

Summary of Some Changes Global Methodist Church 2024 Convening General Conference

Below is an attempt to briefly summarize the changes made to the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. This is not an exhaustive list, only a highlight. These changes go into effect January 1, 2025, unless otherwise stated. As this is a summary you will want to consult the new *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* when it is published. Petitions are grouped based on the Legislative Committee they were considered in. I do add some of my own commentary and speculation here and there, but that is not intended to speak for the body.

Conferences Committee

Petition 184 *Regional Conferences Eliminated*

It was originally written into the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* that we would have regional conferences. This was eliminated with this petition.

Petition 56 *Replacing Bishop with Conference Superintendent*

This petition does exactly as the name suggests. It's important to note that the Episcopacy Committee ¶612.2 now focuses on the Conference Superintendent, not the Bishop. The "Leadership Committee" ¶612.4 is now the "Nominations and Leadership Committee." Another important change here is that rather than all presiding elders of an annual conference serving on this committee, "at least one" will serve on it with voice and vote. Meaning it *could* be all of them, but it must at least be one.

Petition 119 *Amend ¶612 to Require Connectional Council or Equivalent Body*

Among the boards and committees of an annual conference shall be a Connectional Council or equivalent. It will consist of an equal number of clergy and laity, elected by the Annual Conference. It will also consist of the bishop or conference superintendent, one presiding elder, annual conference secretary, annual conference lay leader (if any), any other officers elected by the annual conference, any members at large elected by the annual conference. The conference superintendent may ask other conference staff persons to serve with voice but no vote.

This may body will focus on discipleship and mission planning for the annual conference and make recommendations to boards and committees for implementation of said plans. This body may also adjust the annual conference budget between sessions with published rationale, so long as it does not exceed the total amount of the budget. This body may hire a Conference Operations Officer (or similar), and would be the supervising body.

Connectional Organization Committee

Petition 95

¶705 – (NEW) Membership of Connectional Commissions

Persons elected to serve on commissions at the 2024 Convening General Conference will serve for 2 years. They are eligible to be nominated for the 2026 General Conference (GC).

Annual conference will elect nominees for connectional commissions

- AC nominate by majority vote of both lay and clergy delegates
- Up to sixteen persons (clergy or lay)
 - At least half must be lay
- Each nominee is designated for up to two connectional committees based on gifts, training, and experience
- Must be members of a local church or annual conference within the GMC (or its predecessor) for a period of two years at the time of their nomination
- The General Conference's Administrative Committee on Nominations will take these nominees and determine a slate to be elected by General Conference. Nominees not on the slate may be nominated from the floor at General Conference.

The term of service is six years, with members eligible to be reelected once for a total of twelve years. The General Conference elects 2/3rd of the members of a connectional commission by simple majority. The remaining 1/3rd is elected by the Connectional Council. No person may serve on more than one connectional commission. Any travel and meeting expenses shall be paid for by each connectional commission out of its budget.

Petition 45

Creation of Working Group for GMC Book of Worship

Calls for the creation of a working group to create a draft Book of Worship to be presented to the 2026 General Conference for review and adoption as the GMC's authorized liturgy.

Petition 97

¶707 – (NEW) Operations

Connectional Commissions may request staff. All staff positions are to be approved by the Connectional Council and the position is subject to the budget limits set by the Connectional Council. All staff are hired, assigned, and evaluated by the Connectional Operations Officer. Grants or designated gifts may go toward the paying of staff persons.

Connectional Commissions may contract outside of themselves to fulfill their mission or for coordination on a particular project. These contracts cannot be made with any organization whose missions and/or theological position is inconsistent with the connectional commission or the GMC. Contracts with financial implications beyond the commission's budget will need approval by the Connectional Council.

Connectional Commissions can dismiss any member of their commissions for any of the following reasons:

- Incapacity or a pattern of ineffectiveness
- Failure to attend meetings
- Failure to perform their duties
- Immorality

- Breach of Trust
- Doctrinal Incompatibility
- Criminal Activity

For most of these it is after a pattern or repeat offense. Missing one meeting will not necessitate removal, but missing $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of them may.

Petition 98 ¶708 – (NEW) *Areas of Responsibility and Mission*

Connectional Commissions will not be able to function outside the bounds of their designated responsibilities. If they wish to do so they must receive explicit authorization from the Connectional Council or General Conference. **No commission can serve as a lobbying agency to engage with governmental bodies, either directly or through other entities, except as explicitly authorized by the General Conference.** No commission can claim to speak for the GMC, unless they are reflecting statements made by the General Conference.

Petition 94 ¶704 – (NEW) *Connectional Commissions*

This paragraph establishes what the connectional commissions will be. They are as follows:

- Connectional Commission on Evangelism, Church Multiplication, Missional Mobilization, and Disaster Response
- Connectional Commission on Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry
- Connectional Commission on Ministry and Higher Education
- Connectional Commission on Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits
- Connectional Commission on General Conference
- Connectional Commission on Ecumenical Relationships
- Connectional Commission on Conferences

One commission that was proposed but denied was the Connectional Commission on Communications. The reason that it was not established was because the General Church has a Communications department which consists of hired professionals.

Constitution Committee

Petition 20 *Introduction*

Originally, Petition 20 created the introduction to the Constitution. However, the Constitution Legislative Committee used Petition 20 as their base and built the constitution within this petition. They took the other petitions pertaining to the constitution and used them to build up the constitution within Petition 20. I don't wish to attempt to summarize the entire constitution, but to highlight a few points.

In ¶203, which describes the organization of our church, the sentiment of a “ground up” church is echoed. Article V begins with the local church and one point of interest is the following: “**The right of a local church to be free from a forced closure or trust clause shall not be abrogated.**” Article VI names the Annual Conference and describes its responsibilities, and Article VII names the General Conference and its responsibilities. Article VII states that the General Conference shall meet once every six years (which will begin 2026, then 2032, and so on). It's also important to know that the General Conference may meet virtually, when necessary, with the approval of the bishops and the connectional council.

Article VIII in ¶203 describes the episcopacy and states that bishops shall serve at the pleasure of the General Conference to “guard the faith, order, unity, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church.”

Article XII in ¶204 explains that any amendments to the constitution may originate in the General Conference or an Annual Conference. Amending the restrictive rule will required $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of General Conference delegates followed by $\frac{3}{4}$ affirmative vote of the aggregate number of delegates of the annual conferences present and voting. It was included that until the close of the 2026 General Conference, amendments to the constitution only need a simple majority vote of the General Conference. After the 2026 General Conference closes that threshold changes to $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote of the General Conference delegates followed by $\frac{2}{3}$ affirmative vote of the aggregate number of delegates of the Annual Conferences present and voting. In any of these cases, abstentions are excluded and will not count against the affirmative threshold needed.

When the final version of this constitution is published, I would encourage every GMC clergy, church, and ministry to review and discuss it.

Petition 133 *Task Force to Revise the General Rules*

This petition calls the Assembly of Bishops to form a task force who shall submit legislation to the 2026 General Conference in order to produce revised General Rules of the Global Methodist Church. The intent of this is to preserve the spirit of the General Rules while allowing them to speak into a more globalized and modern context.

Petition 115 *Theological Statement Working Group Resolution*

The Connectional Commission on Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry will form “a working group to develop a successor document synthesizing the content of the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith into a single document and report the results of such work

to the next General Conference of the Global Methodist Church.” The Articles of Religion comes from our Church of England and Methodist Episcopal heritage, while the Confession of Faith comes from our Evangelical United Brethren heritage.

Petition 47 *Petition to Adopt a Methodist Mission Statement*

A mission and vision statement was adopted through this petition. I will write it in its entirety below:

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: The Global Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.

This next line functions as the Vision Statement.

The Vision Statement: Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Global Methodist Church envisions multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the earth who flourish in scriptural holiness as we worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.

The following text is not part of the mission or vision statement, but provides further description for the mission and vision statement. This text will appear in the new MISSION OF THE CHURCH paragraph.

The church is one, holy, catholic (Universal), and apostolic. The mission of the church is an extension of the mission of God. As Christ draws all people to himself, we participate in that work through our evangelism, worship, preaching, teaching, sacramental practice, works of mercy, works of piety, and fellowship. All those of every age and station stand in need of the grace that God has promised to extend to others through his body, the Church.

While it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of individuals, ours is the task of sharing the good news of God as we respond to the summons of Christ in Matthew 28: “As you are going, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,” even as Christ has promised to remain with us always, “even to the end of the age.” Following the example of early Methodists, we believe God has raised us up in order to “spread scriptural holiness across the land,” embodying that “grand depositum” of the faith that John Wesley believed had been entrusted to “the people called Methodists,” the continued striving for entire sanctification.

Episcopacy & Superintendency Committee

Petition 25 *Amend ¶501 – Nature of Superintendency*

Bishops serve in a role of sacred trust that is not a lifelong office. Bishops are called to lead the church in spiritual and temporal matters. Their call to order the church extends to conference superintendents, presiding elders, and all other elders.

Petition 27 *¶503 – General Responsibilities of Bishops*

Bishops are able to delegate presiding over an Annual Conference session to that Annual Conference's Conference Superintendent or a Bishop Emeritus.

Bishops, with the consent of the Annual Conference Connectional Council, will assign Conference Superintendents after consultation with the Annual Conference Connectional Council (or equivalent), the Annual Conference Committee on Superintendency (or its equivalent), and the cabinet.

Bishops are responsible for delegating responsibility for appointment making and supervision to Conference Superintendents and the cabinet. However, bishops will authorize and fix the appointments.

Petition 80 *¶515 – (NEW) Complaints Against Bishops*

Complaints against bishops are to be submitted to the chair of the Global Episcopacy Committee. Originally, complaints that did not involve abuse could be deferred to the Assembly of Bishops for a plan of resolution, but that was stricken from the petition. When an involuntary status change of a bishop is sought it must be recommended by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the investigation committee and approved by a $\frac{2}{3}$ rds vote of the Global Episcopacy Committee.

Petition 244 *Hybrid Episcopacy Model*

What became commonly known as the "Florida Plan" or "Florida Model" for episcopacy was rejected in committee 57-9-1. The Episcopacy and Superintendency Legislative Committee took this proposal, along with the proposal which came from the Transitional Leadership Council and handled them in two sub-committees. These committees perfected both plans as best as possible and decided as a committee to support the TLC plan. Jay Therrell and the Florida Conference Delegation assured the committee that they would not seek a minority report and supported the decision of the committee.

Petition 76 *¶511 – (NEW) Transferring Bishops*

If a bishop from an autonomous Methodist church wishes to transfer to the GMC they affirm the doctrines, Social Witness, and church government found in the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. This transfer is subject to approval by the General Committee on Episcopacy and the Assembly of Bishops. These transferring bishops may receive episcopal assignment between session of General Conference, but at the following General Conference they must stand for election.

Retired Bishops who join the GMC shall be an elder in senior status and afforded the same rights and privileges as senior clergy found in ¶416. They can bear the title "Bishop Emeritus."

Petition 77¶512 – (NEW) *Vacancy in the Office of Bishop*

Should an event occur that takes an active bishop away from fulfilling their duties (death, senior status, resignation, suspension, leave of absence, or medical leave) the Global Episcopacy Committee must come up with a plan of coverage, which may include enlisting bishops emeriti into active service, so long as the bishops emeriti offer consent to do so.

Petition 78¶513 – (NEW) *Status of Bishops Emeriti*

Elders who formerly served as bishops may use the title “bishop emeritus,” but they **will not retain their episcopal responsibilities or membership on the Assembly of Bishops**. Bishops Emeriti can assist active bishops, but will not be remunerated for their work expect for expenses. Bishops Emeriti are clergy members of the annual conference of their choice.

Petition 29¶504 – (NEW) *Election of Bishops*

This is the process for electing Bishops for General Conference 2026 and beyond. Twelve months prior to General Conference, the elected delegates from each Annual Conference shall nominate up to one clergy from within their Annual Conference, and one clergy from outside their Annual Conference. No later than 90 days prior to the upcoming General Conference, the Global Episcopacy Committee will publish a list of all nominees, and a list of bishops eligible and willing to stand for re-election. The Annual Conference delegations will also elect one lay and one clergy to serve on an area committee on episcopacy. Within 90 days of General Conference, all area on episcopacy lay and clergy members will convene to define episcopal areas. These areas need not be geographically contiguous.

Individual area committees on episcopacy will produce a ranked list of 5 candidates that best match the leadership needs of the episcopal area and Global Methodist Church. Actively serving bishops may be included on this list. These lists will be shared with delegates to General Conference at least 30 days prior to General Conference. A bishop must receive at least sixty percent support to be elected to an episcopal area. Those elected to the episcopacy at General Conference will be consecrated at General Conference. Their actual term of service begins 60 days after consecration.

Bishops may serve a maximum of two 6-year terms. No bishop elected at the 2024 Convening General Conference can stand for re-election at the 2026 General Conference (excluding Bishops Jones and Webb) unless they received a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote at the 2024 CGC. **I believe the only newly elected bishop who is eligible to run for re-election at the 2026 General Conference is Bishop Kimba Evariste (DRC), but I’ve not heard anything official on that.**

Petition 33¶507 – (NEW) *Conference Superintendents*

A new paragraph was created which allows for the implementation of Conference Superintendents. These are elders who are appointed by the bishop in consultation with the Conference Connectional Council, Committee on Superintendency, Cabinet. This person must receive the consent of the Conference Connectional Council. If two conferences wish they may be overseen by one Conference Superintendent. These persons serve an initial term of 6 years and may be extended annual for up to twelve years total.

Conference Superintendents serve as missional and visional strategists for the Annual Conference, provide spiritual leadership to laity and clergy, strengthen and multiply churches, provide general fiscal oversight, and other responsibilities.

Petition 34

¶508 – (NEW) *Selection and Assignment of Presiding Elders*

Presiding Elders are appointed by a bishop to lead a district. This person must be recommended by the conference superintendent. These appointments are annual and the person must be evaluated for effectiveness. Presiding Elders cannot serve more than 12 years in the aggregate unless they are extended annually by the Conference Connectional Council and approved by the Conference Superintendent.

Petition 35

¶509 – *Responsibilities of Presiding Elders*

Presiding Elders oversee the ministry of the clergy and churches in their district. They serve as the acting administrator of any pastoral charge when a vacancy arises. They serve as their district's chief mission resource, provide missional accountability, and work with churches to develop their leadership to support the ministry of the local church.

They are to recruit candidates for ordination, work with lay leadership within the district, encourage covenant groups among both the clergy and laity of the district, assess appointed clergy and assigned laity.

Petition 43

¶510 – (NEW) *Consideration and Criteria for Appointments*

Appointments can be made across conference lines and clergy in good standing are free to seek an appointment in any annual conference. Clergy are not guaranteed an appointment, and those not in appointment will be considered inactive.

Whenever possible, churches may be given 2-3 pastoral candidates to choose from for interviews. Churches and clergy may decline appointments, understanding that an extended time without appointment may occur (due to pastoral and church availability).

A church may choose to lead their own search process for pastoral leadership upon the approval of the presiding elder and conference superintendent. Final interviews shall not be scheduled without the following happening first:

- Approval of the pastor being considered by the
 - Board of Ministry
 - Presiding Elder
 - Conference Superintendent.

At the final interview the presiding elder or their designee must be present to give support and guidance.

The goal is for appointments to be multi-year.

Deacons and elders may be appointed to attend any recognized school, college, or theological seminary, or to participate in an accredited program of clinical pastoral education. These persons will remain active clergy.

Financial Administration Committee

Petition 140 *Editorial Amendment to ¶349*

A local church may be designated as a missional church and be exempt from connectional funding for up to 5 years from the date of designation. These are church plants, church re-starts, or churches in a economically disadvantaged community.

Churches who fail to remit connectional funding in full may be involuntarily disaffiliated under ¶354 by the Annual Conference Connectional Council. In my own personal opinion, I do not see this happening to a church who accidently misses connectional funding once or comes under financial hardship and is unable to make their payments. I believe the heart of this is aimed more at churches who intentionally refuse to remit connectional funding.

Petition 243 *Financial Transparency*

This petition, along with a few others, were referred in committee to the Connectional Commission on Finance, Administration, Pension, and Benefits (CCFAPB). I highlight this particular petition because the Financial Administration Legislative Committee requested further study by the CCFAPB and encourage them to produce legislation for 2026 General Conference for stronger financial accountability and transparency. They are asked to enlist the counsel of no less than 3 and no more than 5 local church congregations and representatives not on the commission nor have any other official capacity in the general church nor the annual conference.

Judicial Administration Committee

Most of the petitions handled by this committee were editorial amendments to Part Eight Judicial Administration in *the Book of Doctrines and Discipline* and parts of the *Judicial Practices and Procedures*. They varied in removal of Transitional Leadership Council and replacing that with the Global Episcopacy Committee. It also included adding Conference Superintendent where necessary.

Petition 217 *Editorial Amendment to ¶802*

The General Conference shall adopt the *Judicial Practices and Procedures (JPP)*. This document governs the complaint, supervisory, administrative, and judicial processes. It carries the same force as church law but is not included in the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline (BoDD)*. If at any time the JPP contradicts or conflicts with the BoDD the BoDD shall govern and have final say.

Petition 218 *Editorial Amendment to ¶803*

In the event that a complaint alleging misconduct (defined in ¶808.1-2) is against a local church member the complaint is submitted to their presiding elder, the administrative council chair, the pastor of their church, and the Conference Superintendent. The complaint would be handled by the Conference Superintendent or their designee.

Ministry and Local Church Committee

Petition 255 and 257 *Annual Conference Affiliate Membership for Clergy | Annual Conference Affiliate Membership for Church.*

These petitions created the ability for clergy to serve in one Annual Conference while holding their membership in another. The conference to which they hold affiliate membership will be one in which they can have voice and vote on all matters except for the clergy session. Churches can likewise hold affiliate membership in the geographic conference to which they are located. For example, a Korean church may hold affiliate membership in the Northeast Annual Conference while maintaining full membership in the Korean Annual Conference.

Petition 263 *Ending Block Voting*

All candidates for ordination must be interviewed and recommended by a 2/3rds vote of the Board of Ministry individually. They cannot be accepted as a block.

Petitions 252 and 253 *Inactive Deacon/Elder Amendment*

These petitions were an attempt to remove the language “Deacons/Elders not serving under appointment shall be classified as inactive and shall have no voting rights in the annual conference, except as provided for in ¶418” found in ¶409 and ¶410. These petitions were denied, thus the language stays.

Petition 73 *Member Involvement and Accountability and the Inactive Roll*

This petition removes the minimum 2-year timeframe that a person must remain on the Inactive Roll before being able to be removed by charge conference action. Thus, a congregation may keep someone on the inactive roll indefinitely or remove them from membership completely in less than 2 years.

Petitions 53/54 *Insurance Requirements for Inactive Elders/Deacons*

Those who are inactive Elders or Deacons, and are serving in a ministry setting outside the connectional structure of the GMC, must insure themselves with a package of insurance coverage. Limits may be determined by the conference Board of Ministry and Cabinet. This insurance will include but not be limited to professional liability and misconduct. Certificates of insurance are to be provided yearly to the BoM and Cabinet. This is applicable by national or local laws. [Example] If you are an inactive Elder serving a non-denominational church, this applies to you.

Petition 89 *¶322.3 Refinements*

The presiding elder no longer has to approve the grace-filled process for inactive members of a church to return to active membership. That decision is left us completely to the church council.

Petition 130 *¶407 – Amendments to Educational Requirements*

Below are some key changes, and some things that did not change:

- Bachelor’s degrees can only be considered for candidates living outside the US and Europe.
- Beginning January 1, 2026, all candidates for ordination are **required to choose from a list of approved institutions or programs to complete educational requirements.**

Students who begin matriculation prior to January 1, 2026, are not required to complete their studies at an approved school. (Petition 232)

- Deacons must complete ten courses before being eligible for ordination. Those courses are at the end of this document.
- Those seeking ordination as elder must complete another 10 courses. 8 of those are defined, 2 may be electives. All 10 must be completed to be eligible for ordination. Those courses are at the end of this document.
- Time in continuing education is not counted as vacation or personal time.
- The Commission on Ministry and Higher Education will determine whether courses at a given institution meet the requirements listed. The Board of Ministry will also need to approve this.
- Candidates are not required to change their path to ordination in the event that the *Book of Doctrines and Disciplines* changes. So, for those of you who are following the standards of the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* pre-January 1, 2025, that will continue.

Petition 151 ¶419 – *Transitional Provisions*

The opportunity for someone to apply under these provisions in ¶419 will expire December 31, 2026. These amendments allow for clergy from the UMC to request transfer to the GMC, and upon approval at the Annual Conference Clergy session, be admitted to clergy membership and granted ordained status within the GMC. The BoM may approve clergy between AC sessions.

If anyone applies for transfer and meets the education requirements for ordination as deacon, and has served in the UMC at least two years, the two year minimum period that is between a deacon's and elder's ordination can be waived.

If anyone applies and does not meet the education requirements for ordination as either deacon or elder, they may be granted a license as a Transitional Local Pastor for a **one year term**. This status begins from the date of their approval at the Annual Conference Session and must be approved annually by the BoM. This can be extended up to three additional years. These TLPs have sacramental authority **in their appointment**.

The Board of Ministry may grant exceptions to the requirements in ¶419 upon petition of a person seeking certification as a candidate for conference membership and ordination.

Petition 152 ¶412 – *Supply Pastors*

- Bishops may **appoint** candidates for ordination to serve as a supply pastor, with the approval of the conference BoM.
- The BoM must assign an elder to provide mentoring.
- Supply Pastors may preside over the sacraments after completing training provided by the BoM on the theology and practice of sacraments in the GMC. Sacraments can be done under the direction of their PE or another elder appointed by the PE. The BoM may consider any courses taken in this field as meeting the requirement.
- Supply pastors must be ordained as a deacon within five years of their appointed service.

- Annual extensions can be granted by the BoM after the candidate writes a plan detailing the reason for their request and stating how they will meet their education requirements.
- Supply pastors have full voice and vote on all matters except ordination and conference relations.
- This status is given to those candidates for ordination who are **appointed** to a local church context.

Petition 229 *Ending Block Voting (Amends ¶409.2)*

The clergy session may determine by majority vote to approve candidates individually or as part of a group.

Petition 228 ¶420 – *Interim Ministers*

This paragraph allows for Bishops, Conference Superintendents, and Cabinets to provide to a congregation a Holy Spirit led, lay or clergy interim minister.

New Education Requirements (As of Jan 1, 2025)

Required Courses for Deacons

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- Systematic Theology
- Wesleyan Theology and Doctrine
- Methodist History and Polity of the Global Methodist Church
- Basics of Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Evangelism and Mission
- Wesleyan Understanding of the Sacraments and Worship
- Inductive Bible Study or Hermeneutics

Required Course for Elders (including the list for Deacons)

- History of Christianity through the Reformation
- History of Christianity to the present
- Apologetics
- Wesleyan Discipleship and Spiritual Formation
- Christian Leadership and Conflict Resolution
- An Additional Old Testament Class
- An Additional New Testament Class
- Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Up to **two** electives may be chosen from the following areas:

- Cross Cultural Evangelism
- Advanced Preaching
- Hebrew or Greek Language Studies
- Pastoral Counseling
- Church Finance and Administration
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in a hospital or similar setting
- Philosophy of Religion
- Field Study in Israel
- Theology Electives
- Theology of Worship
- Children or Youth Ministry
- Directed Internship or Independent Study