

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #1

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #1 – Call for a Special Session of General Conference to hear report of Commission on 21st Century Church

Discipline Paragraph: Non-Disciplinary Petition

Non-Disciplinary Petition to Call for a Special Session of the General Conference to hear report from a Commission on the 21st Century Church

When The United Methodist Church (UMC) was formed in 1968, the challenge was largely viewed as merging two denominations located in the United States (US): The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church. Mission and missional partnerships in locations beyond the US were viewed as an extension of the US church's witness. The organizational structure and polity of the UMC evolved from a mixture of patterns existent in the two denominations, into organizational structures and principles thought most useful at the time.

Five decades later, the UMC faces the challenge of reinventing a functional polity that embraces our global character and the need for contextual relevance and governing autonomy in regions where it is present. For Central Conferences to practice self-determination and leave behind perceptions that they are extensions of the church in the US, a new UMC Constitution and polity are required. Mission relationships and partnerships across the global connection can be multi-directional rather than constrained by the power imbalances and dated structures embedded in the current UMC Constitution. The US is now a mission field rather than an exporter of Christendom. The UMC in the US needs the flexibility and adaptability necessary in every mission field to amplify the work of the Spirit in its particular contexts.

We seek a structure that provides meaningful opportunities for mutual ministry and support while also providing maximum latitude for adaptations that take into account language, culture, and legal frameworks in different parts of the world. We seek a plan that continues to articulate the shared doctrine and connectional polity that is the core of our Wesleyan heritage articulated in the Discipline. Practically, each region requires discrete versions of the Discipline in appropriate languages developed in a process of self-determination that is articulated through the experience of the clergy and laity of each region, and that defines appropriate patterns of governance in each region.

We need frameworks for governance that recognize the historic role of the annual conference as the basic body of the church. Annual conferences provide cohesion and support for congregations. To serve the mission of the church in each area, annual conferences and episcopal areas require greater latitude to be nimble and responsive.

The General Conference is the body that helps us clarify the “why” and the “what” questions about theology and mission in our connection. The General Conference fosters unity of purpose and support of core values for the denomination. A simpler structure will clarify the distinctive role of the General Conference and disperse decision making about discrete matters more appropriately and effectively.

The local church is the primary arena for ministry and making disciples of Jesus Christ. The UMC requires relationships and rules that free local churches to gain deep understandings of their communities and adapt their ministries in ways that are relevant and resonant with the people served—while at the same time remaining connected globally to our worldwide mission. The UMC requires a simpler, less costly, and less cumbersome set of structures and practices to facilitate faster decisions made as close as possible to each ministry setting and that enable experimentation and innovation. In the past we often formed agencies to address needs and circumstances unique to the US mission field. We apparently need different ways to address global requirements in the future. Direct interactive global relationships and partnerships are easier to facilitate now. The UMC mission requires greater ability to promptly mobilize the witness of our global denomination during important moments and in each location.

The General Conference is petitioned to create a “Commission on a 21st Century Church,” which shall:

- Propose a new constitution that retains the Articles of Religion of The United Methodist Church and draws upon the best principles of our historic Wesleyan theological tradition, Doctrinal Standards, Our Theological Task, and our history of mission and ministry;
- Propose lean and nimble governance structures that entrust and empower all local units of the church to be responsive and adaptive for relevant ministry near and far;
- Provide for differentiated regions of the church that organize for ministry, which is pertinent to the needs and ethos of each geographical and cultural setting;
- Provide for missional connections among regions of the church;
- Recommend a general church structure that is simpler, flatter, effective, and sustainable to further a vital polity in this age;
- Consider the role and relationships of general agencies, and set adaptable frameworks for the number, financial support, and accountability of such agencies;
- Make provisions so that if the UMC creates a regional US structure as proposed by the Connectional Table, the Commission shall recommend the organizing documents for such a body.

Membership of the Commission for a 21st Century Church shall be limited to 32 voting members appointed by the Council of Bishops. There shall be at least one member from each Jurisdiction, at least one from each African Central Conference, at least one from The Philippines, and at least one from Europe. At least 4 members shall have working knowledge of the global ministries of the church through General Board of Global Ministry or other general

agencies. No more than 5 members shall be bishops, and no more than half of the members shall be clergy. The Connectional Table shall provide staff support for the Commission.

Members should have special knowledge in areas necessary to complete the tasks, including theology, ecclesiology, missiology, organizational management, legal expertise, etc. The Commission is encouraged to seek engagement from a wide variety of experts and from a broad array of members. The members shall be named by the Council of Bishops. The leadership of the Commission for a 21st Century Church shall be selected by the Council of Bishops and shall include one bishop, one clergyperson, and one layperson. The first meeting of the Commission would be scheduled to occur by August 1, 2020. Optimally, members would also attend jurisdictional and central conferences to observe and hear directly the aspirations of leaders in various contexts.

By authority of the Book of Discipline, paragraph 14, the General Conference calls for a Special Session of the General Conference in the autumn of 2023 at the exact time and location determined by the General Commission on the General Conference. Pursuant to ¶135 and ¶136 of the Discipline, general conference clergy delegates who cease to be members in full connection of a UM annual conference, and lay delegates who cease to be professing members of a UM local church, in either case through actions of the local church or annual conference, or both, in which they had been members disaffiliating or otherwise ending its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church, shall cease to be delegates.

The purpose of the special session is to:

- Deliberate and act on the recommendations of the Commission on the 21st Century Church;
- Consider and begin the process of making constitutional amendments or adopting a substitute constitution proposed by the Commission on the 21st Century Church, including steps that assure a clear delineation of the governing prerogatives between regional and global to regional entities. Constitutional amendments would need to be subsequently approved as enumerated in Division Five of the constitution.
- Expand and codify the full participation and leadership of LGBTQ persons in the ministries and mission of the Church.

Rationale: The United Methodist Church must adapt to create a vital, global polity. This requires the thoughtful development of a new constitution by a Commission on the 21st Century Church and the focused attention of a special session of the General Conference in the autumn of 2023.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #2

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC # 2 – Inclusiveness – Amend ¶ 140

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 140

Amend ¶ 140 as follows:

¶ 140. We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons.

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination and rejects every type of barrier that serves to divide and separate us as members of the body of Christ. The mark of an inclusive society is one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world.

In the United Methodist Church inclusiveness means the full involvement and participation of all persons who seek to follow in the way of Jesus by serving God and neighbor in all that they do. Accordingly, ¶the services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons. Additionally, participation and leadership opportunities shall be open to anyone, whether clergy and lay, who meets the requirements of The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* pertaining to membership and leadership within the Church.

~~The mark of an inclusive society is one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world.~~

A further mark of inclusiveness is the setting of church activities in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. ~~In The United Methodist Church inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place.~~ In the spirit of this declaration, United Methodist boards, agencies, congregations, camps, seminaries, and other organizations will begin or continue are challenged to improve access to facilities, ~~to~~ information and communication, and to appropriate support services. ~~and~~ Further, we must make appropriate accommodations as delineated by The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and applicable World Council of Churches guidelines.

Acknowledging that the Church has been divided for too long on the basis of perceived differences, we commit ourselves to the removal of every barrier that separates one from another within the body of Christ, including ableism, heterosexism, racism, sexism, misogyny, tribalism, and all other forms of xenophobia. By the power of Christ's redeeming and sanctifying love, we commit ourselves to grow in love and understanding until all of the walls that divide us are finally cast down.

Rationale: This petition builds on statements on inclusiveness found in ¶ 4. Article IV of the United Methodist Constitution. By expanding the scope of the existing ¶140, we hope to further enshrine the principles of equal participation and nondiscrimination within church law and offer greater protections for historically marginalized groups.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #3

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #3 – Social Principles - Amend ¶ 161.C

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 161.C

Amend ¶ 161.C:

C) Marriage—We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity ~~between a man and a woman~~. We believe that God’s blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. ~~We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.~~

Rationale: Christian marriage is a covenantal relationship between two people who seek the blessing and presence of God in their union. This revision acknowledges the importance of such covenantal relationships, extends to all people the full ministries of the Church, and recognizes and affirms the legal recognition of all marriages.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #4

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #4 – Social Principles – Amend ¶ 161.G

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 161.G

Amend ¶ 161.G as follows:

G) Human Sexuality—We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous, ~~heterosexual~~ marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil

rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. People of all sexual orientations and gender identities are members of The United Methodist Church and are present in our congregations. We urge our churches to welcome them equally. ~~The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.~~ We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

Rationale: The United Methodist Church affirms without exception that all persons are of sacred worth and made in the image of God. We affirm human sexuality as a sacred gift. We affirm the sanctity of monogamous marriage. We welcome all people to our congregations.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #5

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #5 – Qualifications for Ordination – Amend ¶ 304.3
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 304.3

Amend ¶ 304.3 as follows:

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 homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.~~

Rationale: Affirms the role of boards of ordained ministry to evaluate all candidates based on their fitness and readiness for ordained ministry. Removes language that discriminates against a particular class of people, a practice profoundly at odds with the principle of Inclusiveness in Article IV of the Constitution.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #6

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #6 – Amend Qualifications for Ordination - ¶ 304.5

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 304.5

Amend ¶ 304.5 as follows:

¶ 304.5 In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on personal judgment of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the Church. ~~The district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry shall not approve or recommend any person for candidacy, licensing, commissioning, or ordination who does not meet the qualifications of ¶ 304.1-3, based on the full examination and thorough inquiry into the person's fitness by the committee and board (see Judicial Council Decisions 1343 and 1344). The bishop presiding in the clergy session shall rule any such unqualified candidate out of order and not eligible to be acted upon.~~

Rationale: Affirms the role of boards of ordained ministry to evaluate all candidates based on their fitness and readiness for ordained ministry. Removes language that discriminates against a particular class of people, a practice profoundly at odds with the principle of Inclusiveness in Article IV of the Constitution.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #7

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #7 – Candidacy - Amend ¶ 310.2(d) footnote 3

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 310.2(d) footnote 3

Amend ¶ 310.2(d) footnote 3 as follows:

In adopting the statements in ¶¶ 304.2 and 310.2d on the moral and social responsibility of ordained ministers, the General Conference seeks to elevate the standards by calling for a more thoroughgoing moral commitment by the candidate and for a more careful and thorough examination of candidates by district committees and boards of the ministry. The legislation in no way implies that the use of tobacco is a morally indifferent question. In the light of the developing evidence against the use of tobacco, the burden of proof would be upon all users to show that their use of it is consistent with the highest ideals of the Christian life. Similarly, regarding beverage alcohol, the burden of proof would be upon users to show that their action is consistent with the ideals of excellence of mind, purity of body, and responsible social behavior.

Therefore, the changes here do not relax the traditional view concerning the use of tobacco and beverage alcohol by ordained ministers in The United Methodist Church. Rather they call for higher standards of self-discipline and habit formation in all personal and social relationships. They call for dimensions of moral commitment that go far beyond any specific practices which might be listed. (See Judicial Council Decision 318.)

The General Conference, ~~in response to expressions throughout the Church regarding homosexuality and ordination,~~ reaffirms the present language of the Discipline regarding the character and commitment of persons seeking ordination and affirms its high standards.

For more than 200 years candidates for ordination have been asked Wesley's Questions, including " . . . Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? . . ." (§ 310). All candidates agree to make a complete dedication of themselves 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" (§ 304.2).

The character and commitment of candidates for the ordained ministry is described or examined in six places in the Book of Discipline (§§ 304, 310.2, 324, 330, 333, and 335). These say in part: "Only those shall be elected to full membership who are of unquestionable moral character and genuine piety, sound in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and faithful in the discharge of their duties" (§ 333).

The statement on ordination (§ 304.2) states: "*The Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life . . . [and to] agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits. . . .*"

There are eight crucial steps in the examination of candidates. They are:

- (1) The self-examination of the individual seeking ordination as he or she responds to God's call in personal commitment to Christ and his church.
- (2) The decision of the committee on pastor-parish relations, which makes the first recommendation to the charge conference when a member seeks to become a candidate for ordained ministry.
- (3) The decision of the charge conference, which must recommend the candidate.
- (4) The decision of the district committee on ordained ministry, which must recommend the candidate to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and, where applicable, the decision of the district conference.
- (5) The decision of the Board of Ordained Ministry, which must recommend deacon's ordination and provisional membership. See Judicial Council Decisions 513, 536, 542.
- (6) The decision of the clergy members of the annual conference, who must elect candidates to provisional membership.
- (7) The recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry for deacon's or elder's ordination and full membership.
- (8) The election to deacon's or elder's ordination and full membership by the clergy members of the annual conference.

All clergy members of the annual conference are accountable as to character and effectiveness to the annual conference throughout their entire ministry.

The General Conference has made it clear in the “Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task” (Part III of the Discipline) that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are our guidelines. “United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine.”

In the Social Principles, the General Conference has said that ~~we “do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”~~ Furthermore, the Principles state that “we affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity ~~between a man and a woman~~. We believe that God’s blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage.” Also, “we affirm the integrity of single persons, and we reject all social practices that discriminate or social attitudes that are prejudicial against persons because they are single.”

The General Conference affirms the wisdom of our heritage expressed in the disciplinary provisions relating to the character and commitment of ordained ministers. The United Methodist Church has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless. We affirm our trust in the covenant community and the process by which we ordain ministers.

In our covenant we are called to trust one another as we recommend, examine, and elect candidates for the ordained ministry and conference membership. See Judicial Council Decision 480.

Rationale: Affirms the role of boards of ordained ministry to evaluate all candidates based on their fitness and readiness for ordained ministry. This footnote is adjusted to reflect proposed changes in ¶ 161.C and ¶ 161.G that removes language that discriminates against a particular class of people.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA, Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #8

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #8 – Unauthorized Conduct – Delete ¶ 341.6
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 341.6

Amend ¶ 341.6 as follows:

~~¶ 341.6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.~~

Rationale: In United Methodism, marriage is a recognition of two people of faith seeking to enter into a sacred covenantal relationship. This revision acknowledges the importance of such

covenantal relationships, extends to all people the full ministries of the Church, and recognizes and affirms the legal recognition of all marriages.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #9

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #9 – Moratorium on Complaint Proceedings – Amend ¶ 362
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 362

Amend ¶ 362 by adding a new subparagraph (h), as follows:

¶ 362. *Complaint Procedures*—1. 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 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 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.

* * *

h) *Moratorium on Complaints Proceedings Concerning Human Sexuality*—In light of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, effective as of the close of the General Conference of 2020, no complaint proceedings (including, without limitation, a bishop’s supervisory response, suspension proceedings, attempts to achieve a just resolution, or referral of a complaint) shall be commenced, and all such complaint proceedings that may be pending shall be suspended, insofar as the alleged misconduct asserted in the complaint is that the respondent is a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” (however that term may be defined, including, without limitation, living in a same-gender marriage, domestic partnership or civil union); that the respondent has conducted, performed or celebrated a same-gender wedding or other same-gender union; that the respondent has certified, licensed, commissioned, ordained or consecrated a “self-avowed practicing homosexual”; that the respondent has provided “funds to any gay caucus or group” or used funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality”; or that the respondent has otherwise engaged in conduct that *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* currently states is “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

This moratorium on all new and pending complaint proceedings concerning human sexuality provisions applies not merely to charges that are explicitly based on ¶ 2702.1(b), but also to any charge that the same alleged conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision of the *Discipline*, including (without limitation) “immorality” under ¶ 2702.1(a);

“disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church” under ¶ 2702.1(d); “dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church” under ¶ 2702.1(e); and “fiscal malfeasance” under ¶ 2702.1(l).

This moratorium shall remain in effect unless and until it is repealed or modified by the General Conference.

Rationale: The substantial resources required for individual complaint processes related to this deep disagreement in the UMC are best focused on critical missions and ministries. This moratorium offers necessary space for important systematic work to be completed by General Conference delegates without the additional conflict that complaints processes and trials create.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA, Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #10

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #10 – Amend Complaint Process

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 362.1e, ¶413.3.d

Amend the complaint process ¶ 362.1e and ¶ 413.3d as follows:

¶ 362.1 e) *Referral or Dismissal of a Complaint*—Upon receiving a written and signed complaint, the Bishop shall, within 90 days, carry out the supervisory response process outlined above. If within 90 days after the receipt of the complaint resolution is not achieved, the bishop shall either:

(1) Dismiss the complaint ~~as having no basis in law or fact~~, with the consent of the cabinet, giving the reasons therefore in writing, ~~copies~~ a copy of which shall be placed in the clergy person’s file ~~and shared with the complainant~~; or

(2) Refer the matter to the counsel for the Church as a complaint.

¶ 413.3.d) (i) If the supervisory response results in the resolution of the matter, the bishop in charge of the supervisory response and the two episcopacy committee members appointed to the supervisory process (¶ 413.3) shall monitor the fulfillment of the terms of the resolution. If the supervisory response does not result in resolution of the matter, the president or secretary of the College of Bishops may either dismiss the complaint ~~as having no basis in law or fact~~, with the consent of the College of Bishops and the committee on episcopacy, giving the reasons therefore in writing, ~~copies~~ a copy of which shall be placed in the bishop’s file ~~and shared with the complainant~~, refer the matter to the committee on episcopacy as an administrative complaint pursuant to ¶ 413.3e, or refer the matter to counsel for the Church pursuant to ¶ 2704.1 to prepare a complaint to forward to the committee on investigation.

Rationale: In the Wesleyan tradition, we live by the admonition to do no harm. These deletions from the 2019 Traditional Plan restore discernment and discretion to the office of the

episcopacy. There are other reasons that a complaint might be subject to dismissal, beyond having no basis in law or fact.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #11

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #11 – Amend Episcopal Responsibilities - ¶ 415.6
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 415.6

Amend ¶ 415.6 as follows:

6. To consecrate bishops; to ordain elders and deacons; to commission deaconesses, home missionaries, and missionaries; and to see that the names of the persons commissioned and consecrated are entered on the journals of the conference and that proper credentials are furnished to these persons. ~~Bishops are prohibited from consecrating bishops who are self-avowed practicing homosexuals, even if they have been duly elected by the jurisdictional or central conference. Bishops are prohibited from commissioning those on the deacon or elder track if the Board of Ordained Ministry has determined the individual is a self-avowed practicing homosexual or has failed to certify it carried out the disciplinarily mandated examination, even if the individual has been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference. Bishops are prohibited from ordaining deacons or elders if the Board of Ordained Ministry has determined the individual is a self-avowed practicing homosexual or has failed to certify it carried out the disciplinarily mandated examination, even if the individual has been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference.~~

As these services are acts of the whole Church, text and rubrics shall be used in the form approved by the General Conference.

Rationale: ¶33 empowers annual conference clergy members to determine who is qualified for ordination. The power to elect bishops is reserved to members of the jurisdictional and central conferences. These rights should not be nullified by withholding acts of consecration, ordination or commissioning from those judged as qualified for those offices.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #12

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #12 – Funding – Delete ¶ 613.19
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 613.19

Delete ¶ 613.19 as follows:

~~¶ 613.19. To ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall not limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic, nor shall it preclude funding for dialogs or educational events where the Church’s official position is fairly and equally represented.~~

Rationale: This paragraph prevents spending on ministry with and to our lesbian and gay siblings. Funds may be needed for ministry with LGBTQ persons to prevent suicide, shelter those who are homeless, welcome LGBTQ students to AC youth events, and offer Christ. This deletion creates new opportunity for life-changing ministry.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #13

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #13 – GCFA Fiscal Responsibilities – Delete ¶ 806.9

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 806.9

Delete ¶ 806.9 as follows:

~~¶ 806.9. It shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. It shall not limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.~~

Rationale: This paragraph prevents spending on ministry with and to our lesbian and gay siblings. Funds may be needed for ministry with LGBTQ persons to prevent suicide, shelter those who are homeless, welcome LGBTQ students to AC youth events, and offer Christ. This deletion creates new opportunity for life-changing ministry.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #14

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #14– Local Churches Ending Connectional Relationships with The United Methodist Church
 Discipline Paragraph: New ¶ 2553

Amend, effective as of the close of the 2020 General Conference, Chapter Six, Church Property, by deleting current Section VIII., Disaffiliation of Local Churches over issues related to human sexuality, and ¶ 2553 in its entirety, and adding a new Section VIII., Local Churches Changing or Ending Their Relationships with The United Methodist Church then by adding a new ¶ 2553 as follows:

¶ 2553. Local Churches Ending Their Connectional Relationships with The United Methodist Church

1. Basis—Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of ¶2553 to end its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church for reasons of conscience around issues of human sexuality as reflected in the *Book of Discipline* and *Social Principles*, the application or enforcement of provisions of the *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality issues, the actions or inactions of the 2019 or 2020 General Conference related to human sexuality issues, or the actions or inactions of the annual conference or jurisdictional conference in which the local church is located on those issues following the 2019 or 2020 General Conference.

2. Time Limits—The choice by a local church to end its connectional relationship under ¶ 2553 shall be made in sufficient time for the process to be complete prior to December 31, 2025. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2025 and shall not be used after that date.

3. Local Church Decision Making Process.

a) If the church council of a local church determines that the church wishes to consider ending its relationship with The United Methodist Church under ¶ 2553, that church council shall submit a request to the district superintendent. The district superintendent shall, within thirty (30) days after receipt of the request, call for a church conference under ¶ 248 for the sole purpose of deciding whether the local church wishes to end its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church.

b) The decision to end the local church’s connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present and voting at the church conference.

c) A church conference called for the purpose identified in this paragraph shall be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of ¶¶ 246 and 248, except that the following requirements will apply notwithstanding anything to the contrary in ¶¶ 246 or 248.

i. The church conference shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference.

ii. In providing advance notice of the time, place and purpose of the church conference, in addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special effort shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership, and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate.

iii. Under the provisions of ¶ 246.7, the purpose of the church conference shall be stated in the call and must include the recommendation(s) of the church council, the provisions and terms of this paragraph, and the standard terms of separation agreements of the United Methodist Church and the annual conference.

4. Process after Local Church Vote. If a local church votes to separate from and end all relationship with The United Methodist Church, the following provisions in this ¶ 2553 shall apply.

5. Separation Agreement and Terms. If a local church votes to separate from The United Methodist Church, the terms and conditions for that separation shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the bishop and cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of separation, shall be memorialized in a binding separation agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. The separation agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

a) Standard Terms of Separation Agreements. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for separation agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom.

b) Annual Conference Terms. Annual conferences may require that separation agreements include contractual terms not addressed by the form developed by General Council on Finance and Administration, or issues unique to an annual conference or a particular local church or applicable laws. Annual Conferences may also develop additional standard terms or conditions for separation. Any such additional standard terms or individual separation agreements, however, must be consistent with the standard terms required in this paragraph and the form developed by the General Council on Finance and Administration. In addition, the annual conference must notify congregations of such additional standard terms as early as is practicable, so as to inform the congregation prior to its vote, and not to impede the congregation's ability to complete the exit process by December 31, 2025.

c) Apportionments. The local church shall not be required to pay more than 12 months of apportionments.

d) Property. A separating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property for no additional required consideration to the annual conference beyond that described in this paragraph. If the local church property is going to be transferred to another legal entity, all such transfers shall become effective as of the effective date of separation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the separating local church.

e) Pension Withdrawal Liability. The local church shall be responsible for making the withdrawal liability payment in the amount required by ¶ 1504.23, unless the local church is excepted from

such payment or the liability is otherwise satisfied under another paragraph in the *Book of Discipline* addressing pension obligations for separating churches (e.g., ¶ 2555).

f) Other Liabilities to Annual Conference Entities. A separation agreement may require that some or all outstanding debts, loans, and liabilities owed by the local church to its annual conference, district or to any annual conference related entities be satisfied, with the exception that the annual conference may not in any instance require payment of more than 12 months of apportionments.

g) Local Church Liabilities Owed to Other Parties. Before any local church property or assets may be transferred to another entity, all outstanding liabilities of the local church owed to third parties, including other United Methodist Church entities, have either been:

- i. satisfied in full, with written confirmation of that fact supplied by the third party to whom the liability was owed; or
- ii. fully assumed by the other entity pursuant to agreements to which the local church's third party creditors have consented, and which oblige the other entity to fully indemnify and defend the local church against any claims relating to those liabilities.

h) No Other Claims. The local church shall not have a claim to or be entitled to a share of the assets of its annual conference.

i) Payment Terms. The separation agreement shall specify the terms and conditions of the payment to the annual conference for any sums related to ¶ 2553.5.c, e and f. If the local church and the annual conference agree to a payment plan, the plan shall bear no more than a reasonable rate of interest and the term of payment shall not exceed ten (10) years.

6. Annual Conference Approval. Upon the recommendation of the annual conference board of trustees to approve a separation agreement, the annual conference may permit a local church to separate under the terms of that separation agreement, upon approval by a majority of annual conference members present and voting.

7. Release of Interest. The annual conference's approval of the separation agreement, together with the execution of the separation agreement by authorized representatives of the annual conference board of trustees, shall constitute a release and discharge of all local church assets from any trusts in favor of The United Methodist Church that had previously attached to those assets by virtue of trust provisions included in ¶¶ 2501 and 2503 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* or in any deeds or other instruments of conveyance pursuant to which the local church acquired those assets in the first instance.

8. Members Remaining. The District Superintendent shall provide assistance to those members of the local church that wish to remain in The United Methodist Church, and the local church shall not interfere with those efforts.

9. Separating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans. The United Methodist Church believes that a local church ending its connectional relationship under ¶ 2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church ending its connectional relationship under ¶2553 shall continue to be

eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.

10. Effective Date. The terms of this paragraph are effective as of the close of the 2020 General Conference. If any provision in this paragraph is determined to be invalid or unconstitutional, that decision will not affect the remainder of the provisions.

Rationale: Creates a consistent process for local churches who desire to separate from The United Methodist Church, and do not wish to maintain a relationship through an ecumenical agreement, to receive their property and continue to participate in pension plans while paying their portion of pension liabilities, and other considerations.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #15

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #15 – New Expressions of Methodism

Discipline Paragraph: New ¶ 2554

Amend, effective as of the close of the 2020 General Conference, Chapter Six, Church Property, by adding a new ¶ 2554 as follows:

¶ 2554. New Denominational Expressions of Methodism

1. Purpose. In keeping with The United Methodist Church’s longstanding tradition of striving toward greater Christian unity (¶¶ 6, 434), and because, “as a result of our heritage as a part of a people called Methodist,” The United Methodist Church has long “strive[d] toward closer relationship with other Methodist or Wesleyan churches wherever they may be found” (¶ 433.3). The United Methodist Church desires to facilitate the development of a continuing relationship with local churches that have chosen to end their connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church in order to form or join with one another in Christian ministry and mission in what may effectively become distinct “Methodist or Wesleyan churches.” The United Methodist Church recognizes that, notwithstanding differences over issues of human sexuality, it will continue to share religious bonds and convictions and a common Wesleyan heritage with those local churches, and desires to have a continuing relationship with those that wish to forge an ecumenical relationship for shared missional priorities, shared common cause, mutual support and other purposes.

2. Authority. To develop a relationship between The United Methodist Church and a New Denominational Expression of Methodism (as defined in ¶ 2554.3, below) is to forge an ecumenical relationship with another Christian church or denomination within the meaning of ¶ 6 of the Constitution and ¶ 431 *et seq.* of the *Discipline*. The General Conference has previously granted to the Council of Bishops “the authority to enter into ecumenical relationships with other Christian bodies” (¶ 431.1(a)). Inasmuch as ecumenical relations with

other Christian bodies have constitutional and denomination-wide significance (¶ 6), the pre-existing grant of authority to the Council of Bishops to develop ecumenical agreements falls within the General Conference’s “full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional” (¶ 16), and it extends to forging relationships with other Christian churches (including Methodist or Wesleyan churches) operating within or outside the United States.

3. Definition. As used in this paragraph, the phrase “New Denominational Expression of Methodism” applies to any association of local churches that have (a) voted pursuant to ¶ 2554 to end their connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church in order to form or join together; (b) have, using whatever methods they choose, formed an association comprised primarily of other such former local United Methodist churches; and (c) as a group, may be considered, based on scale, polity, and shared Christian ministry and mission, a new and distinct Methodist or Wesleyan church. A New Denominational Expression of Methodism may include any combination of local churches or other entities, regardless of jurisdiction or geography, inside or outside the United States, that has been formed by United Methodist local churches that have voted pursuant to ¶ 2554 to end their connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church.

Pursuant to the authority described under ¶ 2554.2, the Council of Bishops may determine whether an association of local churches qualifies as a New Denominational Expression of Methodism with which The United Methodist Church wishes to enter into an ecumenical agreement under this ¶ 2554.

4. Agreements. The Council of Bishops may enter into ecumenical agreements with New Denominational Expressions of Methodism under such terms and conditions as the Council of Bishops and those representing the New Denominational Expression of Methodism agree. The Council of Bishops may do so through an agreement similar to those authorized by ¶ 434 or other provisions in the *Book of Discipline* and are particularly encouraged to do so when a New Denominational Expression of Methodism has joined the World Methodist Council or the Pan-Methodist Commission. The Council of Bishops may choose to establish standard terms for such agreements. Such agreements do not need to be ratified by the General Conference unless the nature or terms of the agreement require ratification under another provision in The Book of Discipline (e.g. any agreement that contemplates a “full communion relationship” with a New Denominational Expression of Methodism within the meaning of ¶ 431.1.b.).

5. Terms of ecumenical agreements with New Denominational Expressions of Methodism:

a. The Council of Bishops may provide in an ecumenical agreement for participation by non-voting representatives of New Denominational Expressions of Methodism in the General Conference. In accordance with ¶13.2 and 502.1.b, the General Conference may provide for a small number of voting delegates for New Expressions of Methodism at the General Conference, provided that such New Expressions of Methodism allow a similar number of voting delegates in their highest legislative conference.

b. The Council of Bishops may consider including terms in ecumenical agreements that allow a New Denominational Expression of Methodism to make its own use of the words “United Methodist” or protected United Methodist insignia (including the Cross and Flame), provided care is taken to impose requirements or conditions needed to prevent confusion and that preserve The United Methodist Church’s ability to protect its intellectual property rights. To

effectuate this intent, the General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop rules consistent with this subparagraph, to govern the potential use by any New Denominational Expressions of Methodism of UMC insignia and the “United Methodist” name. At a minimum, any such use of the name and insignia must be accompanied by a secondary moniker that distinguishes the organization. In addition, those rules shall permit the use of both the insignia and “United Methodist Church” by New Denominational Expressions of Methodism located entirely outside the United States.

c. The Council of Bishops may include in an ecumenical agreement provisions that allow a New Denominational Expressions of Methodism to make commitments to United Methodist general boards and agencies; or that address their eligibility to receive grants and other services; or other terms relating to United Methodist general boards and agencies.

d. Such agreements may include financial support during a transition period, if budgeted by the General Conference.

e. Such agreement may include such other terms and conditions as the Council of Bishops deem appropriate, except as provided in this ¶ 2554 or as limited by ¶ 431.1.a.

6. Local Churches Changing their Relationship with the United Methodist Church through New Denominational Expressions of Methodism.

a. Basis—Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of ¶ 2554, to end its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church for reasons of conscience around issues of human sexuality as reflected in the *Book of Discipline* and *Social Principles*, application or enforcement of provisions of the *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality issues, the actions or inactions of the 2019 or 2020 General Conference related to human sexuality issues, or the actions or inactions of the annual conference or jurisdictional conference in which the local church is located on those issues following the 2019 or 2020 General Conference. In contrast with the provisions of ¶ 2553, the process set forth in this paragraph is for use by local churches that wish to form or join with a New Denominational Expression of Methodism that has or may enter into an ecumenical agreement with The United Methodist Church, and have a continuing relationship under such agreement.

b. Time Limits—The choice by a local church to change its relationship with the United Methodist Church under ¶ 2554 shall be made in sufficient time for the process to be complete prior to December 31, 2025. The provisions of ¶ 2554 expire on December 31, 2025 and shall not be used after that date.

c. Local Church Decision-making Process.

(1) If the church council of a local church determines that the church wishes to consider changing its relationship with The United Methodist Church under ¶ 2554, that church council shall submit a request to the district superintendent. The district superintendent shall, within thirty (30) days after receipt of the request, call for a church conference under ¶ 248 for the sole purpose of deciding whether the local church wishes to end its relationship with The United Methodist Church in order to form or join with a New Denominational Expression of Methodism.

(2) The decision to change the local church's relationship with The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present and voting at the church conference.

(3) A church conference church conference called for the purpose identified in this paragraph shall be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of ¶¶ 246 and 248, except that the following requirements will apply notwithstanding anything to the contrary in ¶¶ 246 or 248:

a. The church conference shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference.

b. In providing advance notice of the time, place and purpose of the church conference, in addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special effort shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership, and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate.

c. Under the provisions of ¶ 246.7, the purpose of the church conference shall be stated in the call, and must include the recommendation(s) of the church council, the provisions and terms of this paragraph, and the standard terms of separation agreements of the United Methodist Church and the annual conference. The congregation shall be informed of any details then known regarding the existing or proposed New Denominational Expression of Methodism and the terms of the standard separation agreement of the United Methodist Church and its annual conference.

7. Provisions in Ecumenical Agreements Regarding Local Churches Forming or Joining with New Denominational Expressions of Methodism. To effectuate the purposes in 2554.1 and to minimize disruption of the work of The United Methodist Church, the following provisions should be used.

a. The process to be followed by local churches who have voted to change their relationship with The United Methodist Church by aligning with a New Denominational Expression of Methodism under ¶ 2554 will be determined by the Council of Bishops, in consultation with the General Board of Finance and Administration, subject to this paragraph; however, matters related to pension obligations, shall be determined by subparagraph 7.e.(5) below.

b. If a New Denominational Expression of Methodism has entered into an ecumenical agreement with The United Methodist Church that includes terms relating to the process for local churches to join, that process will be followed. Where a group of local churches has decided to form a New Denominational Expression of Methodism, a transition period will be provided for them to create that entity and enter into an ecumenical agreement with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph, if desired. If no ecumenical agreement exists between the New Denominational Expression of Methodism and The United Methodist Church, and there is no intent to enter such an agreement, then the local church (assuming it still wishes to end its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church) and the annual conference will follow the procedures in ¶ 2553.

c. An ecumenical agreement with a New Denominational Expression of Methodism may set out terms that facilitate the ability of local churches that so desire to join a New Denominational Expression of Methodism, provided that no such provisions in the ecumenical agreement vitiate the rights of the annual conference regarding local churches ending their connectional

relationship and forming or joining New Expressions of Methodism. Such provisions may include, but are not limited to:

(1) Allowing the New Denominational Expression of Methodism, or its constituent organizations that are associated with it, to satisfy and/or assume any liabilities of the local church.

(2) Simplified processes to be used by local churches following a vote under ¶ 2554.6, such as standard terms, provisional status, common agreements or other processes. If a process affects the rights of the annual conference, then the applicable annual conference must agree to the process.

(3) Waiver of, or other provisions regarding, liabilities the local church may owe to United Methodist entities other than an annual conference or annual conference related entities, provided the consent/agreement of such other entities can be obtained.

d. Paragraph 2554 should be interpreted and applied to effectuate the purposes set out in 2554.1, subject to the rights of the annual conference.

e. Local Church Agreements and Terms.

Subject to any terms and provisions in ¶ 2554 or any ecumenical agreement made under this paragraph, the terms and conditions for a local church to end its connectional relationship with The United Methodist Church under this ¶ 2554 in order to form or join a New Denominational Expression of Methodism shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the bishop and cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of the agreement, shall be memorialized in a binding separation agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. The local church agreement with the annual conference must be consistent with the following provisions:

(1) Standard Terms of Local Church Agreements. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for local church agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom.

(2) Annual Conference Terms. Annual conferences may require that local church agreements include contractual terms not addressed by the form developed by General Council on Finance and Administration, or issues unique to an annual conference, or a particular local church, or applicable laws. Annual Conferences may also develop additional standard terms or conditions for such agreements. Any such additional standard terms, or local church agreements, must be consistent with the standard terms required in this paragraph and by the form developed by General Council on Finance and Administration. In addition, the annual conference must notify congregations of such additional standard terms as early as is practicable, so as to inform the congregation prior to its vote, and not to impede the congregation's ability to complete the exit process by December 31, 2025.

(3) Apportionments. The local church shall not be required to pay more than 12 months of apportionments.

(4) Property. A local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property for no additional required consideration to the annual conference beyond that described in this paragraph. If the local church property is going to be transferred to another legal entity, all such transfers shall become effective as of the effective date of separation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the local church.

(5) Pension Withdrawal Liability. The local church shall be responsible for making the withdrawal liability payment in the amount required by ¶ 1504.23, unless the local church is excepted from such payment or the liability is otherwise satisfied under another paragraph in the *Book of Discipline* addressing pension obligations for separating churches (e.g., ¶ 2555).

(6) Other Liabilities to Annual Conference Entities. An individual agreement may require that some or all outstanding debts, loans, and liabilities owed by the local church to its annual conference, district or to any annual conference related entities be satisfied, with the exception that the annual conference may not in any instance require payment of more than 12 months of apportionments.

(7) Local Church Liabilities Owed to Other Parties. Before any local church assets may be transferred to another entity (e.g. the New Expression of Methodism or a newly established entity to continue the ministry of the local church), all outstanding liabilities of the local church owed to third parties, including other United Methodist Church entities, have either been:

- i. satisfied in full, with written confirmation of that fact supplied by the third party to whom the liability was owed; or
- ii. fully assumed by another entity pursuant to agreements to which the local church's third party creditors have consented, and which oblige that entity to fully indemnify and defend the local church against any claims relating to those liabilities.

(8) No Other Claims. The local church shall not have a claim to or be entitled to a share of the assets of its annual conference.

(9) Payment Terms. The local church agreement shall specify the terms and conditions of the payment to the annual conference for any sums related to ¶ 2554.7(e) (3), (5) and (7). If the local church and the annual conference agree to a payment plan, the plan shall bear no more than a reasonable rate of interest and the term of payment shall not exceed ten (10) years.

f. Annual Conference Approval. Upon the recommendation of the annual conference board of trustees to approve a local church agreement, the annual conference may permit a local church to change its relationship under the terms of that local church agreement and/or any ecumenical agreement, upon approval by a majority of annual conference members present and voting.

g. Release of Interest. The annual conference's approval of that agreement, together with the execution of the local church agreement by authorized representatives of the annual conference board of trustees, shall constitute a release and discharge of all local church assets from any trusts in favor of The United Methodist Church that had previously attached to those assets by virtue of trust provisions included in ¶¶ 2501 and 2503 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* or in any deeds or other instruments of conveyance pursuant to which the local church acquired those assets in the first instance.

h. Members Remaining. The District Superintendent shall provide assistance to those members of the local church that wish to remain in The United Methodist Church, and the local church shall not interfere with those efforts.

8. Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans. The United Methodist Church believes that a local church changing its relationship under ¶ 2554 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church changing its relationship under ¶ 2554 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.

9. Limits. New Denominational Expressions of Methodism are not required to participate in any program of The United Methodist Church, and do not have a right to participate in any such program, except as provided in ¶ 1504 or other provisions regarding the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Wespath) services. Any continuing relationship shall be made by mutual agreement.

10. General Boards and Agencies. General boards and agencies may negotiate directly with New Denominational Expressions of Methodism related to services, missional agreements and other matters.

11. Effective Date. The terms of this paragraph are effective as of the close of the 2020 General Conference. If any provision in this paragraph is determined to be invalid or unconstitutional, that decision will not affect the remainder of the provisions.

Rationale: Creates a new process for churches who have formed New Denominational Expressions of Methodism under ¶ 2554 and who wish to enter into a continuing relationship with The United Methodist Church on issues other than pensions. Wespath services and pension matters are addressed by ¶ 1504.23 or new ¶ 2555.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #16

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #16 – Grants for New Expressions of Methodism – New ¶ 2556
Discipline Paragraph: New ¶ 2556

Add a new ¶ 2556 as follows:

¶ 2556. Grants for New Denominational Expressions of Methodism

The General Conference shall establish in its 2021-2024 budget an amount to be used for grants that may be provided to new denominational expressions of Methodism that remain in ecumenical or covenantal relationship with The United Methodist Church. These grants reflect and honor a history of shared participation and support in mission and will help with

transition costs. The total amount of funds available for such grants shall be determined by the General Conference. Factors considered in determining this amount should include but not be limited to:

- the number of churches in each new denominational expression of Methodism
- the number of professing members of those churches
- the amounts remitted to their respective annual conference for payment of general apportioned funds in Jurisdictional Conferences, or the General Administration and Episcopal Fund in Central Conferences by those churches in the most recent completed fiscal year.

No monies used for this purpose shall be paid from donor restricted funds or funds subject to a trust. No monies used for this purpose shall be paid from reserves designated or allocated for the funding of pension plans or retiree medical benefits, nor should such payments compromise the ability to fulfill such obligations. Care shall be taken to ensure that the use of all funds shall be consistent with the intent of the donor. The allocation of such grant funds is to be overseen by the Council of Bishops as part of an ecumenical agreement, with advice from a professional mediator, and administrative support and counsel from the General Council on Finance and Administration and other agencies that can assist this process.

Rationale: Resources should be offered to New Denominational Expressions of Methodism that continue in ecumenical relationships. This creates a framework for further discernment within a determined pool of funds for all new expressions. The Council of Bishops should offer oversight and receive guidance and input from a wide range of sources.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #17

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #17 – Just Resolution – Amend Complainant Role
Discipline Paragraph: ¶¶ 362.1(c), 413.3(c), 2701.5, and 2706.5(c)3

Amend ¶¶ 362.1(c), 413.3(c), 2701.5, and 2706.5(c)3 by deleting the same sentence to all four as follows: ~~No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect.~~ Also delete the complainant(s), in ¶¶ 2701.5 and 2706.5(c)3.

¶ 362. Complaint Procedures—1. Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is a sacred trust. . .

...

c) Just Resolution—The supervisory response may include a process that seeks a just resolution in which the parties are assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s), in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties. If the bishop chooses to initiate a mediated attempt to produce a just resolution, then the bishop, the person filing the complaint, the respondent, and other appropriate persons shall enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. A process seeking a just resolution may begin at any time in the supervisory, complaint, or trial process. ~~No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect.~~ If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. A just resolution agreed to by all parties shall be a final disposition of the related complaint.

¶ 413. Complaints Against Bishops

...

3. After receiving a complaint as provided in ¶ 413.2, . . .

...

c) The supervisory response may include a process seeking a just resolution in which the parties are assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s) in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties. (See ¶ 363.1b, c.) The appropriate persons, including the president of the College of Bishops, or the secretary if the complaint concerns the president, should enter into a written agreement outlining such process, including an agreement as to confidentiality. ~~No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect.~~ If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. Such written statement of resolution shall be given to the person in charge of that stage of the process for further action consistent with the agreement. Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.

¶ 2701.5. 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 insofar as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint. 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, ~~the complainant(s)~~, and the counsel for the respondent, should enter into a written agreement outlining such process, including any agreement on confidentiality. ~~No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect.~~ 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.

¶ 2706.5. Bill of Charges and Specifications, Deliberations, Vote, and Referral

c) Findings other than reasonable grounds by committee or other actions

(1) If the committee on investigation determines . . .

(2) If the committee on investigation determines . . .

(3) Upon recommendation of the counsel for the Church and the counsel for the respondent, the committee may refer the matter to the resident bishop as deemed appropriate for a process seeking a just resolution. The bishop shall institute such a process and may use the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s). Such referral will not constitute a dismissal or double jeopardy under ¶ 2701.5. The appropriate persons, including the counsel for the Church, ~~the complainant(s)~~, and counsel for the respondent, should enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. ~~No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect.~~ If resolution is achieved, a written statement, affirming such resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the same persons who signed the written agreement outlining the process, and they shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint. If the resolution results in a change of ministerial status, the disclosure agreement shall not prevent the disciplinary disclosures required for readmission. The written statement affirming such resolution shall be given to the bishop for further action(s) to implement the agreement, if any. If the process does not result in resolution, the matter shall be returned to the committee.

Rationale: This amendment removes language from the 2019 Traditional Plan that makes the complaint process more expensive and creates the potential for unresolvable conflict, which increases the likelihood of costly clergy trials that distract from making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convener of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #18

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #18 – Amend Just Resolution Process

Discipline Paragraph: ¶¶ 362.1, 413.3c, 2701.5, 2706.5.c.3

Amend ¶¶ 362.1, 413.3c, 2701.5, 2706.5.c.3 by deleting the same sentence to all four as follows: ~~Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.~~

¶ 362. Complaint Procedures – 1. Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is . . .

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 . . .

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. ~~Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.~~ In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution as defined in ¶ 362.1c 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 ¶ 2702.1. When . . .

¶ 413. *Complaints Against Bishops*—

3. c) The supervisory response may include a process seeking a just resolution in which the parties are assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s) in reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties. (See ¶ 362.1b, c.) The appropriate persons, including the president of the College of Bishops, or the secretary if the complaint concerns the president, should enter into a written agreement outlining such process, including an agreement as to confidentiality. No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect. If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. Such written statement of resolution shall be given to the person in charge of that stage of the process for further action consistent with the agreement. ~~Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.~~

¶ 2701.5. *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. ~~Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.~~ 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 . . .

¶ 2706.5 c) Findings other than reasonable grounds by committee or other actions

(3) Upon recommendation of the counsel for the Church and the counsel for the respondent, the committee may refer the matter to the resident bishop as deemed appropriate for a process seeking a just resolution. The bishop shall institute such a process and may use the assistance of a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s). Such referral will not constitute a dismissal or double jeopardy under ¶ 2701.2d. The appropriate persons, including the counsel for the Church, the complainant, and counsel for the respondent, should enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. No matter where in the process a just resolution is achieved, the complainant(s) shall be a party to the resolution process and every effort shall be made to have the complainant(s) agree to the resolution before it may take effect. If resolution is achieved, a written statement, affirming such resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the same persons who signed the written agreement outlining the process, and they shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties. ~~Just resolutions shall state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.~~ If the resolution results in a change of ministerial status, the disclosure agreement shall not prevent the disciplinary disclosures . . .

Rationale: The goal of a just resolution is to fairly and fully resolve conflict, not keep a list of all harms. This deletion from 2019 enables the UMC to honor the admonition of scripture to “keep no record of wrongs” (I Corinthians 13:5). Identifying “all harms” is subjective in nature.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #19

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #19 – Moratorium on Judicial Proceedings – Amend ¶ 2701
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 2701

Amend ¶ 2701 by inserting a new subparagraph 6 as follows:

¶ 2701. *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.

* * *

5. *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.

6. *Moratorium on Judicial Proceedings Concerning Human Sexuality*—In light of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, no judicial proceedings shall be commenced, and all pending judicial proceedings shall be suspended, insofar as such proceedings are based on a complaint, charge or allegation that the respondent is a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” (however that term may be defined, including, without limitation, living in a same-gender marriage, domestic partnership or civil union); that the respondent has conducted, performed or celebrated a same-gender wedding or other same-gender union; that the respondent has certified, licensed, commissioned, ordained or consecrated a “self-avowed practicing homosexual”; that the respondent has provided “funds to any gay caucus or group” or used funds “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality”; or that the respondent has otherwise engaged in conduct that *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* currently states is “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

This moratorium on all new and pending judicial proceedings concerning human sexuality provisions applies not merely to charges explicitly asserted pursuant to ¶ 2702.1(b), but also to any charge that the same alleged conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision of the *Discipline*, including (without limitation) “immorality” under

¶ 2702.1(a) or ¶ 2702.3(a); “disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church” under ¶ 2702.1(d) and ¶ 2702.3(c); “dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church” under ¶ 2702.1(e) and ¶ 2702.3(d); and “fiscal malfeasance” under ¶ 2702.1(l) and ¶ 2702.3(k).

This moratorium shall go into effect effective as of the close of the 2020 General Conference, and it shall remain in effect unless and until it is repealed or modified by the General Conference.

Rationale: The substantial resources required for individual trials related to this deep disagreement in the UMC are best focused on critical missions and ministries. This moratorium offers necessary space for important systematic work to be completed by General Conference delegates without the additional conflict that trials create.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #20

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #20 – Moratorium on Judicial Proceedings – Amend ¶ 2702
Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 2702

Amend ¶ 2702 as follows:

¶ 2702. 1. Subject to any and all limitations imposed by other provisions of the *Discipline*, including (without limitation) the moratorium imposed in ¶ 2701.6, a A-bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4) 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; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies; (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; (g) child abuse; (h) sexual abuse; (i) sexual misconduct 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. Subject to any and all limitations imposed by other provisions of the *Discipline*, including (without limitation) the moratorium imposed in ¶ 2701.6, a A-bishop, clergy member of an annual conference, or diaconal minister may be brought to trial when the appropriate body recommends involuntary termination.

3. Subject to any and all limitations imposed by other provisions of the *Discipline*, including (without limitation) the moratorium imposed in ¶ 2701.6, a 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; (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 (¶ 2704.1a)

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 *Book of Discipline* in effect at the time the offense is alleged to have occurred except in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse. Then it shall be in the language of the *Book of 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*.

Rationale: The substantial resources required for individual trials related to this deep disagreement in the UMC are best focused on critical missions and ministries. This moratorium offers necessary space for important systematic work to be completed by General Conference delegates without the additional conflict that trials create.

Submitted by: Rev. Junius Dotson, Elder, Great Plains Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, USA,
Co-convenor of UMC Next

Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #21

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #21 – Chargeable Offenses - ¶ 2702.1

Discipline Paragraph: Amend ¶ 2702.1

Amend ¶ 2702.1 as follows:

¶ 2702.1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4) 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; ~~(b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be~~

~~incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;~~ (eb) crime; (dc) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (ed) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (fe) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (gf) child abuse; (hg) sexual abuse; (ih) sexual misconduct including the use or possession of pornography, (ji) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; (kj) racial, or gender discrimination; or (tk) fiscal malfeasance.

Rationale: Deletions to this paragraph mean that a person's sexual identity as a homosexual will no longer be a chargeable offense and clergy and churches are no longer prevented from conducting same-sex wedding ceremonies. The language is adjusted to reflect proposed changes in ¶¶ 161.C., 161.G, 304.3, and 341.6.

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Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #22

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #22 – Penalties – Amend ¶ 2711.3

Discipline Paragraph: ¶ 2711.3

Amend ¶ 2711.3 as follows:

3. *Penalties—If the Trial Results in Conviction.*—Further testimony may be heard and arguments by counsel presented regarding what the penalty should be. The trial court shall determine the penalty, which shall require a vote of at least seven members. The trial court shall have the power to remove the respondent from professing membership, terminate the conference membership, and revoke the credentials of conference membership and licensing, commissioning, ordination, or consecration of the respondent, suspend the respondent from the exercise of the functions of office, or to fix a lesser penalty. ~~However, where the conviction is for conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies under ¶ 2702.1(b) or (d), the trial court does not have the power to and may not fix a penalty less than the following:~~

a) ~~First (1st) offense — One (1) year's suspension without pay.~~

b) ~~Second (2nd) offense — Not less than termination of conference membership and revocation of credentials of licensing, ordination, or consecration.~~

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

Rationale: Pre-defined penalties for complaints intrude on the constitutional prerogative of annual conference clergy to determine all matters relating to the conference relations of their peers. No such “minimum” penalties exist for any other violations. Minimum penalties undermine the trial court’s responsibilities and the Constitutional principles of legality and inclusiveness.

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Next Generation UMC Proposal – Petition #23

Suggested Title: Next Generation UMC #23 – Church Appeal Procedures – ¶ 2715.10

Discipline Paragraph: Amend ¶ 2715.10

Amend ¶ 2715.10 Appeal Procedures as follows:

¶ 2715. Appeal Procedures—General

...

10. The Church shall have no right of appeal from findings of fact of the trial court. ~~The Church shall have a right of appeal to the committee on appeals and then to the Judicial Council from findings of the trial court based on egregious errors of Church law or administration that could reasonably have affected the findings of the trial court. When the committee on appeals or the Judicial Council shall find egregious errors of Church law or administration under this part, it may remand the case for a new trial, along with a statement of the grounds of its action. This is not to be double jeopardy.~~ In regard to cases where there is an investigation under ¶ 2702, but no trial is held, egregious errors of Church law or administration may be appealed to the jurisdictional ~~or central conference~~ committee on appeals and then to the Judicial Council by counsel for the Church. The committee on investigation’s decision not to certify a bill of charges does not alone constitute an egregious error of Church law or administration. When the committee on appeals ~~or the Judicial Council~~ shall find egregious errors of Church law or administration under this part, it may remand the case for a new hearing, in which event it shall return to the chair of the committee on investigation a statement of the grounds of its action. This is not to be double jeopardy.

Rationale: This amendment deletes a repetitious, potentially expensive, and unnecessary process added by the Traditional Plan. There is no reason to change the process that has worked successfully for years. The finances of the church are best stewarded toward its mission and ministry rather than redundant trial procedures.

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