

General Conference 2016: Facilities Accessibility, Book of Discipline ¶ 610.4

Conference Budget Implications: None

BE IT RESOLVED, that ¶ 610 be amended to, . . . The annual conference is responsible for structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to accomplish its purpose . . . It will monitor to insure inclusiveness—racial, gender, age, and people with disabilities—in the annual conference.

1. ~~Whenever possible,~~ Every effort shall be made to ensure that all meetings scheduled by the annual conference and its districts, boards, or committees ~~should~~ will be held in places that are accessible to persons with disabilities even if this means scheduling meetings outside church-related facilities.

RATIONALE: The Discipline specifies that there shall be no discrimination against people with disabilities, yet ¶ 610.4 is not sufficiently strong to ensure that people using wheelchairs can attend meetings of the annual conference, its districts, boards, and committees. Adopting the petition ensures that the intent of the paragraph is met.

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General Conference 2016: Addressing Joint Committee Membership Book of Discipline ¶ 652

Conference Budget Implications: None

BE IT RESOLVED that ¶ 652 be amended as follows, “Each annual conference shall establish a procedure by which it will manage clergy medical leave. The annual conference may establish a joint committee on clergy medical leave. If the annual conference establishes such a committee, it shall be composed of two representatives each from the Board of Ordained Ministry and the conference board of pensions, and one active or retired minister with one or more disabilities named by the Conference Committee on Disabilities, or—if there is no conference Committee on Disabilities— then by the bishop, all of whom shall be elected either annually or the beginning of each quadrennium, and when a vacancy occurs. Further, a district superintendent shall be appointed from time to time to the committee by the bishop to represent the cabinet. Unless and until other members are elected, the chairperson and registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the chairperson and secretary of the conference board of pensions, and the chairperson of the Conference Disability Committee or others designated by them, shall be authorized to represent their respective boards and The disability committee in organizing itself either annually or at the beginning of each quadrennium by the election of a chairperson and a secretary. If the annual conference does not establish a joint committee, the annual Conference’s established policy and process for managing nonetheless should involve the Board of Ordained Ministry, the conference board of pensions, the Conference Committee on Disabilities or alternate structure and, representation from the cabinet.

RATIONALE: Since each annual conference is required to establish a procedure for clergy medical leave, an active or retired ordained person with a disability must not be an optional, but a required part of the decision making body to ensure a fair and just course of action.

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**General Conference 2016: Addressing Mental Illness Benefits,
Book of Discipline Paragraph: ¶806**

Conference Budget Implications: Nominal

BE IT RESOLVED that ¶806 be amended to add a new paragraph following paragraph 8.

It shall be responsible for ensuring that no United Methodist board, agency, or other entity shall provide to their own agency, other agencies or to annual conferences disability compensation insurance for clergy or laity which offers different levels of protection based on whether or not the diagnosis is for a mental-nervous condition.

RATIONALE: Disability insurance which restricts benefits for “nervous-mental conditions” – common practice -- unjustly discriminates against some employees compared to others, violates Social Principle ¶162X and is counter to the principles of Resolution 3303, Ministry in Mental Illness. GCFA is the appropriate agency to enforce non-use of UMC funds for such insurance.

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**General Conference 2016: Address Ministerial Candidates with Disabilities
Book of Discipline, Section IV Provisional Membership 324.8**

Conference Budget Implications: None

BE IT RESOLVED, Revise 324.8 as follows: Each candidate shall present a satisfactory certificate of good health by a physician on the prescribed form. If a provisional candidate has one or more irremovable disabilities, those conditions shall have no bearing on the question of endorsing the candidate as an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, with the decision based solely on the candidate having met the professional standards and is effective as a provisional member in ministry.

RATIONALE: The current clause opens the door to prejudging disabled provisional members as unfit for ministry. The health examination includes matters irrelevant to effective ministry. Jesus upheld disabled persons as “clean.” John Wesley designed Methodism as an inclusive, not exclusive body of Christ with all and for all; so must we.

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General Conference 2016: Regarding Employee Disability Insurance in the UMC

Book of Resolutions

Budget Implications: Nominal

BE IT RESOLVED that United Methodist Church Employees have the same Disability Benefits as clergy.

RATIONALE: The “industry-standard” in commercial disability insurance is to terminate disability compensation after two years when the disability is based on a mental or nervous diagnosis, regardless of the continuing presence of disability. Such a policy unjustly discriminates against some employees compared to others and violates the trust employees have that their employer will provide adequate assistance for them if they become disabled. Such a policy violates United Methodist Social Principle ¶162X and is counter to the principles of Resolution 3303, Ministry in Mental Illness. Some employers which object to this discrimination, however, have been able to negotiate non-discriminatory disability policies. The General Council on Finance and Administration is entrusted with many related matters and is the logical entity to enforce a policy of non-discrimination across the denomination. Currently, disability policies for General Agencies are provided by GCFA and policies for Annual Conferences and all clergy are offered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

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