

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 3, 2024
FROM THE INTERJURISDICTIONAL COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

During General Conference 2024, the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy recommended 32 total bishops in the jurisdictions and the allocations of bishops of 6 in the NCJ, 6 in the NEJ, 6 in the SCJ, 9 in the SEJ, and 5 in the WJ. This recommendation was approved by General Conference and would have required three bishops to transfer.

Since General Conference, the Executive Committee of the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy has met five times and consulted with each bishop regarding transfer. The ICOE has discovered either an unwillingness or inability to transfer any bishops through the process outlined in the *Discipline*. The *Discipline* clearly states, “No bishop shall be transferred unless the bishop shall have specifically consented.” (Par. 49)

Two new developments have occurred that impact the number of bishops in the jurisdictions. Bishop Frank Beard, from the NCJ, has requested long term disability effective August 1. Bishop Robert Schnase, from the SCJ, announced his retirement effective September 1. This has created two unexpected vacancies in the number of bishops eligible for assignment.

Based on these developments, the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy met on July 2nd and overwhelmingly approved the following:

- The NCJ will assign the six remaining bishops in their jurisdiction.
- The SCJ will assign the six remaining bishops in their jurisdiction.
- The NEJ and SEJ will share a bishop who will serve in both jurisdictions and be a member of both colleges of bishops.
- The NEJ will assign six bishops to serve in their jurisdiction.
- The SEJ will assign nine bishops to serve in their jurisdiction with one additional bishop being shared with the NEJ and assigned to both jurisdictions.
- The WJ will elect two bishops and assign five bishops to serve in their jurisdiction.

There has been unprecedented collaboration across jurisdictions to get to this point. This plan gives each jurisdiction the minimum of five bishops as required by our *Discipline* and maintains the number of 32 total bishops in the jurisdictions to be funded by the episcopal fund. The vast majority of the expenses related to Bishop Beard’s long-term disability are funded outside of the episcopal fund.

This report addresses the needs of the annual conferences, episcopal leaders, and the mission of The United Methodist Church. It is a report that focuses on the next four years, recognizing more work will be required in 2028 when there will be further reduction of bishops.

The ICOE continues to consider the good of the whole United Methodist Church in the United States now and into the future. Each jurisdiction is giving to the whole in specific and sacrificial ways. There are fewer bishops than annual conferences in each jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction will have bishops who will serve multiple annual conferences.

The work of the jurisdictional conferences next week will be to receive from their respective committees on episcopacy a recommendation regarding the episcopal areas and the assignment of bishops within their jurisdictions.

The ICOE recognizes that we are in significant time of transition and invites The United Methodist Church to be in prayer for the election of two bishops in the West, the assignment of each bishop, and the work of the whole church that is now before us.