

**THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES
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**THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
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BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church is authorized by Paragraph 47, Division Three, Article III, of the Constitution of The United Methodist Church. The Council is governed by *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. The following bylaws describe the procedures for carrying out these Disciplinary mandates.

ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as the *Council*) is made up of all the bishops of the church, active and retired; retired bishops participate in the Council and its committees without vote. (§47, ¶409.1)

ARTICLE II – MEETINGS

- Section 1. The Council may meet in regular session twice a year. A meeting may be held in or near the week in which May 1 falls and in or near the week in which November 8 falls. In General Conference years, the May meeting shall be held immediately prior to the convening of the General Conference at the site of the General Conference.
- Section 2. Special meetings may be called by action of the Council or by two-thirds of the Executive Committee present and voting.
- Section 3. The Executive Committee shall develop, at least one year prior to the General Conference, a schedule of dates and locations of Council meetings for the next quadrennium.
- Section 4. The meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee shall be open except for those times when an Executive Session is determined. Meetings of all other units, sub-units, task forces, etc., shall be considered study sessions limited to their membership and invited participants.

ARTICLE III – OFFICERS

Section 1. OFFICERS: The officers of the Council shall be the President, the President-Designate, the immediate Past President, the Secretary, the Executive Secretary and the Ecumenical Officer. In the year the General Conference meets, specified incoming officers shall assume leadership in a plenary session of the Council of Bishops on or after the third day of the General Conference.

Section 2. DISCERNMENT AND ELECTION PROCESS

Item 1. The president and president-designate shall be elected from the entire Council following the discernment process stated below, with appropriate attention to the diversity of the Council. They shall serve two-year terms. Discernment will be the method by which these officers are selected for presentation to the Council for election.

The discernment process shall be:

- a. There shall be a Leadership Discernment Committee (Article IX) that will discern and nominate the President, President-Designate, Secretary, and Executive Secretary.
- b. Any member of the Leadership Discernment Committee who may be considered in the discernment process shall be replaced on the Committee by her/his college.
- c. Considering all members of the Council, each college will submit to the Leadership Discernment Committee one or more names for President, President-Designate, Secretary and Executive Secretary.

The Leadership Discernment Committee will present one name for each position to the Council for election.

Although it is assumed that the bishop serving as President-Designate will ordinarily be the bishop nominated by the Leadership Discernment Committee to be the next President, the Committee has the authority to nominate a different bishop if they believe that this best serves the needs of the Council.

Item 2. Following the report of the Leadership Discernment Committee as to the person discerned for the Secretary, other nominations may be made from the floor for the position of Secretary. The Secretary shall be elected from the entire Council by a 2/3 majority vote. The Secretary will serve for a two-year term, with eligibility for re-election to consecutive terms.

- Item 3. The President, President-Designate and the Secretary will be elected by a 2/3 majority vote at the meeting of the Council in the odd-numbered years. These officers shall take office in May of the following year. In the interim, these officers shall be non-voting members of the Executive Committee.
- Item 4. The Executive Secretary shall be elected at the meeting held one year prior to the General Conference. The election shall be by ballot with a 2/3 majority for a four-year term. From within the entire Council, member colleges will submit names for the position of Executive Secretary to the Leadership Discernment Committee, which will bring one name for this position to the Council for election. The Executive Secretary as a retired bishop shall not have vote. The Executive Secretary shall take office on September 1 following General Conference.
- Item 5. The Ecumenical Officer shall be elected for the quadrennium at the meeting held one year prior to the General Conference by ballot with a 2/3 majority for a four-year term. Nominations may be made from the floor. Active or retired bishops may be nominated. If the Ecumenical Officer is a retired bishop, he/she shall not have vote. The Ecumenical Officer shall take office on September 1 following General Conference.

Section 3. **PRESIDENT:** The President shall be an active bishop and shall preside at all meetings of the Council and of the Executive Committee.

- Item 1. The President will function at all times as a servant of the Council and its Executive Committee, as the Council offers spiritual and temporal leadership for the whole church.
- Item 2. The President will give oversight to the total life and mission of The United Methodist Church and the Council.
- Item 3. The President, as spokesperson for the Council, will speak on public issues of urgent concern, in consultation with the Executive Secretary or Executive Committee as may be possible. Other bishops may be designated to speak on various issues. Such statements shall be made only (1) when consonant with the position of the General Conference, and (2) according to processes established by the Council. In this connection, the President will develop a strong working relationship with United Methodist Communications and its general secretary, in order that communications to the Church and the world may be most effective.

Item 4. The outgoing President in a General Conference year shall be the presiding officer of the opening session of the General Conference in fulfillment of ¶16.11. In the year the General Conference meets, specified incoming officers shall assume leadership in a plenary session of the Council of Bishops on or after the third day of General Conference.

Section 4. IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: The immediate Past President shall serve as a member of the Executive Committee for two years, with vote if that bishop is still an active bishop.

Section 5. SECRETARY: The Secretary shall be an active bishop serving a two-year term and eligible for reelection, elected by ballot at the meeting of the Council in odd-numbered years. As Secretary-Designate, he/she shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee, and shall assume office with vote at the conclusion of the COB meeting of the following year.

Item 1. The Secretary shall record minutes at the meetings of the Council and of the Executive Committee.

Item 2. Following each meeting of the Council and Executive Committee, the Secretary shall produce the Minutes with supporting materials for distribution to all members of the Council by the office of the Executive Secretary. Minutes of the meetings of the Council and Executive Committee, as well as other units which may so decide, will be distributed to members of the Council electronically from the Council Office.

Item 3. The Secretary shall sign all legal documents of the Council as required.

Section 6. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY: The Executive Secretary shall be a retired bishop serving a four-year term with compensation, including expenses for the quadrennium, as provided by *The Book of Discipline*

Item 1. The Executive Secretary will provide servant leadership for the Council under the supervision of the Council President, and will work with the President and Ecumenical Officer in building and maintaining ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

Item 2. The Executive Secretary will be the operations officer of the Council and will work closely with the Secretary to monitor actions of the Council and Executive Committee requiring follow-up in order to see that assignments are implemented. To this end, the President and Executive Secretary will offer the assistance of their offices to the various organizational units of the Council.

- Item 3. Upon notification of the death of a bishop, or of a bishop's spouse, widow or widower, the Executive Secretary shall notify, as expeditiously as possible, all members of the Council. (See also Guideline VIII, Notices to the Episcopal Community.)
- Item 4. The Council may, on nomination of the Executive Committee in consultation with the Executive Secretary, elect a bishop as assistant to the Executive Secretary. When elected, the assistant to the Executive Secretary may meet with the Executive Committee, without vote.
- Item 5. The Executive Secretary, under direction of the President, shall handle general correspondence coming to the office of the Council of Bishops.
- Item 6. The Executive Secretary, in consultation with the President, will coordinate all arrangements for Council meetings, in cooperation with the General Council on Finance and Administration.
- Item 7. Prior to each meeting of the Council, the Executive Secretary shall prepare a book of agenda reflecting the actions of the Executive Committee concerning the agenda and containing materials relating thereto. The agenda book shall be distributed electronically at least 7 days in advance.
- Item 8. In order to ensure attendance at Council meetings of bishops from all countries, and to expedite other global concerns of the Council, the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the President, will establish relationships with embassies and various national and international governmental agencies.
- Item 9. The Executive Secretary, in consultation with the President, will develop a collegial working relationship with all General Secretaries, toward the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of the total mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.
- Item 10. The Executive Secretary, in consultation with the President and Executive Committee, will act as communications officer for the Council using United Methodist Communications as a resource.
- Item 11. The Executive Secretary will carry out such other operational and communications responsibilities as may be assigned by the President of the Council or the Executive Committee.

Section 7. Ecumenical Officer: The Ecumenical Officer will be elected at the Council meeting prior to General Conference and shall take office on

September 1 following General Conference. The Ecumenical Officer may be a retired bishop, in which case he/she shall not have vote. The Ecumenical Officer, if a retired bishop, shall receive compensation including expenses.

The Ecumenical Officer of the Council shall be responsible for relationships with other Churches and/or ecclesial bodies with which the Council shall be the primary liaison for The United Methodist Church, as provided by *The Book of Discipline*.

ARTICLE IV–EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Section 1. There shall be an Executive Committee of the Council consisting of the six officers, the chairperson of each Leadership Team and the chairperson of the Connectional Table. If any jurisdiction or Asia, Europe or Africa does not have one bishop serving as a member of the Executive Committee, that college or group of bishops shall elect one of their number as an additional voting member of the Executive Committee. If unable to be present, the chairperson of a Leadership Team may designate the secretary of that Leadership Team or any other bishop on that team to attend the meeting with vote.
- Section 2. The Executive Committee shall meet on call during the regular meetings of the Council and at such other times, places and means as it may determine.
- Section 3. The Executive Committee shall consider and act, as it deems appropriate, on matters properly referred to it; and, between sessions of the Council, on matters it deems immediately essential to the life and work of the Council. All shall be reported to the Council.
- Section 4. The Executive Committee shall serve as the Agenda Committee for the Council. Between sessions of the Council, requests by bishops for agenda items shall be sent to the Executive Secretary for consideration by the Executive Committee.
- Section 5. When requests for financial support from the Episcopal Fund for a crisis or emergency situation are received between meetings of the Council and/or Executive Committee, the proper distribution of funds shall be decided by any two of the following persons: President of the Council, Secretary of the Council, and Chair of the Finance Committee. Their action will be reported to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.
- Section 6. The Executive Committee may form sub-committees, for a short-term specific task. These committees shall report directly to the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE V–COLLEGES OF BISHOPS

- Section 1. Each college of bishops shall at the meeting of the Council elect a president and a secretary, and other officers as that college may determine.
- Section 2. Each college shall meet at least once during a regular meeting of the Council. For purposes of these Bylaws, bishops attending from the Central Conferences shall comprise a single Central Conferences college of bishops at meetings of the Council.
- Section 3. Each college may have additional meetings at such times and places as decided by the college.

ARTICLE VI – AGENDA FOR COUNCIL MEETINGS

- Section 1. The proposed agenda for each regular session of the Council shall include worship; adequate time for meetings of committees and teams, colleges and other meetings; adequate time for plenary sessions to consider such matters related to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the church as the Executive Committee shall propose.
- Section 2. At each Council meeting, a memorial service ordinarily including Holy Communion will be scheduled at which time members of the Council, spouses, widows, and widowers of bishops who have died shall be memorialized.
- Section 3. Requests for inclusion of items on the agenda of the Council meetings, or for the appearance by persons or groups before the Council, shall be considered first by the Executive Committee as the Council's Agenda Committee. Items of personal privilege may be honored at the President's discretion.
- Section 4. The Council or the Executive Committee may schedule or call executive sessions.

ARTICLE VII -- LEADERSHIP TEAMS

- Section 1. There shall be nine Leadership Teams of the Council. Each Leadership Team shall be composed of both active and retired bishops. The Leadership Discernment Committee shall assign the bishops to the Leadership Teams, and will recommend for election the chairpersons of the Leadership Teams. Each Leadership Team shall elect a secretary from among the active bishops. The Team assignments shall be for a quadrennium.
- Section 2. All matters to be considered by the Council, other than matters which

come under the jurisdiction of the Executive Committee, may be referred to groups formed by the Council, or to the Leadership Teams, under the following division of responsibility:

- Item 1. **CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY:** To assist and equip the Council resident bishops and agencies to lead the church in planting new churches and faith communities; other areas of responsibility to include congregational development with existing churches; the “metrics” project.
- Item 2. **MISSIONAL ENGAGEMENT:** To assist and equip the Council resident bishops and agencies to lead the church related to global health; other areas of responsibility to include picking up some of the work of our current Relational Concerns Committee related to our connections with mission conferences.
- Item 3. **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** To assist and equip the Council resident bishops and agencies to lead the church in developing principled Christian leaders; other areas of responsibility to include the COB leadership strategies, the relationship to seminaries.
- Item 4. **JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION:** To assist and equip the Council resident bishops and agencies to lead the church in ministry with the poor; other areas of responsibility to include some of our current work related to racism, immigration, and unity.
- Item 5. **COMMITTEE ON FAITH AND ORDER:** To assist and equip the Council, residential bishops and the agencies of the church to lead the church in matters of faith and order, other areas of responsibility such as teaching and learning forums, theological documents, ecclesiology, ministry and orders; planning for intentional theological reflection at each COB meeting.
- Item 6. **ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS:** To assist and equip the Council resident bishops and agencies to lead the church in connecting and incorporating the work of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, to coordinate and encourage the relationships with other denominations and faith communities.
- Item 7. **LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT:** For areas of responsibility see Article VIII.
- Item 8. **COUNCIL LIFE TOGETHER:** Areas of responsibility to include worship services, covenant groups, pastoral matters, Pastoral Care Fund, spiritual formation, Courtesy Fund.

Item 9. FINANCE: For areas of responsibility see Article IX.

- Section 3. Each Leadership Team shall give consideration to emerging issues and recommend to the Council items for conversation, action and/or statement by the Council (See Guidelines IV: Statements by the Council of Bishops).
- Section 4. Each Leadership Team shall elect a chairperson and a secretary from among the active bishops. Chairpersons may be elected for two year terms and may be re-elected for a second term.
- Section 5. In consultation with the chairperson of the Leadership Discernment Committee, the Executive Secretary of the Council shall prepare the agenda for the meeting of that committee. The agenda may include any matter affecting the total life of the church in the area of responsibility of that particular Team and/or matters referred by the Executive Committee or President.
- Section 6. The chairpersons of the Leadership Teams shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Council.
- Section 7. To facilitate business, subcommittees may be formed by Leadership Teams. The chairperson shall be responsible for the naming of members of such subcommittees, as well as the chairperson, who shall be a member of that Leadership Team.
- Section 8. Minutes of the Leadership Teams shall be published and distributed with the Minutes of each meeting of the Council.

ARTICLE VIII – LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

- Section 1. There shall be a Leadership Discernment Committee composed of eight bishops who shall serve for the quadrennium, one from each jurisdictional college, and three Central Conference bishops, one each representing Europe, Africa and the Philippines. Each jurisdictional college shall nominate two bishops, from which the Executive Committee will chose one from each jurisdiction. The Central Conference bishops shall be nominated by the Central Conference college. The Secretary of the Council shall be an *ex officio* member. The Executive Committee shall designate the Chairperson of the Committee. The Committee will report directly to the Council. The membership of the committee will be in two classes, with one-half of the committee replaced each quadrennium.
- Section 2. The Committee shall be responsible for completing the nominations required by *The Book of Discipline*, the General Conference, Council

responsibilities, and other nominations as assigned by the Council or the Executive Committee.

- Section 3. The committee shall be responsible for discerning and nominating the officers of the council, namely the President, President-Designate, Secretary, and Executive Secretary.
- Section 4. After General Conference and before the start of the new quadrennium, each active and retired bishop shall be given the opportunity to submit first and second choices for committee or team assignments. The Leadership Discernment Committee shall then assign each bishop to one of the committees or teams of the Council. The goal is to ensure that each active and retired bishop has a place within the Council's life and corporate leadership of the Church. As new bishops are elected to the Council the same procedures shall be followed and assignments made.
- .Section 5. All committee and team assignments shall be for the quadrennium, unless otherwise prescribed by the bylaws or guidelines.
- Section 6. Nominations for the General Church: Preceding the General Conference the Leadership Discernment Committee shall make recommendations to the full Council for persons to fill the following positions to be elected by the Council or nominated to the General Conference for election, as *The Book of Discipline* provides:
- Item 1. The Judicial Council.
 - Item 2. The University Senate.
 - Item 3. The Administrative Committees of the General Conference called for in the Rules of Order.
 - Item 4. Members of the General Agencies:
 - a. A distribution of the active bishops among the General Agencies of the church. At the request of a college, a retired bishop may be asked to serve as a member of a General Agency.
 - b. Nominations for vacancies on General Agencies of the church in a category without reference to Jurisdictions shall be named upon recommendation of the Leadership Discernment Committee.
- Section 7. The Leadership Discernment Committee shall be called, as necessary, to respond to requests for Council nominations and/or changes in the Council's report to General Conference which may arise at the site of the General Conference.
- Section 8. Nominations for the Council: The Leadership Discernment Committee shall also recommend assignments for Council

responsibilities, including other quadrennial or special Council committees, or other special assignments as requested by the Executive Committee.

- Section 9. COURTESY CHAIR: At the regular meeting immediately preceding the General Conference, the Council shall elect, for the quadrennium, on nomination of the Leadership Discernment Committee, a bishop to serve as Courtesy Chair. This bishop shall be responsible for a Courtesy Fund provided by contributions made annually by each bishop, as needed, in order that appropriate representation of the Council may be made in case of illness, death, weddings and golden wedding anniversaries in the immediate families of bishops. (See Guidelines VII Courtesies) That bishop will assume these responsibilities on September 1 following General Conference.
- Section 10. RETIREE CORRESPONDENT: At the meeting immediately preceding the General Conference, on nomination of the Leadership Discernment Committee, the Council shall elect a Retiree Correspondent to keep the members of the Council who are unable to attend the regularly-scheduled meetings informed about actions and personal concerns of the episcopal community. That bishop will assume these responsibilities on September 1 following General Conference.
- Section 11. Time line. In order to fulfill the committee's work as detailed in Article X of the By-Laws it is recommended that immediately following its formation by the Executive Committee of the Council, the Leadership Discernment Committee will meet to orient itself to the nominating procedure and members of the Committee will in turn orient their respective colleges.
- Section 12. No later than during the third year of the quadrennium, each college will begin the process of identification of persons for service in Council nominated positions in general church agencies. This process shall be completed early in the fourth year. (The Secretary of the Council shall request the Secretary of the General Conference to prepare a workbook showing all nominations to be called for by the Council and the number of years served on an agency by those persons due to be re-nominated or replaced. Such workbook shall be for the use of the Leadership Discernment Committee and also shall be available upon request of a bishop.) During the fourth year of the quadrennium, nominations will be completed for Council responsibilities.

ARTICLE IX – COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

There shall be a Committee on Finance which shall develop and recommend the annual budget for the Council; monitor the general status of the Episcopal Fund and report its findings to the Council; act as liaison to the General Council on Finance and Administration Episcopal Services Committee; and consider all special requests from the Episcopal Fund. The Committee shall be composed of six members, one from each of the six colleges, named by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall also name the chairperson from among the six.

ARTICLE X—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

- Section 1. **THE COUNCIL OFFICE.** There shall be a permanent office location determined by the Council with appropriate staffing.
- Section 2. **RECORDS:** The current records of the Council shall be housed in its permanent office. The non-current records of the Council shall be filed by the Executive Secretary with the General Commission on Archives and History. A bound copy of the Minutes of the Council shall be furnished by the Executive Secretary at the end of each quadrennium to the General Commission. The records, documents, correspondence and papers of the Council deposited with the General Commission shall be open to the public unless otherwise designated by the Council.
- Section 3. **ATTENDANCE AT MEMORIAL SERVICES:** In the case of the death of a bishop, bishop's spouse, widow or widower of a bishop, former bishop, or former bishop's spouse, all members of the college(s), active or retired, to which such persons belonged, shall be eligible to attend the principal memorial service at the expense of the Episcopal Fund.
- Item 1. The President of the Council has the right to be present or to designate a representative to be present at the memorial service of a bishop, bishop's spouse, widow, widower, former bishop or former bishop's spouse. Likewise, bishops not members of the college who have a leadership role in the service or who are named by their college officially to represent it, shall have their expenses paid from the Episcopal Fund.
- Item 2. The widow/widower of a bishop or former bishop or former bishop's spouse to be memorialized at a Council meeting shall have her/his expenses paid from the Episcopal Fund.
- Item 3. "Former bishop" refers to Central Conference bishops who have completed their terms of office.
- Section 4. **PRESENTER OF EPISCOPAL ADDRESS:** At the meeting of the

Council nearest two years before the General Conference, the Council shall elect by ballot, by majority vote, without nomination, a bishop to be responsible for developing the Episcopal Address at the next session of the General Conference.

Section 5. ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS: The Executive Committee shall provide for an accountability process for support and accountability as bishops lead in their residential settings to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Section 6. GENERAL GUIDELINES: The Council may, from time to time, adopt guidelines for its work. Such guidelines shall be appended to the By-Laws and may be amended by a majority vote of the Council.

Section 7. STATEMENTS BY THE COUNCIL: During each quadrennium, statements may be issued to give direction to the church on issues and stances in line with the Council's disciplinary responsibility. The Council shall also give leadership in proposing new legislation, emphases and priorities.

Section 8. GLOBAL VISITATION: The plan of Global Visitation is to be administered by the Missional Engagement Team which shall develop an appropriate manual for its implementation.

Section 9. VOTING: At the discretion of the officers, electronic voting may be used between Council meetings.

ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these By-Laws may be proposed by members at any session of the Council. Such amendments shall be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration and recommendation back to the Council. Adoption of the proposed amendments shall require a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting and shall be effective upon adoption.

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