - (1) The central conference may order a special session. Such session cannot transact any other business than that indicated in the call.

(2) The College of Bishops, with the concurrence of the executive committee, shall have the authority to call a special session of the central conference to be held at the time and place designated by them.

(3) The delegates to a special session of the central conference shall be the delegates last elected by each annual or provisional annual conference.

2. *Rules of Order*-The central conference shall adopt its own procedure, rules, and plan of organization.

3. *Presiding Officers*-a) A bishop shall be the presiding officer.

b) The bishop acting as presiding officer shall decide questions of law, subject to an appeal to the Judicial Council, or the Judicial Court of the central conference.¹⁷

c) The Council of Bishops may assign one or more of its members to visit a central conference. When so assigned, the bishop shall be an accredited representative of the general Church, and when requested by a majority of the bishops resident in that conference may exercise therein the functions of the episcopacy.

4. The central conference shall provide for the expenses of its sessions.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 514.1 = 542.2; 514.2=new; 514.3=new+542.4+3; 514.4=new

¹⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 375, 376, 381.

¶ 515. *Records and Archives* —1. The central conference shall keep an exact record of its proceedings. If there are no archives of the central conference, the secretary shall keep the bound copy or copies to be handed on to the succeeding secretary.

2. Each central conference shall send without charge to the General Commission on Archives and History a copy of its journal, of every translation of the *General Book of Discipline*, including its adapted Part VII, in printed or electronic format. Other general agencies may request such material as needed at their expense.

3. The secretary of a central conference in which one or more bishops have been elected shall report to the secretary of the General Conference the names of the bishop(s) and the residences to which they have been assigned by the central conference.

4. A central conference may examine and acknowledge the journals of the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions located within its boundaries and to make rules for the drawing up of the journals as may seem necessary.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 515.1 = new; 515.2-3=545.3+2; 515.4=543.11

¶ 516. *Conference Agencies*— 1. Central conferences may create agencies, structures or committees with such duties and mandates as the central conference may determine to carry out their mission.

>VII: 516.001<

2. Upon nomination of their respective annual conference delegations, each central conference shall elect a committee on episcopacy consisting of at least one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual or provisional annual conference. The committee shall:

a) review and evaluate at least once each quadrennium the work of the bishops, pass on their character and ministry, and report such evaluations and other findings to the central conference for such action as the conference may deem appropriate within its constitutional warrant of power; such review and evaluation may be organized by episcopal areas, in which case the central conference decides on the enlargement of membership of sub-committees in episcopal areas;

b) it shall, after consultation with the College of Bishops, recommend to the central conference for its approval the boundaries of the episcopal areas and the assignments of the bishops;

c) It shall receive and act upon requests for possible voluntary or involuntary retirement of bishops.

d) The central conference shall provide funding for the expenses of its committee on episcopacy.

3. Each central conference shall establish a board of pensions or make provisions for the creation of boards of pensions on the level of the annual conferences, episcopal areas, or countries within its boundaries. These boards of pensions are responsible for the long-term sustainability of their plans, administration of their pension programs in accordance with plan provisions, investment of pension funds, and proposing plan amendment.

GBOD ¶516.1 = 547+new; 516.2=543.5+new; 516.3=new

¶ 517. *Property*— 1. A central conference, through a duly incorporated property-holding body or bodies, shall have authority to purchase, own, hold, or transfer property for and on behalf of all the unincorporated organizations of The United Methodist Church within its boundaries or on behalf of other organizations of The United Methodist Church that have entrusted their property to that central conference.

2. A central conference shall have authority to make the necessary rules and provisions for the holding and management of such properties; provided, however, that a) all procedure shall be subject to the laws of the country or countries concerned; and b) no action shall be taken transferring or alienating property or proceeds of property without due consideration of its trusteeship for local churches, annual

conferences, the General Board of Global Ministries, and other organizations, local or general, of the Church.

3. A central conference or any of its incorporated organizations shall not involve a general agency of the Church in any financial obligation without the official approval of said agency or organization. All invested funds, fiduciary trusts, or property belonging to an annual conference, a provisional annual conference, or a mission, or any of its institutions, acquired by bequest, donation, or otherwise and designated for a specific use, shall be applied to the purpose for which they were designated. They shall not be diverted to any other purpose, except by the consent of the conference or mission involved and with the approval of the central conference concerned and civil court action when necessary. The same rule shall apply to similar funds or properties acquired by a central conference for specific objects. In cases involving the diversion of trust funds and properties within the boundaries of a central conference, the central conference concerned shall determine the disposition of the interests involved, subject to an appeal to the judicial court of the central conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 517.1 = 546.1; 517.2=546.2+3; 517.3=546.4

Section IV. Provisional Central Conferences

¶ 521. *Purpose*— Annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions outside the United States that are not included in central conferences and that, because of geographical, language, political, or other considerations, have common interests that can best be served thereby, may be organized into provisional central conferences by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference. Thus, The United Methodist Church may have Provisional Central Conferences with territorial boundaries as listed in the General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 521).¹⁸

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 521 = 560

¹⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 525.

GC-R ¶ 521. *Purpose*— General Conference, by a two-thirds vote, has organized the following Provisional Central Conferences:

The United Methodist Church shall have a provisional central conference with ministries in the following countries:

a) *Southeast Asia and Mongolia Provisional Central Conference*: Laos, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam.

GBOD GC-R ¶ 521 = 560

¶ 522. *Powers and Duties*— The General Conference may grant to a provisional central conference any of the powers of a central conference except that of electing bishops.¹⁹

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 522 = 562

¹⁹ Judicial Council Decision 403.

¶ 523. *Membership*— Membership of a provisional central conference shall be according to the enabling act by the General Conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 523 = new

¶ 524. *Conference session 1. Episcopal Supervision*— The General Conference shall make provision for the episcopal supervision of work in a provisional central conference.

2. *Organization a)* The organization of a provisional central conference shall conform to the provisions prescribed for central conferences insofar as they are considered applicable by the bishop in charge.

b) The first organizational meeting of a new provisional central conference shall take place within the quadrennium after General Conference action.

c) *Ad Interim Provisions*— In the interval between General Conferences, the General Board of Global Ministries, upon the recommendation of the bishops in charge and after consultation with the annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, and missions concerned, may make changes in the boundaries of a provisional central conference. All changes in boundaries shall be reported to the ensuing session of the General Conference and shall expire at the close of that session unless renewed by the General Conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 524.1 = 566; 524.2a=561; 524.2b=new 524.2c=563

Section V. Annual Conferences

¶ 531. *Purpose* —1. The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.

2. Annual Conferences are the fundamental bodies of the Church (¶ 11).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 531 = 601

¶ 532. *Powers and Duties* — 1. The annual conference for its own government, may adopt rules and regulations not in conflict with the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.²⁰ >VII: 532.001<

2. An annual conference cannot financially obligate any organizational unit of The United Methodist Church except the annual conference itself.²¹

3.a) The clergy session of the annual conference shall have power to make inquiry into the moral and official conduct of its clergy members. Subject only to the provisions on *Judicial Administration*, the clergy session of the annual conference shall have power to hear complaints against its clergy members and may try, reprove, suspend, deprive of clergy office and credentials, expel, or acquit any against whom charges may have been preferred. The clergy session of the annual conference shall have power to locate a clergy member for failure to perform effectively and competently the duties of itinerant ministry. The actions of the clergy session shall be for and on behalf of the annual conference.²²

b) All clergy members of the annual conference and the lay members of the Board of Ordained Ministry may attend and shall have voice in the clergy session. Only the ordained clergy in full connection and the members of the Board of Ordained Ministry may vote. Others may be admitted by express action of the clergy session, but shall not have vote, nor, unless specifically granted by the clergy session, shall have voice.²³

4. The annual conference shall have power to make inquiry into the financial status of the local churches, and shall provide counsel to help a local church overcome a deficit position.

5. The annual conference shall have the power to make inquiry into the membership status of the local churches, particularly if no members have been received on confession of faith during the year.

6. The annual conference shall give recognition to any new churches that have been organized during the year. >VII: 532.002<

7. The annual conference shall make provision for legal counsel applicable to its legal context. >VII: 532.003<

8. If any annual conference initiates, joins, monitors, or terminates a boycott, the guidelines in *The Book of Resolutions* should be followed. The General Conference is the only body that can initiate, empower, or join a boycott in the name of The United Methodist Church. >VII: 532.004<

9. The annual conference may choose to adopt a conference wide plan for compensation of pastors. Such a plan shall provide the method for setting and funding the salaries, and/or other compensation elements as specified in the plan, of the pastors appointed to the charges of the annual conference.

GBOD ¶ 532.1-2=604.1-2; 532.3=604.4+605.7; 532.4-6=604.8-10; 532.7=603.8; 532.8=603.8/new; 532.8-9=604.12-13 BOD604.6-7 → see GBOD335.1!

²⁰ See Judicial Council Decisions 43, 74, 141, 318, 367, 373, 432, 435, 476, 536, 584, 590, 592, 699, 876, 1198.

²¹ See Judicial Council Decisions 707, 440.

²² See Judicial Council Decisions 534, 782.

²³ See Judicial Council Decisions 686, 690.

¶ **533. Membership** - 1. The clergy membership of an annual conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members, and local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment, each with their respective voting rights. The term *clergy members* shall refer to both active and retired members of the annual conference.²⁴ >VII: 533.001<

2. a) The lay membership of the annual conference shall consist of a professing member elected by each charge, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, home missionaries, the conference president of United Methodist Women, the conference president of United Methodist Men, the conference lay leader, district lay leaders, the president or equivalent officer of the conference young adult organization, the president of the conference youth organization, one youth and one young adult from each district to be selected in such a manner as may be determined by the annual conference according to the age provisions of the central conference or outside central conference boundaries by other legislation enacted by General Conference. If the lay membership should number less than the clergy members of the annual conference, the annual conference shall, by its own formula, provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize lay and clergy membership of the annual conference.²⁵

b) Each charge served by more than one clergy member under appointment (including deacons in full connection for whom this is their primary appointment) shall be entitled to as many lay members as there are clergy members under appointment.

c) The lay members shall have been members of The United Methodist Church for the two years preceding their election and shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years preceding their election. The four-year participation and the two-year membership requirements may be waived for young persons under thirty years of age. Such persons must be members of The United Methodist Church and active participants at the time of election. >VII: 533.002<

3. The lay member or alternate, whoever was last seated in the annual conference, shall be seated in a special session of the annual conference when convened, provided that no local charge shall be deprived of its lay member.²⁶

4. The lay members of the annual conference shall participate in all deliberations and vote upon all measures except on the granting or validation of license, ordination, reception into full conference membership, or any question concerning the character and official conduct of clergy, except those who are lay members of the Board of Ordained Ministry and committee on investigation. Lay members shall serve on all committees except those on ministerial relations.²⁷

5. It is the duty of every member to attend the sessions of the annual conference.

6. Officers who are not members of the annual conference and such additional persons as the annual conference may decide shall have voice but not vote. >VII: 533.003<

GBOD ¶ 533.1 = 602.2+502.2; 533.2=602.4; 533.3-4=602.5-6; 533.5=602.8; 533.6=602.9+10

²⁴ See Judicial Council Decisions 477, 555, 1062.

²⁵ See Judicial Council Decision 1212.

²⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 319.

²⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 109, 505.

¶ **534. Conference Session**— 1. The bishop shall appoint the times for holding the annual conference.²⁸

2. The annual conference or a committee thereof shall select the place for holding the conference session. Each central conference may provide for minimum standards for places and sites in which to hold annual conference sessions. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 534.001<

3. The agenda of the session shall be prepared by the bishop, the district superintendents, the conference lay leader, and such others as the conference may name and shall be submitted to the conference for adoption. >VII: 534.002<

4. A special session of the annual conference may be held at such time and in such place as shall have been determined by the annual conference after consultation with the bishop, or by the bishop with the concurrence of three-fourths of the district superintendents. A special session of the annual conference shall have only such powers as are stated in the call.²⁹

5. The bishop assigned shall preside over the annual conference or, in case of inability, shall arrange for another bishop to preside. In the absence of a bishop, the conference shall by ballot, without nomination or debate, elect a president *pro tempore* from among the ordained elders. The president thus elected shall discharge all the duties of a bishop except ordination.

6. At the conclusion of the examination of the standing of the clergy members or at such later times as the bishop may designate, the presiding bishop may call to the bar of the conference the class to be admitted into full connection and receive them into conference membership after asking the questions of the Historic examination. >VII: <534.003

7. The annual conference shall adopt a comprehensive policy for handling sexual and gender harassment of clergy when laypersons are the perpetrators. This policy shall guide the local church in how to handle the report, how to care for the accuser and the accused, the victim and the perpetrator, the findings and settlement. It shall make provision for support of the pastor and for care of church members.

8. Members for committees, boards, and commissions of the annual conference shall be selected in such manner as the *Discipline* may specifically require or as the annual conference may determine. Attention shall be given to inclusiveness.³⁰ >VII: 534.004<

9. The annual conference at the first session following the General Conference or central or jurisdictional conference shall elect a secretary, a conference lay leader, a statistician, and a treasurer/director of administrative services to serve for the succeeding quadrennium. In the case of a vacancy in either office, the bishop, after consultation with the district superintendents, shall appoint a person to act until the next session of the annual conference. Quadrennial elections for conference agencies shall take place the same year as the election of officers.

a) *The conference lay leader*- The conference lay leader shall be a professing member of a local church in the annual conference, shall be the chairperson of the conference board of laity, or its equivalent structure, and participate in annual conference sessions as a partner in ministry with the bishop.

The conference lay leader is the elected leader of conference laity and has responsibility for fostering awareness of the role of the laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission of the Church and enabling and supporting lay participation in the planning and decision-making processes of the annual conference in cooperation with the bishop and district superintendents. >VII: 534.005<

b) *The treasurer / director of administrative services* is directly amenable to the conference council on finance and administration, and may sit with the council and its committees at all sessions and have

the privilege of voice but not vote. The treasurer / director may serve as treasurer for any or all agencies served by a conference central treasury and report of all receipts, disbursements, and balances of all funds under his or her direction. The treasurer / director shall perform such other staff services as the council on finance and administration may require in the fulfillment of its functions and responsibilities.

>VII: 534.006<

GBOD ¶ 534.1 = 603.2; 534.2=603.3+4; 534.3=605.2; 534.4-5=603.5-6; 534.6-7=605.8+9; 534.8=605.3; 534.9=603.7+619 534.9a=607.1; 534.9b=619Intro+1b+1c(2)+1f

²⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 1206

²⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 397.

³⁰ See Judicial Council Decision 559.

¶ **535. *Records and Archives***—1. The annual conference shall keep an exact record of its proceedings according to the forms provided by the General, central, and jurisdictional conferences. If there are no archives of the annual conference, the secretary shall keep the bound copy or copies or a digital version to be handed on to the succeeding secretary.

2. Each annual conference shall send without charge to the General Commission on Archives and History, a copy of its annual journal, in printed or electronic format. Other general agencies may request such material as needed at their expense.

3. The annual conference journal shall include at least the following divisions:

- a) Officers of annual conference,
- b) Boards, commissions, committees; rolls of conference members,
- c) Daily proceedings,
- d) Business of the annual conference report (formerly known as the disciplinary questions),
- e) Appointments,
- f) Reports as ordered by the annual conference,
- g) Clergy record,
- h) Roll of deceased clergy members,
- i) Memoirs,
- j) Statistics,
- k) Miscellaneous,
- l) Index.

>VII: 535.001<

4. The secretary, or other administrative officer named by the annual conference, shall keep a complete service record of clergy and diaconal ministry personnel in the annual conference. Service records shall include but not be limited to biographical information supplied by the individual, a list of appointments, a record of annual conference actions with regard to conference relationships, and in addition descriptions of circumstances related to changes in conference relationships, credentials surrendered to the bishop or district superintendent, and confidential trial records.

5. The local church report to the annual conference shall be submitted as per the requirements of the annual conference.

6. In central conferences, official records of secretaries, statisticians, and treasurers shall be kept according to basic forms prepared by the General Council on Finance and Administration in cooperation with the central conferences so that elementary statistical data can be collected from all annual conferences. The General Council on Finance and Administration may recommend the use of more developed forms where applicable. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

7. All records of candidates and clergy and diaconal ministry personnel maintained by the conference secretary, or other administrative officer named by the annual conference, Board of

Ordained Ministry, and board of pensions, are to be kept on behalf of the annual conference, subject to the laws of the country, in conformity with guidelines provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration, in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and the following principles:

- a) The annual conference is the owner of its personnel records and files;
- b) Individuals in whose name a record is kept shall have access to the information contained in a record or file, with the exception of surrendered credentials and information for which a right-of-access waiver has been signed;
- c) Access to unpublished records by persons other than the bishop, district superintendent, conference secretary, treasurer, or other administrative officer or the Board of Ordained Ministry, through its chair, board of pensions, through its chair, counsel for the Church, and committee on investigation, through its chair, shall require written consent of the person in whose name a record is kept; access to trial records shall be governed by the provisions of the chapter on *Judicial Administration*.³¹

GBOD ¶ 535.1-3 = 606.1-3; 535.4-7=606.6-9

³¹ See Judicial Council Decisions 751, 765, 1024.

¶ 536. *Conference Agencies* —1. The annual conference is responsible for structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to accomplish its purpose. In so doing it shall provide for the connectional relationship from the annual conference to the district and the local church, as well as to the central, jurisdictional and General conference and their respective agencies. >VII: 536.001<

2. a) Annual conferences are given flexibility to design conference and district structures in ways that best support the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ in an increasingly diverse global community, except for the mandated entities. In doing so, an annual conference shall provide for such functions of and connections with the agencies of central, jurisdictional or General conference as help develop its mission.

b) Conferences are permitted to create contextually appropriate structures that encourage collaboration and partnerships among all program, administrative, and financial entities. Annual conferences may fund their ministries in ways that reflect conference priorities and structures, as approved by the annual conference in the budgeting process.

c) It is recommended that each annual conference have a director of connectional ministries or designated person to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within the annual conference. The director may be lay or clergy, and shall serve as an officer of the annual conference and shall sit with the cabinet when the cabinet considers matters relating to coordination, implementation, or administration of the vision and program of the annual conference. Whether appointed or elected to this position, the director shall be amenable to the bishop, in consultation with the appropriate annual conference personnel body. >VII: 536.002-536.027<

3. In central conferences, the mandated entities for each annual conference shall be the Council on Finance and Administration (¶538) and the Board of Ordained Ministry (¶539). Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

4. Provisions for membership of mandated entities shall be made by each central conference, or in territories outside central conference boundaries by other legislation enacted by General conference, provided that:

a) among the members in all mandated entities shall be at least one member of the cabinet as expression of its ministry of general oversight and superintendency;

b) members in the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be nominated by the presiding bishop after consultation with the chairperson of the board.³²

GBOD ¶ 536.1 = 610Intro; 536.2=610.1+608.after§6; 536.3=new+611+635; 536.4b=635.1a

³² See Judicial Council Decisions 446, 558.

¶ 537. *Property*— 1. Annual conferences, or sub-units authorized by them, may become several bodies corporate under the law of the countries, states, and territories within whose bounds they are located.³³

2. The annual conferences, or sub-units authorized by them, may create boards of trustees, and incorporate property-holding bodies, under the law of the countries, states, and territories within whose bounds they are located, to hold and administer real and personal property, receive and administer church extension and mission funds, and exercise such other powers and duties as may be set forth in its charter or articles of incorporation as authorized by the annual conference, subject to the provisions of chapter 6 on *Church Property*.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 537.1 = 603.1; 537.2=640+cf. 659.4

³³ See Judicial Council Decision 108.

¶ 538. *Council on Finance and Administration*—1. In each annual conference there shall be a conference council on finance and administration, hereinafter called the council, or other structure to provide for the functions of this ministry and maintain the connectional relationships. The council shall be amenable and report to the annual conference. >VII: 538.001<

2. *Purpose*— The purpose of the council shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference.³⁴

3. *Responsibilities*— The council shall have authority and responsibility to perform the following functions, to which others may be added by the annual conference:

a) To recommend to the annual conference for its action and determination budgets of anticipated income and proposed expenditures for all funds that provide for annual conference clergy support, annual conference administrative expenses, and annual conference benevolence and program causes.³⁴

b) To receive, consider, report, and make recommendations to the annual conference regarding the following, prior to final decision by the annual conference: (1) any proposal to raise capital funds for any purpose; (2) funding considerations related to any proposal that may come before the conference; (3) any requests to conduct a special conference-wide financial appeal.

c) To recommend to the annual conference for its action and decision the methods or formulas by which apportionments to churches, charges, or districts for duly authorized funds shall be determined.³⁶

d) To develop policies and practices in the employment and compensation of personnel, in accordance with the Social Principles.

e) To develop policies governing the construction, renovation and managing of church property, in consultation with boards of trustees where they exist.

f) To develop policies governing the investment of conference funds (except for pension funds managed by the applicable board of pensions), in a manner consistent with the preservation of capital, the Policies Relative to Socially Responsible Investments, and the Social Principles of the Church.

g) To develop policies governing the auditing of the financial records of the conference, its agencies and entities within its boundaries.

h) To develop policies governing the bonding of conference and conference agency officers and staff whose responsibilities include the custody or handling of conference funds or other negotiable assets:

>VII: 538.002-538.006<

GBOD ¶ 538.1 = 611+612.6; 538.2=612.1; 538.3=613.1-3+13+7+5+617Intro+618Intro

³⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 1054.

³⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 521, 551, 560, 590, 744.

³⁶ See Judicial Council Decision 983.

¶ **539. Board of Ordained Ministry—** 1. *Organization* – In each annual conference there shall be a Board of Ordained Ministry. In central conferences, the annual conference, upon recommendation of its Board of Ordained Ministry, may create an executive committee of the Board, district committees on ordained ministry, or other appropriate structure, as it serves the need to carry out the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and assign and delegate to such structures the appropriate tasks and responsibilities it chooses. With regard to mandated sub-units of the Board of Ordained Ministry and their respective tasks and responsibilities, jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. The Board shall be amenable and report to the annual conference. >VII: 539.001-539.002<

2. *Purpose*— The purpose of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be to develop, oversee and administer a comprehensive and coordinated approach to all matters related to the ordained ministry. Concerning all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy it brings recommendations directly to the clergy session of the annual conference.

3. *Responsibilities*— The Board of Ordained Ministry shall have authority and responsibility to perform the following functions, to which others may be added by the annual conference:

a) To assume the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of licensed and ordained clergy. It shall, with the assistance of the local church committee on pastor-parish relations, and every clergy of the conference, enlist women and men of all races and ethnic origins for the ordained ministry and guide those persons in the process of education, training, licensing and ordination;

b) To relate to, and develop cooperation with theological institutions and programs approved for the training of United Methodist clergy;

c) To examine and make full inquiry as to the fitness of candidates for: (1) annual election as local pastor; (2) election to associate membership; (3) election to provisional membership; and (4) election to full conference membership.

d) To evaluate and make recommendations concerning character and effectiveness of clergy, and to equip, train, and elect mentors;

e) To evaluate and make recommendations for all elections to, renewal of, and changes concerning certified candidates and conference relationship of clergy;³⁷

f) To keep records of all changes of conference relationship and place a copy in the permanent records of the annual conference, and to ensure confidentiality in relation to the interview and reporting process. There are occasions when the Board of Ordained Ministry would not report privileged information, which in the judgment of the board, if revealed in the clergy session of the annual conference, would be an undue invasion of privacy without adding measurably to the conference's information about the person's qualifications for ordained ministry. However, it is the right of the clergy session of the annual conference to receive all pertinent information, confidential or otherwise, related to the qualifications and/or character of any candidate or clergy member of the conference, subject to the laws of the country.³⁸

g) To report in a timely manner any change in the conference relationship of a clergy member of the conference to the applicable board of pension.

h) To be in consultation with the bishop through the chairperson regarding transfers. This consultation is to be at the bishop's initiative.

i) To provide support services for the clergy, including counseling, continuing education, continuing spiritual growth in Christ, evaluating the effectiveness, and assistance in preparation for retirement.

k) To work with and support the Order of Deacon and the Order of Elder, and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. >VII: 539.003-539.004<

4. *Membership*— The membership of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall consist of at least six ordained clergy in full membership and at least one-fifth laypersons. All laypersons shall be professing members of local churches in the annual conference.

>VII: 539.005<

GBOD ¶ 539.1 = 635.1+1b+NEW305.6; 539.2=new; 539.3a=635.2a; 539.3b=new; 539.3c=635.2h; 539.3d=635.new+2f; 539.3e-f=635.2j-m; 539.2g=635.2z; 539h-k-=635.2n-p; 539.4=635.1

³⁷ See Judicial Council Decisions 405, 1263.

³⁸ See Judicial Council Decision 406.

Section VI. Provisional Annual Conferences

¶ 541. *Purpose*— A provisional annual conference shares the same purpose with an annual conference, but because of its limited membership, does not qualify for annual conference status. The creation of a provisional annual conference is part of a missional development which should lead to an annual conference within twelve years.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 541=580

¶ 542. *Powers and Duties*— 1. Any mission established under the provisions of the *Discipline*, and any geographical part of an annual conference may be constituted as a provisional annual conference by the General Conference, upon recommendation by the central conference or provisional central conference, within which it is located, and in consultation with the General Board of Global Ministries and the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, provided that:

a) No provisional annual conference shall be organized with fewer than ten elders in provisional or full connection, or be continued, after completion of the initial quadrennium, with fewer than six elders in full connection.

b) Membership, worship attendance, leadership development, and financial contributions have shown a reasonable progress during the previous quadrennium and give evidence for continued growth towards becoming an annual conference.

2. A provisional annual conference shall be organized in the same manner and have the same powers and functions as an annual conference, subject to the approval of the bishop in charge.

3. If a provisional annual conference, after three quadrennia, does not show progress towards becoming an annual conference, the following session of the central conference shall review said conference, consult with the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, and recommend to the following General Conference on continuation or discontinuation as a provisional annual conference. The provisional annual conference shall only be continued with sufficient missional, geographical, and contextual reasons.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 542.1+a+b = 581Intro+1+3; 542.2=582Intro; 542.3=new

¶ 543. *Membership*— A provisional annual conference shall be organized with the same provisions for membership as an annual conference.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 543 = new

¶ 544. *Conference Session*— 1. A provisional annual conference shall be organized with the same provisions for a conference session as an annual conference insofar as they are considered applicable by the bishop in charge.

2. The bishop in charge may appoint a superintendent to whom may be committed specific responsibility as liaison to the General Board of Global Ministries.

3. In a provisional annual conference receiving major funding from the General Board of Global Ministries, the assigned staff of the board shall provide consultation and guidance in setting up the annual budget and Advance projects within the conference, aiming to increase self-support.

4. A provisional annual conference shall elect one clergy and one layperson as delegates to the General Conference. Delegates to central conferences shall be elected in accordance with ¶ 513.1.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 544.1 = new; 544.2=582.1; 544.3=582.3; 544.4=582.4

Section VII. District Conferences

¶ 551. *District Conferences*— Each central conference shall establish provisions for organizing within annual conferences District Conferences, district administrative structures, and district agencies, or delegate such power to the annual conferences within its boundaries. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 551.001-551.007<

GBOD ¶ 551 = new, cf. 658+659.1

Section VIII. Missions

¶ 561. *Purpose* -1. The purpose of a mission is to provide and develop ministry with a particular group or region whose potential and need cannot be met within the existing structures and resources of annual or district conference(s). A mission may also be the initial stage in moving toward the formation of a provisional annual conference.

2. In accordance with the Wesleyan ecumenical spirit, in all phases of mission development, the initiating United Methodist entities will consult with, and where possible create cooperative relationships with Wesleyan communions. They will promote relationships with other denominations serving in the area, and with interdenominational and ecumenical organizations. Where appropriate, they will engage in dialogue with interfaith agencies and organizations.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 561 = 590

¶ 562. *Powers and Duties*— 1. A mission is an organizational body for a field of work inside, outside, or across the structures of annual conferences, or provisional annual conferences.

2. A mission may be established by the General Board of Global Ministries, or by a central or annual conference in cooperation with the General Board of Global Ministries.

3. The boundaries for a mission established by a central or annual conference(s) in cooperation with the General Board of Global Ministries are to be determined by the central or annual conference(s) and the General Board of Global Ministries. If a mission is established by the General Board of Global Ministries outside territories of a central or provisional central conference, the General Board of Global Ministries will establish the boundaries.

4.a) When the mission lies within the bounds of one episcopal area, the resident bishop shall preside over the mission.

b) When the mission crosses the boundaries of one or more episcopal areas, central or jurisdictional conferences, the College(s) of Bishops, in consultation with the general secretary of the General Board

of Global Ministries, shall assign a bishop to the mission.

c) When the mission lies outside the bounds of an established episcopal area in central or jurisdictional conferences, the Council of Bishops, in consultation with the general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, will assign a bishop to be its presiding officer.

5. The entity or entities establishing a mission, in collaboration with the assigned bishop will seek a cooperative agreement with an annual conference which will serve as the correspondent annual conference to the mission for the purposes of ordination and conference membership as well as for local pastor licensing.

6. The annual meeting of the mission shall have the power to certify candidates for the ordained ministry, to receive and to examine mission pastors and local elders in mission, and to recommend to an annual conference proper persons for provisional or full membership and ordination.

7. The entity or entities initiating a mission shall be responsible for its administration and development and for making sure that the mission sets up, organizes and implements the necessary mechanisms and processes to fulfill the functions of the mission.

8. Neither the mission nor its officers shall assume financial obligations or make financial commitments on behalf of the General Board of Global Ministries without the board's written authorization.

9. Recommendations for a change of status of a mission shall be made by the entity or entities which established the mission.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 562 = 591

¶ 563. *Membership* - 1. A mission shall be made up of all regularly appointed missionaries, both lay and clergy, local elders in mission, mission pastors, and other lay members. The mission shall determine the number of lay members and the method of their selection. In so doing, it shall ensure that all aspects of the mission's work are represented.³⁹

2. In territories outside the boundaries of central or annual conferences, the bishop assigned to the mission and the General Board of Global Ministries recommend the educational requirements for local elders in mission and mission pastors. Such recommendations and requirements shall be approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

a) Local elders in mission are ordained members of the mission and are not members of an annual conference. Local elders in mission are limited in their itineration and sacramental authority to the bounds of the mission and as such are not eligible to transfer their credentials to another annual conference.

b) Mission pastors are members of the mission without being members of an annual conference. The mission shall determine the requirements for a mission pastor in order to most effectively utilize the indigenous leadership. Mission pastors are limited in their itineration to the bounds of the mission.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 563=592;

³⁹ See Judicial Council Decision 341.

¶ 564. *Annual Meeting*— 1. A mission shall meet annually at the time and place designated by the bishop in charge, who shall preside. In the absence of the bishop, a superintendent of the mission shall preside. The presiding officer shall bring forward the regular business of the meeting and arrange the work.

2. The assigned bishop, in consultation with the entity or entities establishing the mission, may appoint one or more superintendents of the mission.

3. At the annual meeting, the bishop shall assign the missionaries, local elders in mission, and mission pastors to the several charges for the ensuing year; provided that transfer of missionaries related to the General Board of Global Ministries shall be completed only after consultation with the board.

4. A mission related to a central conference is authorized to elect and send one lay and one clergy to the central conference as its representative, with voice but not vote.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 564 = 593

Section IX. Joining The United Methodist Church

¶ 571. *Joining The United Methodist Church* -1. A church outside the United States may join The United Methodist Church when all of the following requirements are fulfilled:

a) Said church shall accept and approve the Constitution, Articles of Faith, *Discipline*, and polity of The United Methodist Church.

b) Said church, if it is within the boundaries of a central or provisional central conference, shall apply for membership in that conference. Such application shall be reviewed and recommended by the central or provisional central conference. In the event that said church is not within the boundaries of an existing central or provisional central conference, then its membership application shall be reviewed and recommended by the Council of Bishops.

c) Said church shall declare that, upon consummation of becoming an integral part of The United Methodist Church, its former constitution and church order becomes null and void.

2. The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters shall advise and assist said church in the process of joining The United Methodist Church and prepare the necessary enabling act for approval by the General Conference, including necessary adjustments in the organization of the central or provisional central conferences.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 571.1 = 575Intro+.1-3; 571.2=575.4-5

Chapter Five

Administrative Order

Important Note on the draft for Chapter 5:

For Chapter 5, the Standing Committee presents some samples of its ongoing work. The samples indicate the direction of the transformative work needed in this chapter for discerning essentials that shall bind us connectionally together in being agents of God’s mission on all levels of conferencing. There has been a clear realization that the existing Chapter 5 is an extremely U.S. created and driven chapter. In order to give contextual freedom to adapt, there must be a clearly stated way in which that contextualization can occur (e.g. below ¶821 United Methodist Women).

The core values for the revision work are:

- Alignment (with the mission);
- Global (in scope);
- Simplification (of the various elements);
- Focus (on the specifics);
- Creativity (of the ministries);
- Relevance (to the context);
- Consistency (of the format).

The main focus of these samples is: not “how” an agency should work, but “why” the work of an agency is essential to creating a Methodist ethos and presence in diverse settings across the world. Therefore, the ongoing work on chapter 5 has developed the following minimum description for the new Part VI with samples in a consistent format:

- Provision with scriptural / theological / Wesleyan grounding;
- Purpose / mission;
- Goals / strategies;
- Amenability and Accountability.

Additional elements (e.g. membership; organizational, or legal, etc.) will be needed for a finalized draft. They may be contained in GC-R paragraphs (*General Conference-Regulations*) within this new Part VI, or may be moved to the new Part VII (*Additional Organization and Administration*).

This unfinished draft gives an idea how a consistent structuring of Chapter 5, with a focus on “why”, might look like.

As this chapter contains samples and no finalized draft, Judicial Council Decisions are not yet updated. Furthermore, no additional versions for a full comparison to the BOD2016 with tracking changes have been produced so far.

Chapter Five

Administrative Order

*“God’s self-revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ summons the church to ministry in the world through witness by word and deed in light of the church’s mission. ... United Methodists throughout the world are bound together in a **connectional covenant** in which we support and hold each other accountable for faithful discipleship and mission ...”* (¶ 124-125)

Section I. General Provisions

[BOD ¶¶ 701-724 → GBOD ¶¶ 701ff]

¶ 701. *General Provisions for Administrative Order*— 1. The connectional covenant (¶ 124-125) refers to the specific way The United Methodist Church lives in community and continuous interconnection. It is the embodiment of Biblical metaphors such as the Church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12), and the vine and the branches (John 15). In this connectional relationship, each and every part of the body has particular and specific responsibilities.

2. Often, within the church, the term *agency* is limited in usage, referring to an organizational structure of the general church. However, the word *agency* refers to the God-given ability and authority to act. Thus, individuals, congregations, and conferences all exercise agency. Furthermore, all agency is grace induced, which means that all agency is an expression of human activity participating in God’s work of grace in all creation. Such empowerment happens best in a spirit of partnership.

3. This ability to participate in God’s grace-filled work requires authority and freedom. At its best, agency means communal participation, offered and enacted with humility (Phil 2:3-8). As agents in a worldwide ecclesiological framework, United Methodists (as individuals, congregations, or designated connectional units) are called to mirror vital aspects of redeemed humanity as a whole: reconciled diversity, intercultural sensitivity, and commitment to peace and justice.

GBOD ¶ 701 = New

¶ 702. *Provisions for General Agencies*— Based on this understanding of agency, the administrative units known as *general agencies* are called into being and authorized by the General Conference and given particular and distinctive responsibilities. They uniquely serve between the global and the local. They seek to collaborate with other agencies within The United Methodist Church, the worldwide Methodist relationships, and ecumenical partnerships in fulfilling its vocation of spreading scriptural holiness across the land and around the globe. All agency ministries are grounded in God’s word and grace, seek to be accountable, transparent, and leave room for contextual application.

GBOD ¶ 702 = New

Section II. Programmatic Ministries I – General Board of Church and Society

[BOD ¶¶ 1001-1011 → GBOD ¶¶ 711ff]

¶ 711. *Provision*— 1. There shall be a General Board of Church and Society in The United Methodist Church.

2. The work and ministry of the general board is shaped by Christ’s command to love neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:31), and the admonition from the prophets for justice, righteousness and mercy (Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24). The prophets and Jesus consistently warned leaders who would oppress and deny justice to others.

3. Wesley worked tirelessly for justice in all domains. From John Wesley's charge to "*reform the nation and, in particular, the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land*", Methodism is rooted in a call to transform the world through personal and social holiness.

GBOD ¶ 711 = 1001+new

¶ 712. *Purpose*— The purpose of the general board shall be to relate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the members of the Church and to the persons and structures of the communities, nations and world in which they live. It shall seek ways to bring the whole of human life - activities, possessions, use of resources and community and world relationships - into conformity with the will of God. It shall witness to the members of both Church and the society that the reconciliation that God effected through Christ involves personal, social and civic righteousness.

GBOD ¶ 712 = 1002

¶ 713. *Goals*— The following goals enable the general board in achieving its purpose:

1. Analyze local and global issues that confront persons, communities, nations, and world.
2. Encourage Christian lines of action that assist humankind to move toward a world in which peace and justice are achieved.
3. Assist district and annual conferences in the US, and Central Conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe with needed and requested resources in areas of such concern.
4. Develop plans and programs that challenge members of the UMC to work through their local churches, ecumenical channels and community efforts toward personal, social and civic righteousness.
5. Seek the implementation of the Social Principles and other policy statements of the General Conference on social concerns for Christians.

GBOD ¶ 713 = 1003 (partly new)

¶ 714. *Scope and strategies*— 1. The scope of the general board's work includes those outlined in the Social Principles. These include civil and human rights, economic justice, environmental justice, health and wholeness and well-being of women and children in the social community. The general board shall be an advocate for justice and peace, integrating personal responsibility with social policy, and spiritual transformation with institutional change.

2. The following strategies shall help the general board to fulfill the goals:
 - a) Implementation and promotion of the Social Principles and other policy statements of the General Conference on Christian social concerns throughout the global church;
 - b) Witness and action on issues of human well-being, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;
 - c) Analysis of long-range social trends, the underlying ethical values, and exploration of strategies for alternative futures, speaking its convictions and concerns to the Church and world;
 - d) Development of faith-based coalitions and networks (local, ecumenical, regional, national and international) in which multiple agencies exchange ideas, strategies, and advocacy for a more just and caring world.
 - e) Development and distribution of contextually relevant resources and programs that inform, motivate, train and build networks for action toward social justice;
 - f) Educating, equipping and connecting advocates of United Methodists in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America to form a global network for justice in every nation;

g) Facilitate and coordinate the legislative advocacy activities in the United States Congress of other general agencies of The United Methodist Church that receive General Church funds. (This is currently a separate item in ¶ 1004)

h) Offering opportunities for learning and engagement for youth, young clergy, and emerging leadership in the U.S and Central Conferences to awaken a desire for justice and peace in the world.
GBOD ¶ 714 = 1004 (partly new)

¶ 715. *Amenability and Accountability*—The general board shall have a Board of Directors which establishes its Bylaws, which shall not violate any provision of the *Discipline*. The board shall be amenable to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. Between sessions of the General Conference, it shall be accountable to the Connectional Table for its work, its report, and its evaluation, based on its purpose, goals, and other legislated responsibilities.

GBOD ¶ 715 = 1006+1011+new

Section III. Programmatic Ministries II – General Board of Discipleship

[BOD ¶¶ 1101-1126 → GBOD ¶¶ 721ff]

¶ 721. *Provision*— 1. There shall be a General Board of Discipleship, also known as Discipleship Ministries, in The United Methodist Church.

2. The work and ministry of the general board is grounded by the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19); and to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ to attain unity of faith (Ephesians 4:12-13).

3. Wesley envisioned various ways to equip the saints and grow in Christlikeness including the Oxford Holy Club, and later Band and Class meetings in the Methodist Societies.

GBOD ¶ 721 = 1101+new

¶ 722. *Purpose*—The purpose of the general board shall be to support the nurturing, and caring ministries of all congregations in The United Methodist Church. The general board shall seek ways assist annual and central conferences, districts, and local churches of all membership sizes to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Further, it shall provide leadership and resources that persons may grow in faith as children of God and members of the global Christian community to fulfill their common discipleship in the world.

GBOD ¶ 722 = 1101+new

¶ 723. *Goals*—The following goals shall enable the general board to achieve its purposes:

1. Provide publications directed for local church nurture, outreach and witness, within the framework of cultural differences across the global faith community;

2. Manage the publications of The Upper Room and other resources in multiple languages to help people grow in their relationship with God;

3. Facilitate areas that expand knowledge and strategic conversation for contextualized ministries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America;

4. Provide leadership and resources for local churches for the areas of Christian education, worship, music, evangelism, new church development, stewardship, lay leadership development, all age-level and

family ministries, small group ministries, and spiritual formation, as appropriate within the ethnic, cultural and contextual frameworks in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America;

5. Develop contextual ministries for the laity that nurture faith, and build a global Christian community;

6. Provide research and innovation for the global faith community for creation of new effective programs, resources, and methods of faith formation and intentional discipleship;

7. Equip and empower Ministries with Young People.

GBOD ¶ 723 = 1102+new

¶ 724. *Amenability and Accountability*—The general board shall have a Board of Directors which establishes its Bylaws, which shall not violate any provision of the *Discipline*. The Board is amenable to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. Between sessions of the General Conference, it shall be accountable to the Connectional Table for its work, its report, and its evaluation, based on its purpose, goals, and other legislated responsibilities.

GBOD ¶ 724 = 1103, 1104, 1105

Section IV. Programmatic Ministries III – General Board of Global Ministries

[BOD ¶¶ 1301-1315 → GBOD ¶¶ 731ff]

¶ 731. *Provision*— 1. There shall be a General Board of Global Ministries in The United Methodist Church.

2. Missional mandates are throughout scripture, constantly calling the church to care for people beyond the gathered community: “Go, make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28); “as you have done it to one of the least of these...you did it to me” (Matthew 25) and “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind...let the oppressed go free.” (Isaiah /Luke 4).

3. Wesley’s vision was social and sacramental, with the world being the parish. The United Methodist mission is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (¶120). The transforming power belongs to God. Global Ministries is in mission to learn and witness to what God has done and is doing in every land where disciples gather in the name of Jesus Christ. God’s mission is theologically perceived from creation to completion (¶124).

GBOD ¶ 731 = 1301+new

¶ 732. *Purpose*— 1. The purpose of the general board shall be to discern those places where the gospel has not been heard or heeded and to witness to its meaning throughout the world, inviting all persons to newness of life in Jesus Christ and to express the mission of the Church by sending and connecting the global Church in mission through a variety of programs and partnerships.

2. The general board shall engage in global mission by alleviating human suffering and seeking justice, freedom and peace. This engagement in mission shall be a sign of God’s continuing presence in the world. The general board shall include the United Methodist Committee on Relief or UMCOR, providing nonsectarian disaster response and sustainable development worldwide.

GBOD ¶ 732.1 = 1302; 732.2 = 1315

¶ 733. *Goals*— The following goals shall enable the general board to achieve its purpose:

1. To engage in a range of missional efforts and persons of various professions, including pastors, educators, agriculturalists, health coordinators and doctors, congregation and leadership developers;

2. To respond to natural disasters through UMCOR and address issues of hunger, health, and immigration including uprooted people;
3. To develop Advance Special Projects that enable support mission projects and missionaries throughout the world;
4. To design and oversee short and long-term Volunteer-in-Mission opportunities;
5. To explore a new vision of partnership with churches and missionaries around the world, focusing on mutual relationships based on respect, service, support and prayer;
6. To create Mission Opportunities for Young People.

GBOD ¶ 733 = 1303

¶ 734. *Strategies*—The following strategies shall help the general board to fulfill the goals by:

1. Engaging annual conferences in North America and central conferences in Africa, Asia, and Europe to explore ways to support current work in mission;
2. Building relationships and capacities among global mission partners to assist each to establish, lead, and grow churches in their regions;
3. Emphasizing the importance of global missionaries, young adult missionaries, and volunteer laity to serve by increasing recruitment and places of assignment;
4. Promoting health for all, especially children, establishing and expanding lifesaving and health promoting measures, with special attention to the economically vulnerable;
5. Increasing humanitarian assistance more fully and regularly by integrating immediate disaster response with long-range sustainable development;

GBOD ¶ 734 = 1303+new

¶ 735. *Amenability and Accountability*—The general board shall have a Board of Directors which establishes its Bylaws, which shall not violate any provision of the *Discipline*. The board shall be amenable to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. Between sessions of the General Conference, it shall be accountable to the Connectional Table for its work, its report, and its evaluation, based on its purpose, goals, and other legislated responsibilities

GBOD ¶ 735 = 1305+1311+new

Section V. Programmatic Ministries IV – General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

[BOD ¶¶ 1401-1423 → GBOD ¶¶ 741ff]

¶ 741. *Provision*— 1. There shall be a General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in The United Methodist Church.

2. The work and ministry of the general board is grounded in Scripture, including passages such as “...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with...and with all your mind...;” (Matthew 22:37-40) and “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11-12). Jesus emphasized that these words are the root of all the commandments that are given to the disciples.

3. A distinctive Wesleyan emphasis is understanding that Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illumined by Tradition, vivified in personal Experience and confirmed by Reason. The general board shall be an advocate for the intellectual opportunities of and for the Church and its leadership.

GBOD ¶ 741 = 1401+new

¶ 742. *Purpose*— 1. The purpose of the general board shall be to prepare leaders for a global church and ministry in and for the world. The general board shall provide general guidance and care for campus ministries and institutions of higher education, including schools, colleges, universities and theological schools, in the U.S. and, as appropriate in Central Conferences.

2. The general board shall recognize the call and the gifts of the whole church, and to affirm those who respond to God’s call by offering themselves in leadership as set-apart ministers. It shall provide training and resources as persons discover their call, claim it and flourish by fulfilling their ministry in Christ through the several special ministries, ordained and diaconal. Further, it will interpret the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world for the ordering of ministry to the global church. The distinctive functions of the orders are Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion and Justice, all of which can be both contextual and incarnational.

GBOD ¶ 742 = 1404+new

¶ 743. *Goals*—The following goals shall enable the general board to achieve its purpose:

1. To study, interpret, understand, communicate and promote the significance of higher education and ministry in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America;

2. To develop guidelines, standards, criteria, and procedures for certification in professional ministerial careers and for ordination into the ordained ministry;

3. To provide trainings, counsel, guidance, and assistance to annual conferences in North America, and central conferences in Asia, Africa, and Europe through their boards of ordained ministry and higher education and campus ministry;

4. To explore new types of ministries, to study and creatively develop relevant resources for ordained and diaconal ministries, in the both central conference and American contexts;

5. To educate and provide evaluation tools for clergy, their continuing education, professional growth, quality of performance and assessment of effectiveness for the mission of the church.

GBOD ¶ 743 = 1405

¶ 744. *Amenability and Accountability*— The general board shall have a Board of Directors which establishes its Bylaws, which shall not violate any provision of the *Discipline*. The board shall be amenable to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. Between sessions of the General Conference, it shall be accountable to the Connectional Table for its work, its report, and its evaluation, based on its purpose, goals, and other legislated responsibilities.

GBOD ¶ 744 = 1409

Section VI. Focused Ministries I – Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters

[BOD ¶ 2201 → GBOD ¶¶ 801ff]

(or option to move to chapter 4, section I, General Conference, and add to ¶ 504 and GC-R ¶ 504)

¶ 801ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section VII. Focused Ministries II – Ministries with Young People

[BOD ¶¶ 1201-1212 → GBOD ¶¶ 811ff]

¶ 811ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section VIII. Focused Ministries III – United Methodist Women

[BOD ¶¶ 1901-1918 → GBOD ¶¶ 821ff]

¶ 821ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

¶ 821. Provision—1. There shall be an organization called United Methodist Women in The United Methodist Church.

2. The New Testament has many references to women in ministry. Luke refers to women who were healed and provided for Jesus' ministry out of their resources. (Luke 8:3) Lydia was a business woman in Thyatira (Acts 18) who, after she was baptized, offered hospitality to the Apostle Paul. Paul also had a commendation for Phoebe, a deacon in the early church (Romans 16). These ministries of women in the early church are extended, expanded and continued through United Methodist Women.

3. Women in each of the central conferences of The United Methodist Church, in the United States, and in each of the annual conferences of The United Methodist Church, shall have the right to organize for the purposes set forth below, to use the name United Methodist Women or another one deemed suitable, to organize at local, district, circuit levels and in other configurations that help women further the purpose, and to elect their own leaders through processes that they develop and manage. Annual Conference UMW organizations shall be directly related to their central conference structure outside the US and in their jurisdiction and national structure in the U.S.

GBOD ¶ 821 = 1901+new

Section IX. Focused Ministries IV – United Methodist Men

[BOD ¶¶ 2301-2303 → GBOD ¶¶ 831ff]

¶ 831ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section X. Focused Ministries V – General Commission on Religion and Race

[BOD ¶¶ 2001-2008 → GBOD ¶¶ 841ff]

¶ 841ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*

- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

¶ 841. *Provision*— 1. There shall be a General Commission on Religion and Race in The United Methodist Church.

2. The work and ministry of the commission is shaped by the Great Commandment of loving God and loving people. The early church realized the importance of caring for others: “If then there is any encouragement in Christ...Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:1-4). The Great Commission of going to all nations can also be understood as going into every ethnic community and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

3. The commission’s work is informed by the teachings of John Wesley, who embraced the diversity of God’s world as his parish. John Wesley and Charles Wesley established class meetings to address social issues such as class, race, and ethnicity in church and society. Given the undergirding of Scripture, the work of the commission expresses the core values: Love, Grace, Equity, Justice, Respect, and Mutual Accountability.

GBOD ¶ 841 = 2001+new

Section XI. Focused Ministries VI – General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

[BOD ¶¶ 2101-2109 → GBOD ¶¶ 851ff]

¶ 851ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

¶ 851. *Provision*—1. There shall be a General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church.

2. Faith communities are called to live fully into the biblical promise that “there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). The Scripture offers clear and unequivocal commitment to the equality of women and their full inclusion in all faith communities as the Spirit falls indiscriminately upon all flesh, male and female (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17).

3. Susanna Wesley was known for spiritual development for her children through weekly one-on-one time for spiritual direction. John Wesley was a reformer regarding women in ministry as he encouraged women to preach in cells and society meetings. Leadership by men and women was a key component of the early Methodist movement.

GBOD ¶ 851 = 2101+new

Section XII. Focused Ministries VII – JustPeace

[BOD ¶¶ 2401 → GBOD ¶¶ 861ff]

¶ 861ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XIII. Organizational Ministries I – General Commission on Archives and History

[BOD ¶¶ 1701-1712 → GBOD ¶¶ 901ff]

¶ 901ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XIV. Organizational Ministries II – General Commission on Communication

[BOD ¶¶ 1801-1808 → GBOD ¶¶ 911ff]

¶ 911ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XV. Organizational Ministries III – General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Wespath)

[BOD ¶¶ 1501-1509 → GBOD ¶¶ 921ff]

¶ 921ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XVI. Organizational Ministries IV – The United Methodist Publishing House

[BOD ¶¶ 1601-1641 → GBOD ¶¶ 931ff]

¶ 931ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XVII. Organizational Ministries V – Connectional Table

[BOD ¶¶ 901-907 → GBOD ¶¶ 941ff]

¶ 941ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Section XVIII. Organizational Ministries VI – General Council on Finance and Administration

[BOD ¶¶ 801-824 → GBOD ¶¶ 951ff]

¶ 951ff.

- *Provision (Scriptural / theological grounding)*
- *Purpose*
- *Responsibilities / Goals*
- *Amenability and Accountability*

Chapter Six

Church Property

Section I. All Titles—In Trust

¶ 2501. *Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property*—1. All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, *in trust*, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the *Discipline*, and is to be in compliance with applicable local laws. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations or communions and has been a part of the *Discipline* since 1797. It reflects the connectional structure of the Church by ensuring that the property will be used solely for purposes consonant with the mission of the entire denomination as set forth in the *Discipline*. The trust requirement is thus a fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.

In consonance with the legal definition and self-understanding of The United Methodist Church (see ¶ 141), and with particular reference to its lack of capacity to hold title to property, The United Methodist Church is organized as a connectional structure, and titles to all real and personal, tangible and intangible property held at central, jurisdictional, annual, or district conference levels, or by a local church or charge, or by an agency or institution of the Church, shall be held in trust for The United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of its *Discipline*. Titles are not held by The United Methodist Church (see BOD ¶ 807.1) or by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, but instead by the incorporated conferences, agencies, or organizations of the denomination, or in the case of unincorporated bodies of the denomination, by boards of trustees established for the purpose of holding and administering real and personal, tangible and intangible property.

2. The trust is and always has been irrevocable, except as provided in the *Discipline*. Property can be released from the trust, transferred free of trust or subordinated to the interests of creditors and other third parties only to the extent authority is given by the *Discipline*.

3. Local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions may acquire, hold, maintain, improve, and sell property for purposes consistent with the mission of the Church, unless restricted or prevented by the *Discipline*.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2501.1-3 = 2501.1-3

¶ 2502. *Registration of the Name United Methodist*—The words *United Methodist* are not to be used as, or as a part of, a trade name or trademark or as a part of the name of any business firm or organization, except by corporations or other business units created for the administration of work undertaken directly by The United Methodist Church. The General Council on Finance and Administration is charged with supervision and registration of “United Methodist” and the denomination’s insignia (BOD ¶ 807.10 and ¶ 807.11).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2502 = 2502

¶ 2503. *Trust Clauses in Deeds*— 1. Except in conveyances that require that the real property so conveyed shall revert to the grantor if and when its use as a place of divine worship has been terminated, all written instruments of conveyance by which premises are held or hereafter acquired for use as a place of divine worship or other activities for members of The United Methodist Church shall¹ ensure that said premises shall be used, kept, and maintained as a place of divine worship of the United Methodist ministry and members of The United Methodist Church; subject to the *Discipline*, usage, and ministerial

appointments of said Church as from time to time authorized and declared by the General Conference and by the annual conference within whose bounds the said premises are situated. This provision is solely for the benefit of the grantee, and the grantor reserves no right or interest in said premises.

2. All written instruments by which premises are held or hereafter acquired as a parsonage for the use and occupancy of the clergy of The United Methodist Church shall ensure that said premises shall be held, kept, and maintained as a place of residence for the use and occupancy of the clergy of The United Methodist Church who may from time to time be entitled to occupy the same by appointment; subject to the *Discipline* and usage of said Church as from time to time authorized and declared by the General Conference and by the annual conference within whose bounds the said premises are situated. This provision is solely for the benefit of the grantee, and the grantor reserves no right or interest in said premises.

3. In case the property so acquired is to be used for both a house of worship and a parsonage the provisions of both trust mandates specified in §1 and §2 above shall be included in the conveyance.

4. In case the property so acquired is not to be used exclusively for a place of worship, or a parsonage, or both, all written instruments by which such premises are held or hereafter acquired shall ensure that said premises shall be kept, maintained, and disposed of for the benefit of The United Methodist Church and subject to the usages and the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church. This provision is solely for the benefit of the grantee, and the grantor reserves no right or interest in said premises.

5. When property is acquired from another United Methodist entity or organization, whether it is to be used as a place of divine worship, parsonage, or for other use, all written instruments by which such premises are held or hereafter acquired shall ensure that said premises shall be held, kept, maintained, and disposed of for the benefit of The United Methodist Church and subject to the usages and the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church.

6. The failure to meet the requirements of §§ 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 above in deeds and conveyances executed previously or in the future shall in no way exclude a local church or church agency, or the board of trustees of either, from or relieve it of its connectional responsibilities to The United Methodist Church. Nor shall it absolve a local church or church agency or the board of trustees of either, of its responsibility and accountability to The United Methodist Church, including the responsibility to hold all of its property in trust for The United Methodist Church; provided that the intent of the founders and/or a later local church or church agency, or the board of trustees of either, is shown by any or all of the following:

a) the conveyance of the property to a local church or church agency (or the board of trustees of either) of The United Methodist Church or any predecessor to The United Methodist Church;

b) the use of the name, customs, and polity of The United Methodist Church or any predecessor to The United Methodist Church in such a way as to be thus known to the community as a part of such denomination; or

c) the acceptance of the pastorate of clergy appointed by a bishop or employed by the superintendent of the district or annual conference of The United Methodist Church or any predecessor to The United Methodist Church.

7. It shall be the responsibility of each central conference, to apply the provisions in this paragraph above to meet the legal requirements and ministry needs of the various legal central conference structures, and annual conferences within its boundaries. These revisions and applications shall be reported to the General Council on Finance and Administration by the secretary of the central conference within 60 days after the close of its regular quadrennial session.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2503.1-6 = 2503.1-6; 2503.7=new

¹ See Judicial Council Decision 668.

¶ 2504. *Effect of Union*—Nothing in the Plan of Union at any time after the union is to be construed so as to require any existing local church of any predecessor denomination to The United Methodist Church to alienate or in any way to change the title to property contained in its deed or deeds at the time of union, and lapse of time or usage shall not affect said title or control. Title to all property of a local church, or charge, or agency of the Church shall be held subject to the provisions of the *Discipline*, whether title to the same is taken in the name of the local church trustees, or charge trustees, or in the name of a corporation organized for the purpose, or otherwise.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2504 = 2504

¶ 2505. *Oil, Gas, and Mineral Leases*—Subject to and in accordance with the laws of the state, province, or country, the governing body of any church unit or agency owning land in trust for The United Methodist Church as provided in *the Discipline* may lease said land for the production of oil, gas, coal, and other minerals, upon such terms as it may deem best; provided, however, that such production shall not interfere with the purpose for which said land is held. The moneys received from such leases as rentals, royalties, or otherwise shall be used so far as practicable for the benefit of the church unit and for the promotion of the interests of The United Methodist Church. The lessee shall have no control over or responsibility for the payments made under such lease.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2505 = 2505

Section II. Compliance with Law

¶ 2506. *Conformity with Local Law—Church Corporations*—1. All provisions of the *Discipline* relating to property, both real and personal, and relating to the formation and operation of any corporation, and relating to mergers are conditioned upon their being in conformity with the local laws, and in the event of conflict therewith the local laws shall prevail; provided, however, that this requirement shall not be construed to give the consent of The United Methodist Church to deprivation of its property without due process of law or to the regulation of its affairs by state statute where such regulation violates the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and separation of church and state or violates the right of the Church to maintain its connectional structure. *Local laws* shall be construed to mean the laws of the country, state, or other like political unit within the geographical bounds of which the church property is located.²

2. Any corporation which is or has been formed or is controlled by a church agency (¶ 702), acting alone or with another church agency, shall include in its Articles of Incorporation (or Charter) and its Bylaws (“corporate documents”) the following:

- a) identification of the sponsoring church agency or agencies (“sponsor(s)”) to which it relates and the relationship of the corporation to its sponsor(s),
- b) recognition that its corporate powers are subject to the *Discipline* to the same extent as its sponsor(s), and
- c) recognition that the corporation’s powers cannot exceed those given by the *Discipline* to its sponsor(s).

3. The corporate documents shall contain language consistent with the appropriate taxation authority to protect its tax-exempt status, where applicable. Also, the corporate documents shall name the corporation’s sponsor(s) as the recipient(s) of corporate property in the event the corporation is abandoned, discontinued, or ceases to exist as a legal entity. The corporate documents shall also include a reference to the provisions of ¶ 2501.

4. The corporate documents shall contain provisions prohibiting the corporation's trustees, directors, or officers from changing the corporation's connectional relationship to its sponsor(s) without the sponsor(s)' consent, or otherwise acting in a manner contrary to the purpose of its sponsor(s) or the *Discipline*.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2506 = 2506

² See Judicial Council Decisions 315.

¶ 2507. *The Terms Trustee, Trustees, and Board of Trustees*—*Trustee, trustees, and board of trustees*, as used herein or elsewhere in the *Discipline*, may be construed to be synonymous with *director, directors, and board of directors* applied to corporations, or such other terms as in compliance with applicable local law.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2507 = 2507

¶ 2508. *Conformity of Deeds and/or Other Ownership Documents, Conveyances with Local Law*—In order to secure the right of property, with the appurtenances thereof, of the churches and parsonages of The United Methodist Church, care shall be taken that all conveyances and deeds be drawn and executed in due conformity to the laws of the respective states, provinces, and countries in which the property is situated and also in due conformity to the laws of The United Methodist Church. Deeds shall be registered or recorded directly upon their execution.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2508 = 2508

¶ 2509. *Instituting and Defending Civil Action*—Because of the nature of The United Methodist Church (¶ 141), no individual or affiliated church body or unit, nor any official thereof, may commence or participate in any suit or proceeding in the name of or on behalf of The United Methodist Church, excepting, however, the following:

1. The General Council on Finance and Administration or any person or church unit served with legal process in the name of The United Methodist Church may appear for the purpose of presenting to the court the nonjural nature of The United Methodist Church and to raise issues of lack of jurisdiction of the court, lack of capacity of such individual or unit to be served with process, and related constitutional issues in defense of denominational interests.

2. Any denominational unit authorized to hold title to property and to enforce trusts for the benefit of the denomination may bring suit in its own name to protect denominational interests.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2509 = 2509

¶ 2510. *Limitation of Financial Obligations*—No conference, council, board, agency, local church, or other unit can financially obligate the denomination or, without prior specific consent, any other organizational unit thereof.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2510 = 2510

Section III. General Provisions for Church Officers

¶ 2511. *Auditing and Bonding*—All persons holding trust funds, securities, or moneys of any kind belonging to the General, central, jurisdictional, annual, or provisional annual conferences or to organizations under the control of the General, central, jurisdictional, annual, or provisional annual

conferences shall be bonded by a reliable company in such good and sufficient sum as the conference may direct. The accounts of such persons shall be audited at least annually by a recognized public or certified public accountant. A report to an annual conference containing a financial statement that the *Discipline* requires to be audited shall not be approved until the audit is made and the financial statement is shown to be correct. Other parts of the report may be approved pending such audit.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2511=2511

¶ 2512. *Trustees of Church Institutions*—Trustees of schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, homes, orphanages, institutes, and other institutions owned or controlled by any annual, jurisdictional, or central conference or any agency of The United Methodist Church shall be at least the legal majority of age according to the laws of the country. At all times, not less than three-fifths of them shall be members of a local church and/or members of an annual conference or the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, and all must be nominated, confirmed, or elected by such conference or agency of the Church or by some body or officer thereof to which or to whom this power has been delegated by such conference or agency; provided that the number of trustees of any such institution owned or controlled by any annual conference or conferences required to be members of a local church and/or annual conference or the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church may be reduced to not less than the majority by a three-fourths vote of such annual conference or conferences; and provided further, that when an institution is owned and operated jointly with some other religious organization, said requirement that three-fifths of the trustees shall be members of a local church and/or annual conference or the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church shall apply only to the portion of the trustees selected by the United Methodist agency or annual, jurisdictional, or central conference. It is recognized that there are numerous educational, health-care, and charitable organizations that traditionally have been affiliated with The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations, which are neither owned nor controlled by any unit of the denomination.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2512=2552

Section IV. Annual Conference, District, Local Church, and General Agency Property

¶ 2513. 1. *Central Conference authority*—Each central conference shall have authority to organize the structures and provisions necessary for the annual conferences, districts, local churches and other United Methodist-related entities within its boundaries to receive, collect, and hold in trust for the benefit of those entities any and all donations, bequests, and devises of any kind or character, real or personal, that may be given, devised, bequeathed, or conveyed for any benevolent, charitable, or religious purpose, and shall administer the same and the income there from in accordance with the directions of the donor, trustor, or testator and in the interest of the church, society, institution, or agency contemplated by such donor, trustor, or testator, provided that any provisions established conform to the provisions of ¶¶ 2501-2510 above.

2. Jurisdictional conferences shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*. >VII: 2513.001-2513.040<

3. For authority regarding property held by general agencies of the Church, see BOD ¶ 807.6, .8.
GBOD ¶ 2513.1-2 = new; 2513.3=footnote 3 of section IV

Chapter Seven

Judicial Administration

¶ 2601. *Preamble and Purpose*—1. In fulfillment of its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the United Methodist Church has found it prudent to establish judicial structures and processes. We recognize that God has given authority to the state to make laws and render judgments for the sake of preserving the common good (cf. Romans 13:1-7). For this reason, we affirm the legitimacy of the civil courts and the importance of cooperating with these. At the same time, we understand judicial administration as a proper ministry of the United Methodist Church. Against the legalism that has from time to time been mistaken for holiness, Methodists have emphasized the universal, free, and abounding grace of God. However, over and against a cheapening of this grace, Methodists have always insisted that laws can be divine gifts and discipline can be life giving. When conflicts arise in the fellowship of believers, the United Methodist Church as representative of Christ, the prince of peace, prefers to pursue and promote just resolution and reconciliation. Trials and judicial processes are in this sense instruments of last resort. However, these instruments are not to be disdained. This work is necessary to protect vulnerable members of the body from harm, as well as to preserve the theological and moral integrity of the church's witness to the world.

2. The exercise of judicial functions by the General Church and by annual and central conferences is not to be understood as essentially punitive. Instead, these activities aim at sustaining the health and welfare of the body of Christ. Such activities are modeled for us already in the gospel, where we find Jesus offering patterns for responding to and healing offenses within the community of faith (Matthew 18:15-18). Similar concerns are taken up by Paul in his writings to the churches under his leadership. (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5:1-6; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-8). In light of these and other texts of both the Old and New Testaments, the judicial functions of church leadership should be understood as an aspect of mutual care and admonition, part of the “watching over one another in love” that Wesley commended to his followers in the name of growing together in holiness. These processes and structures have as their goal the building up of the sacred trust which binds its members as the people called Methodist. It is important to remember that human judgments are always provisional. God alone is the judge of the living and the dead. Hence, the judicial ministration of the United Methodist Church is to be carried out in humility knowing that “all of us make many mistakes” (James 3:2).

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2601.1-2 = New

Section I. The Judicial Council

¶ 2602. *Duties and Responsibilities of the Judicial Council*—The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body in The United Methodist Church. The Judicial Council shall have authority as specified in the Constitution, ¶¶ 55-57, and in ¶¶ 2607-2610.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2602 = 2601

¶ 2603. *Members*—1. *Composition and Term*—The Judicial Council shall be composed of nine members and should reflect the diversity of The United Methodist Church, including racial, age, ethnic, gender, central and jurisdictional conferences, and congregational size. On nominations and election, alternates, vacancies and expiration of term, further provisions according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 2603) shall be followed.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2603 = 2602

GC-R ¶ 2603 *Further Provisions on Membership-1. Terms of Office*—In the year 2000 and each sixteen years thereafter, there shall be elected three laypersons and two ordained clergy other than bishops. In 2004 and each eight years thereafter, there shall be elected two ordained clergy other than bishops and two laypersons. In 2008 and each sixteen years thereafter, there shall be three ordained clergy other than bishops and two laypersons. The laypersons shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church. Elections shall be held at each session of the General Conference for only the number of members whose terms expire at such session. A member's term of office shall be eight years. A member may serve a maximum of two consecutive eight-year terms, with a minimum of four years before reelection to the council.

2. *Nominations and Election*—Members of the council shall be nominated and elected in the manner following: At each quadrennial session of the General Conference, the Council of Bishops shall nominate by majority vote three times the number of ordained ministers and laypersons to be elected at such session of the General Conference. The number to be elected shall correspond to the number of members whose terms expire at the conclusion of such session. Each of the central and jurisdictional conferences as a group shall be represented by at least one nominee, but it shall not be a requirement that each of the central or jurisdictional conferences as a group be represented by an elected member.¹ At the same daily session at which the above nominations are announced, nominations of both ministers and laypersons may be made from the floor, but at no other time. The names of all nominees, identified with the conference to which each belongs, and a biographical sketch that does not exceed one hundred words shall be published by the Daily Christian Advocate at least forty-eight hours prior to the time of election, which shall be set by action of the General Conference at the session at which the nominations are made; and from these nominations the General Conference shall elect without discussion, by ballot and majority vote, the necessary number of ministerial and lay members.

3. *Alternates*—There shall be six alternates for the clergy members and six alternates for the lay members, and their qualifications shall be the same as for membership on the Judicial Council. The term of the alternates shall be for four years.

The alternates shall be elected in the following manner: From the clergy and lay nominees remaining on the ballot after the election of the necessary number of members of the Judicial Council to be elected at sessions of the General Conference, the General Conference shall by separate ballot, without discussion and by majority vote, elect the number of clergy and lay alternates to be chosen at such session of the General Conference.

4. *Vacancies*—*a)* If a vacancy in the membership of the council occurs during the interim between sessions of the General Conference, a clergy vacancy shall be filled by the first-elected clergy alternate and a lay vacancy by the first-elected lay alternate. The alternate filling such vacancy shall hold office as a member of the Judicial Council for the unexpired term of the member whom the alternate succeeds. In the event of any vacancy, it shall be the duty of the president and secretary of the council to notify the alternate entitled to fill it.

b) In the event of an absence of one or more members of the council during a session of the Judicial Council, such temporary vacancy among the clergy members may be filled for that session or the remainder thereof by the clergy alternates in order of election who can be present, and such temporary vacancy among the lay members by the lay alternates in order of election who can be present; but inability or failure to fill a vacancy does not affect the validity or any action of the council so long as a quorum is present.

5. *Expiration of Term*—The term of office of the members of the council and of the alternates shall expire upon the adjournment of the General Conference at which their successors are elected.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 2603 = ¶2602, 2603, 2604, 2605

¹ See Judicial Council Decision 540.

¶ 2604. *Ineligibility of Members*—Members of the council shall be ineligible to serve as delegates to the General, central, or jurisdictional, conference or to serve in any General, central, or jurisdictional, conference board or agency.²

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2606 = 2604

² See Judicial Council Decision 196; and Decision 3, Interim Judicial Council

¶ 2605. *Confidentiality and Ex Parte Communication*—The members of the Judicial Council will not permit discussion with them on matters pending before them or that may be referred to them for determination, save and except before the Judicial Council in session. Questions of procedure may be raised with the presiding officer or secretary of the Judicial Council. On confidentiality and ex-parte communication, further provisions according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 2605) shall be followed.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2605 = 2607

GC-R ¶ 2605 *Further Provisions on Confidentiality and Ex Parte Communication-1*. While strictly observing the intent of the preceding paragraph, a member of the council to whom a case has been assigned by the president may request that the secretary secure from persons and agencies concerned directly or indirectly with the case pertinent facts, briefs, and statements shall be sent promptly by the secretary of the council to other members of the council as is deemed necessary.³

2. Prior to the decision of a case in question, members of the Judicial Council shall not discuss with any party matters of substance pending in the judicial process unless all parties are privy to the discussion. Nor shall members of the Judicial Council or staff allow to be published or communicated, including electronic communications, to third parties any matters of substance pending in the judicial process.

3. The Judicial Council shall in all cases in which a decision or memorandum is issued set forth the specific provisions of the Constitution or the *Discipline* that provide the basis of the decision and the rationale that led to the conclusion.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 2605 = 2607

³ See Judicial Council Decision 763

¶ 2606. *Organization and Procedure*—1. The Judicial Council shall provide its own method of organization and procedure, both with respect to hearings on appeals and petitions for declaratory decisions. All parties shall have the privilege of filing briefs and arguments and presenting evidence under such rules as the council may adopt from time to time; provided that at the time of filing, copies of such briefs are delivered to all parties of record. On organization and procedure, further provisions according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 2606) shall be followed.

2. *Time and Place*—The council shall meet at the time and place of the meeting of the General Conference and shall continue in session until the adjournment of that body, and at least one other time in each calendar year and at such other times as it may deem appropriate, at such places as it may select from time to time. Seven members shall constitute a quorum except on questions of the constitutionality of acts of General Conference in which case a quorum shall be nine members or alternates duly seated according to the rules established by the Judicial Council. An affirmative vote of at least six members of the council shall be necessary to declare any act of the General Conference

unconstitutional. On other matters, a majority vote of the entire council shall be sufficient. The council may decline to entertain an appeal or a petition for a declaratory decision in any instance in which it determines that it does not have jurisdiction to decide the matter.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2606=2608

GC-R ¶ 2606 *Further Provisions on Procedure*- 1. The complete wording in the document requesting an appeal, declaratory decision, or ruling on a question of law shall be posted on the Judicial Council website no less than thirty (30) days prior to the deadline for submitting briefs and arguments to allow for the filing of amicus curiae briefs. The council shall employ a part-time clerk to assist the council in all matters designated by the council as needed, but no more than an average 20 hours per week, and shall in consultation with the General Council on Finance and Administration provide an office for the clerk suitable to maintain records and conduct business as the council shall direct.

2. Funds for the operations of the clerk's office shall be appropriated by the General Conference. In selecting the location of the clerk's office, consideration shall be given to a location that provides visibility and reasonable accessibility to the church and parties. The council shall also give consideration to visibility and accessibility to the church and parties in selecting the places it holds sessions.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶2606 = 2608

¶ 2607. *Jurisdiction and Powers*—1. The Judicial Council shall determine the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference upon an appeal by a majority of the Council of Bishops or one-fifth of the members of the General Conference.

2. The Judicial Council shall have jurisdiction to determine the constitutionality of any proposed legislation when such declaratory decision is requested by the General Conference or by the Council of Bishops.

3. The Judicial Council shall determine the constitutionality of any act of a central or jurisdictional conference upon an appeal by a majority of the bishops of that central or jurisdictional conference or upon an appeal by one-fifth of the members of that central or jurisdictional conference.⁴

4. The Judicial Council shall hear and determine the legality of any action taken by any body created or authorized by the General Conference or any body created or authorized by a central or jurisdictional conference, upon appeal by one-third of the members thereof or upon request of the Council of Bishops or a majority of the bishops of the central or jurisdictional conference wherein the action was taken.

5. The Judicial Council shall hear and determine the legality of any action taken by any body created or authorized by a General Conference or any body created or authorized by the central or jurisdictional conference on a matter affecting an annual or a provisional annual conference, upon appeal by two-thirds of the members of the annual or provisional annual conference present and voting.

6. The Judicial Council shall pass upon and affirm, modify, or reverse the decisions of law made by bishops in central, jurisdictional, annual, or district conferences upon questions of law submitted to them in writing in the regular business of a session; and in order to facilitate such review, each bishop shall report annually in writing to the Judicial Council on forms provided by the council all the bishop's decisions of law. No such episcopal decision shall be authoritative, except in the case pending, until it has been passed upon by the Judicial Council, but thereafter it shall become the law of the Church to the extent that it is affirmed by the council. Normally, the bishop shall rule before the close of the annual conference session during which the question was submitted, but in no case later than thirty days after the close of the session. The annual conference secretary shall enter in the annual conference journal an exact statement of the question submitted and the ruling of the bishop.⁵

7. The Judicial Council shall hear and determine any appeal from a bishop's decision on a question of law made in a central, jurisdictional, annual, or district conference when said appeal has been made by one-fifth of that conference present and voting.

8. The Judicial Council shall have power to review an opinion or decision of a committee on appeals of a central or jurisdictional conference if it should appear that such opinion or decision is at variance with the *Discipline*, a prior decision of the Judicial Council, or an opinion or decision of a committee on appeals of another central or jurisdictional conference on a question of Church law. In the event the committee on appeals' decision appears to be at variance with the decision of another committee on appeals, then the following procedure should be followed:

a) Any party to the opinion or decision may appeal the case to the Judicial Council on the ground of such conflict of decisions; or

b) The committee on appeals rendering the last of such opinions or decisions may certify the case to, and file it with, the Judicial Council on the ground of such conflict of decisions; or

c) The attention of the president of the Judicial Council being directed to such conflict or alleged conflict of decisions, the president may issue an order directing the secretaries of the committees on appeals involved to certify a copy of a sufficient portion of the record to disclose the nature of the case and the entire opinion and decision of the committee on appeals in each case to the Judicial Council for its consideration at its next meeting.

The Judicial Council shall hear and determine the question of Church law involved but shall not pass upon the facts in either case further than is necessary to decide the question of Church law involved. After deciding the question of Church law, the Judicial Council shall cause its decision to be certified to each of the committees on appeals involved, and such committees on appeals shall take such action, if any, as may be necessary under the law as determined by the Judicial Council.

d) All opinions and decisions of central or jurisdictional and central conference committees on appeal shall be sent to the secretary of the Judicial Council within thirty days after a decision. These decisions shall be made available to those who are involved in trials and appeals when needed and for those preparing for trial or appeal, but not otherwise.

9. The Judicial Council shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine all appeals from decisions of the jurisdictional appeals committee.⁶

10. The Judicial Council shall have other duties and powers as may be conferred upon it by the General Conference.

11. All decisions of the Judicial Council shall be final.

12. The Judicial Council shall not have the authority to grant or award compensation to cover or reimburse attorney fees to a party to an appeal in a matter of Church law.⁷

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2607 = 2609

⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 338.

⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 153, 747, 762, 763, 799, 1004, 1078, 1120, 1130, 1161, 1166, 1167, 1188.

⁶ See Judicial Council decision 1276.

⁷ See Judicial Council Decision 1230.

¶ 2608. *Declaratory Decisions*—1. The Judicial Council, on petition as hereinafter provided, shall have jurisdiction to make a ruling in the nature of a declaratory decision as to the constitutionality, meaning, application, or effect of the *Discipline* or any portion thereof or of any act or legislation of a General Conference; and the decision of the Judicial Council thereon shall be as binding and effectual as a decision made by it on appeal.

2. The following bodies in The United Methodist Church are hereby authorized to make such petitions to the Judicial Council for declaratory decisions:

- a) the General Conference;
- b) the Council of Bishops;
- c) any body created or authorized by the General Conference on matters relating to or affecting the work of such body;
- d) a majority of the bishops assigned to any central or jurisdictional conference on matters relating to or affecting said body or the work therein;
- e) any central or jurisdictional conference on matters relating to or affecting said body or the work therein;
- f) any body created or authorized by the central or jurisdictional conference on matters relating to or affecting the work of such body; and
- g) any annual conference on matters relating to annual conferences or the work therein.

3. When a declaratory decision is sought, all persons or bodies who have or claim any interest that would be affected by the declaration shall be parties to the proceeding, and the petition shall name such parties. Any interested party may, on the party's own motion, intervene and answer, plead, or interplead. On the process for the secretary to follow regarding parties to the declaratory decision, further provisions according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 2608) shall be followed.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2608 = 2610

GC-R ¶ 2608 *Additional Procedures* - After receiving such request the secretary of the Judicial Council shall publish on the official United Methodist Internet pages a brief statement of the question involved. If the president of the council determines that other parties not named by the petition would be affected by such a decision, such additional parties shall also be added, and the petitioner or petitioners, upon direction of the secretary of the Judicial Council, shall then be required to serve all parties so joined with a copy of the petition within fifteen days after such direction by the secretary of the Judicial Council.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 2608 = 2610.3

¶ 2609. *Precedential Value*—The decisions of the Judicial Council of The Methodist Church heretofore issued shall have the same authority in The United Methodist Church as they had in The Methodist Church, persuasive as precedents, except where their basis has been changed by the terms of the Plan of Union or other revisions of Church law.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2609 = 2611

¶ 2610. *Notification and Publication*—The decisions of the Judicial Council on questions of Church law, with a summary of the facts of the opinion, shall be filed with the secretary of the General Conference and with the bishop, chancellor, and secretary of each annual conference. On publication of decisions, further provisions according to General Conference Regulations (GC-R ¶ 2610) shall be followed.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2610 = 2612

GC-R ¶2610 *Further Provisions on Publication* - 1. The decisions of the Judicial Council shall be posted on the official United Methodist Internet pages as soon as practicable, no later than ninety days following each meeting.

2. When the Judicial Council shall have declared unconstitutional any provision of the *Discipline*, the secretary of the Judicial Council shall notify the chairperson of the Committee on

Correlation and Editorial Revision and the Editor of the *Discipline* which phrase or sentence was found to violate the Constitution so that it will not appear in the next edition. All such deletions also shall appear in the *Advance Daily Christian Advocate* or successor publication of the next General Conference for information purposes.

3. When the Judicial Council shall declare any act of the General Conference then in session unconstitutional, that decision shall be reported to that General Conference immediately.

>VII: —<

GBOD GC-R ¶ 2610.1-2 = 2612.1-2; 2610.3=2609.11

Section II. Fair Process in Judicial Proceedings

¶ 2701. *Generalities on Fair Process*—1. *Preamble and Purpose*—The judicial proceedings and the rights set forth in this paragraph commence upon referral of a matter as a judicial complaint from the counsel for the Church to the committee on investigation. The judicial process terminates at the end of any appeal or right of appeal. The judicial process shall have as its purpose a just resolution of judicial complaints, in the hope that God’s work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Jesus Christ. The following procedures are presented for the protection of the rights of individuals guaranteed under Section III, Article IV, of our Constitution and for the protection of the Church. The presumption of innocence shall be maintained until the conclusion of the trial process. Special attention should be given to ensuring racial, ethnic, age, and gender diversity of boards, committees, and courts and the timely disposition of all matters.

2. *Rights of the Complainant* (the person filing the complaint):

a) *Right of Impartiality*— In any judicial proceeding, the complainant shall have a right to investigation and judgement by impartial and independent parties.

b) *Right to Be Heard*—In any judicial proceeding, the complainant shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken.

c) *Right to Notice of Hearings*—Notice of any hearing shall advise the complainant about proposed procedures, with sufficient detail to allow the complainant to prepare. Notice shall be given not less than twenty (20) days prior to the hearing. The complainant shall have the right to be present at any judicial process hearing.

d) *Right to Be Accompanied*—The complainant shall have the right to be accompanied by another person to any interview or hearing to which they are subject. The person accompanying the complainant may be an attorney, but shall not have the right to voice. In no instance and under no circumstances shall the complainant be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the complainant’s use of an attorney.

e) *Right to Be Informed of Resolution*—The complainant shall have the right to be informed of the disposition of the complaint of the judicial proceeding as part of a holistic process of healing. Church officials are encouraged, as may be permissible, to include rationale.

3. *Rights of the Respondent* (the person to whom the procedure is being applied):

a) *Right of Impartiality*— In any judicial proceeding, the respondent shall have a right to investigation and judgement by impartial and independent parties.

b) *Right to Be Heard*—In any judicial proceeding, the respondent shall have a right to be heard before any final action is taken.

c) *Right to Notice of Hearings*—Notice of any judicial process hearing shall advise the respondent 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) days prior to the hearing. The respondent shall have the right to be present at any judicial process hearing.

d) *Right to Be Accompanied*—The respondent shall have a right to be accompanied by a clergy person in full connection. The clergy person accompanying the respondent shall have the right of

advocacy. The 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

e) Right Against Double Jeopardy—No bill of charges shall be certified by any committee on investigation after an earlier bill of charges has been certified by a committee on investigation based on the same alleged occurrences.

f) Right of Access to Records—The respondent and the Church shall have access to all records relied upon in the determination of the outcome of the committee on investigation, trial court, or appeal committee or body.⁸

4. *Rights of the Church:*

a) Right to Be Heard—In any judicial proceeding, the Church shall have the right to be heard before any final action is taken.

b) For other rights and responsibilities of the Church and counsel for the Church see ¶ 2706.

5. *Process and Procedure*

a) Failure to Appear or Respond—In the event that the respondent fails to appear for any judicial process hearing, refuses mail, refuses to communicate personally with the bishop or district superintendent, or otherwise fails to respond to requests from official judicial 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.

b) Evidence— Only evidence that is material to the complaint and deemed reliable shall be considered.

c) Communications—In any judicial proceeding, under no circumstances shall one party or counsel, in the absence of the other party or counsel, discuss substantive matters with members of the pending hearing, trial, or appellate body while the case is pending. Questions of procedure may be raised and discussed ex parte, but only with the presiding officer or secretary of the hearing or appellate body.

d) Healing—As a part of the judicial process, the bishop 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 judicial matter. This may include a just resolution process for unresolved conflicts, support for victims, and reconciliation for all who are involved. This process may also include the sharing of information by the bishop or a cabinet member about the nature of the complaint without disclosing alleged facts underlying the complaint that might compromise the judicial process.

e) Immunity of Participants—In order to preserve the integrity of the Church's judicial process and ensure full participation in it at all times, the resident bishop, the cabinet, the presiding officer of the trial, trial officers, trial court, witnesses, counsels, assistant counsels, advocates, complainant, committee on investigation, and all others who participate in the Church's judicial process shall have immunity from prosecution of complaints brought against them related to their role in a particular judicial process, unless they have committed a chargeable offense in conscious and knowing bad faith. The complainant 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.

f) Records of Judicial Proceedings— At the conclusion of all judicial proceedings, where allowable by civil law, complete and accurate records shall be maintained by the secretary of the annual conference, or the central or jurisdictional conference in the case of a complaint against a bishop. Records of investigations are to be held in a confidential file and shall not be released except for purposes

of trial and then only to counsels for the Church and the respondent and to the presiding officer of the trial court.

6. *A Just Resolution in Judicial Proceedings*—A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. Special attention should be given to ensuring that cultural, racial, ethnic, age, and gender contexts are valued throughout the process in terms of their understandings of fairness, justice, and restoration. During the just resolution process, the parties may be assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s), in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties. Processes that seek a just resolution are encouraged at any time, including through the judicial proceedings. After the referral of a matter as a judicial complaint from counsel for the Church to the committee on investigation, if a process seeking a just resolution is used, the appropriate persons, including the counsel for the Church and the counsel for the respondent, should enter into a written agreement outlining such process, including any agreement on confidentiality. If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including 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 possible readmission.

7. *Central Conferences* - A central conference shall have authority to adopt rules of procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church in accordance with ¶ 512.8.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2701 = 2701

⁸ See Judicial Council Decisions 691, 765.

¶ 2702. *Chargeable Offenses and the Statutes of Limitations* - 1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 308.1), local pastor,⁹ clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4)¹⁰ with one or more of the following offenses:

a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage;¹¹

b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings,¹² including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homo-sexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;¹³

c) crime;

d) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church;

e) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church;

f) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor;¹⁴

g) child abuse;¹⁵

h) sexual abuse;¹⁶

i) sexual misconduct¹⁵ including the use or possession of pornography,

j) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment;

k) racial or gender discrimination; or

l) fiscal malfeasance.

2. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference, or diaconal minister may be brought to trial when the appropriate body recommends involuntary termination.¹⁷

3. A professing member of a local church may be charged with the following offenses, and, if so, may choose a trial:

- a) immorality;
- b) crime;
- c) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church;
- d) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church;
- e) sexual abuse;
- f) sexual misconduct;¹⁸
- g) child abuse;
- h) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment;
- i) racial or gender discrimination;
- j) relationships and/or behaviors that undermine the ministry of persons serving within an appointment; or
- k) fiscal malfeasance.

4. *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.¹⁵

Time spent on leave of absence shall not be considered as part of the six years.

5. *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 *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 *Discipline* in effect at the time the charge was filed. Any charge must relate to an action listed as a chargeable offense in the *Discipline*.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2702 = 2702

9. See Judicial Council Decision 982.

10. The statute of limitations went into effect as law on a prospective basis starting on January 1, 1993. All alleged offenses that occurred prior to this date are time barred. See Judicial Council Decisions 691, 704, and 723.

11. The language beginning “including but not limited to . . .” first appeared in the 2004 *Discipline*, effective January 1, 2005.

12. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 984, 985, 1185.

13. The language beginning “including but not limited to . . .” first appeared in the 2004 *Discipline*, effective January 1, 2005.

14. See Judicial Council Decision 702.

15. This offense was first listed as a separate chargeable offense in the 1996 *Discipline* effective April 27, 1996. See Judicial Council Decision 691.

16. See Judicial Council Decisions 736, 768

17. See Judicial Council Decision 767.

18. This offense was first listed as a separate chargeable offense in the 2000 *Discipline*, effective January 1, 2001. See Judicial Council Decision 691.

¶ 2703. *Miscellaneous Provisions*- 1. Any clergy members residing beyond the bounds of the conference in which membership is held shall be subject to the procedures of fair process in judicial proceedings exercised by the appropriate officers of the conference in which he or she is a member, unless the presiding bishops of the two annual conferences and the clergy member subject to the procedures agree that fairness will be better served by having the procedures carried out by the appropriate officers of the annual conference in which he or she is serving under appointment, or if retired, currently residing.

2. When a bishop, clergy member, or diaconal minister is the respondent to a complaint under ¶ 353 and desires to withdraw from the Church, the central or jurisdictional conference in the case of a bishop, the annual conference in the case of a clergy member, or the district conference (where there is no district conference, the charge conference) in the case of a diaconal minister will ask him or her to surrender his or her credentials and will remove his or her name from professing membership; in which case the record shall be “Withdrawn under complaints” or “withdrawn under charges,” whichever is appropriate.

3. 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 presented, such member may be permitted to withdraw, in which case the record shall be “Withdrawn under charges.”

4. In all matters of judicial administration, the rights, duties, and responsibilities of clergy members, local pastors, clergy on honorable or administrative location, and diaconal ministers of missions, missionary conferences, and provisional annual conferences are the same as those in annual conferences, and the procedure is the same.

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

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2703 = 2719

Section III. Procedures for Referral and Investigation of a Judicial Complaint

¶ 2704. *Generalities on Investigation*— 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.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2704 = 2706.1

¶ 2705. *Committee on Investigation*— 1. There shall be a committee on investigation elected by each central or jurisdictional conference, becoming active when the respondent is a bishop.

2. There shall be a committee on investigation in each annual conference, elected quadrennially by the annual conference, becoming active when the respondent is a clergyperson.

3. The district superintendent shall appoint a committee on investigation when the respondent is a layperson.

4. Central conferences shall establish provisions for committees on investigation on central and annual conference levels. Committees on investigation shall consist of no less than seven members. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII: 2705.001<

GBOD ¶ 2705.1 = 2703.1; 2705.2=2703.2; 2705.3=2703.3; 2705.4=new

¶ 2706. *Procedures for Investigations*- Central conferences shall establish provisions on procedures for investigations of a judicial complaint. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII:2706.001-2706.003<

GBOD ¶ 2706 = new

Section IV. Trials

¶ 2707. *Generalities on Trials* — 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 ¶ 2701.4e. All trials shall be conducted according to the *Discipline* in a consistent Christian manner by a properly constituted court after due investigation.

2. *Open or Closed Trials*—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(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 have a right to be present.

>VII: —<

GBOD ¶ 2707.1 = 2707.1; 2707.2=2708.12

¶ 2708. *Trial Court*- 1. The presiding officer of the court shall be a bishop when the respondent is a bishop or a clergyperson, and the district superintendent or another clergyperson in full connection designated by the district superintendent when the respondent is a layperson.

2. No one can serve in the same case as a member both of the committee on investigation and of the trial court.

3. Central conferences shall establish provisions for a trial court. The trial court shall consist of no less than seven members. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII:2708.001-2708.002<

GBOD ¶ 2708.1 = 2708.1+new; 2708.2+3 = new

¶ 2709. *Procedures in Trials*- Central conferences shall establish provisions on procedures for trials. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII:2709.001-2709.005<

GBOD ¶ 2709 = new

Section V. Appeals

¶ 2710. *Generalities on Appeals*- 1. In all judicial procedures, the rights of appeal shall be adequately safeguarded.

2. The appellant shall within thirty days give written notice of appeal and at the same time shall furnish a written statement of the grounds of the appeal, and the hearing in the appellate body shall be limited to the grounds set forth in such statement.²⁰

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.

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

5. 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 penalty? The appellate body shall in no case hear witnesses.

>VII: 2710.001<

GBOD ¶ 2710.1 = 543.12; 2710.2 = 2715.1; 2710.3 = 2715.3; 2710.4-5 = 2715.6-7

²⁰ See Judicial Council Memorandum 826.

¶ 2711. *Committee on Appeals*- 1. There shall be a committee on appeals elected by each central or jurisdictional conference, becoming active when the appellant is a bishop or a clergyperson.

2. When the appellant is a layperson, the district superintendent shall appoint a committee on appeals from among lay leaders or lay members of the annual conference.

3. No one who has already served as a member of the committee on investigation or the trial court on the case concerned can serve as a member of the committee on appeals on the same case.

4. Central conferences shall establish provisions for a committee on appeals. The committee on appeals shall consist of no less than seven members. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII:2711.001-2711.002<

GBOD ¶ 2711.1 = 2716.1; 2711.2=2717.3; 2711.3+4 = new

¶ 2712. *Procedures in Appeals*- Central conferences shall establish provisions on procedures for appeals. Jurisdictional conferences and annual conferences in jurisdictions shall follow the procedures in Part VII of the *Discipline*.

>VII:2712.001<

GBOD ¶ 2712 = new