

Paragraph 1000

# THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*The organizations of The United Methodist Church are...*

Christ-Centered  
Outward Turning  
Disciple Making  
Justice Seeking  
Life Transforming

*The organizations of The United Methodist Church are...*

Diverse  
Inclusive  
Multiplying  
Wrestling  
Becoming

*The organizations of The United Methodist Church...*

Whose mission and ministry  
inspires and captivates the hearts  
and minds of new generations of disciples

and is

Continually being shaped by  
God for the challenges and  
opportunities of these times

The United Methodist Church is organized into four units.

1. Local church - The United Methodist congregations around the world that meet annually in a charge or church conference to align leadership, program, and budget with the mission of The United Methodist Church.
2. Connectional church - A group of United Methodist congregations that meet in a connectional conference to align resources, personnel, goals, strategies, and budget to resource congregations to carry out the mission of The United Methodist Church.
3. Regional church – A group of United Methodist connectional churches that meet every four years to elect bishops, contextualize The Connection, act on resolutions related to the area covered by the regional church, approve benefit programs for clergy and lay employees in the regional church, and covenant for services with general agencies to resource connectional churches and address missional needs within the regional church.
4. Global church – All of the United Methodist congregations and organizations from around the world working collaboratively to make disciples for the transformation of the world. The global church gathers every four years in a global conference to affirm the theology, values, mission, goals, and global policies of The United Methodist Church.

## THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church consists of all of the United Methodist congregations around the world. The congregation is the primary agent of mission in the church. Individually and collectively, congregations carry out the mission of The United Methodist Church. United Methodist congregations are also part of the Christian church universal, which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

### **PURPOSE**

Congregations exist for the worship and praise of the Triune God and to nurture disciples who turn outward to connect and engage with the people in the community in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, congregations help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live daily as followers of Jesus.

Congregations also partner with other congregations and organizations in their community, the connectional church and the global church for fruitful local, connectional and global mission that transforms lives and communities.

Transformational leaders and fruitful Wesleyan congregations are essential to the mission. Therefore, The United Methodist Church shall be organized and led to strengthen the leadership and health and fruitfulness of congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

*For a description of the terms disciple, fruitful Wesleyan congregation, transformational leader, and transformed world, refer to Paragraph 600 regarding the mission of The United Methodist Church.*

## **ORGANIZATION**

Congregations have the authority to organize their ministry based on their size and context to effectively fulfill the mission of The United Methodist Church.

Congregations shall have the following bodies and may add to this basic structure with the approval of the charge and church conference and the knowledge of the district superintendent.

### **Charge and Church Conferences**

The ministry of congregations shall be governed by a charge conference or church conference. A charge conference is the board of stewards of the congregation, and all United Methodist clergy, active and retired who are under appointment or associated with the congregation, presided over by the district superintendent or by an ordained full member assigned by the district superintendent. Alternatively, the district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor, may convene a church conference, which includes all the professing members of the congregation. The pastor, any other clergy appointed to the congregation, and retired and extension ministry clergy associated with the congregation shall be ex-officio members of the charge or church conference with voice but not vote.

The charge and church conferences have the following responsibilities.

1. Elect the board of stewards of the congregation, its officers, and committee members.
2. Set and evaluate the vision and broad goals for the congregation to achieve the mission.
3. Set and evaluate the budget to achieve the mission and ministry.
4. Set compensation for all clergy persons appointed to the congregation according to the policies of the connectional church and in consultation with the district superintendent.
5. Endorse and sponsor candidates for ministry.
6. Approve construction projects, property purchases and sales, and property leases of a year or more.

7. Set policies for endowments and approve new endowments.

A district superintendent, or the superintendent's designee, convenes and presides at charge and church conferences. These may be convened individually with each charge or church, or the superintendent may convene groups of charges or churches to have their conferences together. The superintendent, in consultation with the pastor, shall set the date, time, and location for the charge or church conference.

The district superintendent, in consultation with the pastor and the chairperson of the board of stewards, may call a special charge or church conference to conduct only the business related to the stated call for the special conference.

Notification for a charge or church conference must be given at least 10 days prior to the meeting. The quorum for a charge conference shall be 50% of the members of the congregation's board of stewards plus one. The quorum for a church conference shall be the professing members who are present for a duly called church conference.

A charge or church conference, with the approval of the district superintendent, may be convened electronically and votes may be taken electronically.

A charge or church conference shall be conducted in the language of the majority of the people gathered, with adequate provision being made for translations.

The charge or church conference shall operate in accordance with the doctrine, teachings, Wesleyan Path and polity of The United Methodist Church.

**Outcome** – The congregation is focused on the mission, a budget is set to focus on the mission and to achieve the goals and priorities of the congregation, and new leaders are cultivated to serve in and through the congregation and the connectional church.

### **Nominations Committee**

The nominations committee plans and implements policies and practices to identify persons within the congregation that reflect the diversity of the congregation and possess the gifts, skills and experience to effectively lead the mission and ministry of the congregation.

The nominations committee shall be composed of 3-9 professing members of the congregation elected by the charge or church conference. The number of members of the committee shall be determined by the charge or church conference. The pastor and the chair of the board of stewards shall serve as co-chairpersons of the committee. The committee shall nominate the following officers and members;

1. The members of the board of stewards

2. The officers of the board of stewards, including but not limited to the chairperson, secretary and treasurer.
3. The financial secretary, who shall be a member of the finance committee and one of the 7-18 members of the board of stewards. The financial secretary must be unrelated to the treasurer.
4. The chairpersons of any of the committees of the board of stewards, who shall also be one of the 7-18 members of the board of stewards.
5. Committee members in addition to board of stewards members who also serve on the various committees.

In order to secure experience and stability, the nominations committee is to develop a policy to rotate leadership so that new people are participating in the organizational life of the congregation.

**Outcome** – A gifted and engaged team of leaders who are leading the congregation to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow to be a fruitful Wesleyan congregation for the transformation of the world. There is a rotation of leaders in place that continues to bring new gifted leaders into the leadership team.

### **Board of Stewards**

A congregation shall have a board of stewards. The board of stewards shall have 7-18 members, as determined and elected by the charge or church conference and shall represent the diversity of the congregation. The lead pastor shall be an ex-officio member of the board of stewards with voice but not vote and may attend all committee meetings. The lead pastor is included as one of the 7-18 members.

Other staff may attend board of stewards meetings as invited or by policy of the stewards and attend committee meetings as assigned by the appointed lead pastor.

The chairperson of the board of stewards in consultation with the pastor shall set the date, time, and location for board meetings. The board of stewards shall meet at least four times a year. Notification for meetings of the board of stewards shall be given at least 5 days prior to the meeting. A quorum for any meeting shall be 50% of the members plus one. A board of stewards meeting may be convened electronically and may also take a vote by mail and email ballot.

The board of stewards shall have the following responsibilities.

1. Establish and evaluate a plan for how the congregation will connect and engage with the people in the community to make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world.
2. Establish a plan and allocate resources to grow the vitality of the congregation.
3. Establish and oversee personnel policies for hiring, supporting, developing and compensating staff.

4. Develop and oversee a safe sanctuary policy to protect young people and adults from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.
5. Allocate the appropriate resources to maintain the property and, in consultation with the lead pastor, establish property and building usage policies, including wedding policies.
6. Oversee the finances and administration of the congregation.
7. Determine the appropriate committees, teams and task forces to carry out the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church in the local community.
8. Ensure there is appropriate oversight of the ministry, finances, property and personnel functions of the congregation.
9. Create a plan and strategies to develop leaders within the congregation.
10. Determine additional committees to carry out the work of the board of stewards in addition to the committees listed below.
11. In consultation with the lead pastor, appoint stewards to committees, teams and task forces. Members who are not part of the board of stewards are to be elected by the charge or church conference.
12. Review misconduct by a lay member and determine an individual's membership in the event of misconduct. The procedures are listed below under the heading lay member misconduct.

It is recommended that members of the board of stewards and its committees be elected to a four-year term and four classes so that ideally not more than 25% of the members leave or join the board or its committees in the same year. Members of the board of stewards must be re-nominated by the nominations committee and reelected by the charge or church conference after completing their term. No member of the board of stewards may serve more than three consecutive terms. It is recommended that the chairperson of the board of stewards and other officers be elected every two years.

It is recommended that the board of stewards have committees depending on the size of the congregation and its ministries. If it does not have committees, the following work and ministries shall remain the responsibility of the board of stewards. The committees are to report to the board of stewards except for the nominations committee which reports to the charge or church conference.

*Executive Committee* – comprised of the officers of the board of stewards, and the committee chairpersons of the board of stewards to evaluate the leadership and ministry of the pastor, review and approve the pastor's goals, affirm what is going well, recommend actions, direction and improvement for leading the seven core responsibilities of a clergy person.

The executive committee shall develop a congregational profile that is approved by the board of stewards as part of the consultation process with the cabinet for pastoral appointments. The executive committee shall meet with any newly appointed pastor prior to an appointment being finalized by the bishop as part of the consultation process.

**Outcome** – The pastor understands the hopes and needs of the congregation, is leading the congregation well and the congregation is progressing toward its vision, mission, and goals.

*Ministry* – One or more ministry teams, comprised of at-large members and members of the board of stewards, that plan and implement ministries that make and grow disciples, develop worship that draws people to God and attracts new worshipers, organizes small group (class meeting) ministries, engages the congregation in ministries of witness, justice and mercy.

**Outcome** – New disciples of Jesus Christ are being made, disciples are growing in their faith, the congregation is engaged with its community through ministries of witness, mercy and justice and the congregation is growing as a fruitful Wesleyan congregation.

*Personnel* – a team of 6-9 people, comprised of at-large members and members of the board of stewards, that plans and implements ministries, policies and practices that develop paid and volunteer leadership, including personnel policies and safe sanctuary policies. Policies must be recommended to and affirmed by the board of stewards. The Personnel team also hires, oversees, evaluates all staff, and recommends compensation for all paid staff to the board of stewards. For the evaluation of pastoral staff, the connectional church is to provide the evaluation procedures.

The committee and the officers of the board of stewards shall meet with any newly appointed pastor prior to any appointment being finalized by the bishop as part of the consultation process.

**Outcome** – The paid staff are fairly compensated, growing in their abilities, and are clear about their expectations. They are evaluated and given feedback so that they, along with the elected leadership, may continue to lead the congregation to make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ and grow a fruitful Wesleyan congregation and so that the congregation is turning outward to the community to connect with its neighbors through ministries of witness, mercy and justice.

*Finance* – a team of 6-9 members comprised of at-large members and members of the board of stewards, that,

1. plans and implements ministries, policies and practices that cultivate giving and financial resources for the ministry and administration of the congregation,
2. ensure offerings are counted weekly by two or more people that are not from the same family,
3. ensure that giving is accurately recorded and reported,
4. recommend the budget to the board of stewards and manage the approved budget,
5. prepare financial statements and reports for the regular meetings of the board of stewards,
6. ensure that bank statements are reviewed by someone other than the treasurer,
7. ensure that the financial books are reviewed by someone outside the congregation annually,
8. collaborate with the pastor to ensure statistical reports are completed and accurate by February 15 of each year,
9. develop and regularly communicate a program of wills and bequests, and
10. invest the funds of the congregation.

Funds of the congregation are to be invested wisely and with social responsibility so that they continue to grow assets for mission and ministry. Socially responsible investing includes but is not limited to refraining from investing in companies that produce or sell weapons of war and companies that profit from addictive substances or activities (alcohol, gambling, and tobacco). It includes investing in companies engaged in social justice, environmental sustainability, alternative energy production, and clean technology efforts. Congregations are to consider investing through the connectional church foundation where such foundations operate.

**Outcome** – people are giving generously to the mission, ministry. Administration is fully funded including 100% apportionment giving. All bills are paid fully and on time, and there is transparency, accurate accounting, and socially responsible investing of all the funds and finances of the congregation.

*Property* – a team of 6-9 members comprised of at-large members and members of the board of stewards, that,

1. plans and implements ministries, policies and practices that assess and address all property needs,
2. develops a plan to address any deferred maintenance,
3. tours the parsonage(s) annually and recommends to the board of stewards a plan and budget to address needs identified,
4. recommends property use policies to the board of stewards,
5. ensures the property is adequately insured,
6. reviews and recommends to the board of stewards all leases and capital projects,
7. ensures that the trust clause is included in any deeds of the congregation.

**Outcome** – the property is welcoming and available for community ministry and is enhancing and supporting the mission and ministry of the congregation.

The board of stewards and its committees shall operate in accordance with The United Methodist Church's doctrine, teachings, Wesleyan Path and polity.

**Outcome of the Board of Stewards** – the congregation is engaged with the people in the community and is offering worship that inspires and attracts new people. New disciples are being made, and all disciples are involved in small groups (class meetings), growing in their faith, engaged in hands-on community ministry, and giving generously to the mission and ministry of the church.

### **Lay Member Misconduct**

The United Methodist Church believes that grace and redemption are available to all people through Jesus Christ, but it also recognizes the need for appropriate accountability when harm has been done.



There is a significant difference between misconduct and a conflict between two or more people. Conflict is when two or more people do not agree about something. *Misconduct is an unethical act that rises to the level of the offenses described below where an individual has been harmed because of the behavior.*

A person is to have their leadership and membership reviewed, if the person has:

1. harmed children, youth or adults in any one or more of the following ways - spiritually, physically, emotionally, or sexually in or outside the church,
2. has used their leadership and position to further their personal aims or desires in relationships,
3. been unfaithful in their family relationships,
4. committed financial malfeasance,
5. engaged in conduct unbecoming of a lay person in the United Methodist Church,
6. engaged in harassment, or
7. discriminated against another based upon race, gender, color, national origin, status, ability, or economic condition.

When appropriate, the person shall be removed from leadership until the issues are addressed and the church can be assured that the individual will not engage in the same behavior again. A connectional church may further elaborate and give specificity in their policies to any of the misconduct listed above.

The following process is to be used to handle misconduct, not simply a dispute, grievance or conflict between two or more persons. The connectional church shall provide protocols for handling congregational conflict.

When an allegation of misconduct has been made in writing and presented to the chairperson of the board of stewards or the pastor,

1. The chairperson of the board of stewards is to contact the district superintendent who shall identify someone to research the allegations and determine if the allegations have merit. They shall also identify the specific reference to misconduct in The Connection that applies or the policies of the connectional church that apply to the situation.
2. If the allegations have merit, the district superintendent is to identify five persons from the board of stewards as a review committee to hear the matter and review an individual's membership. If a secular law has been violated, the individual is to be reported to secular authorities.
3. The review committee shall invite the individual who is bringing the allegation and the accused individual to appear before the committee. Each individual may bring one other person with knowledge about the matter, but in no instance shall it be their attorney. The committee may request the district superintendent to provide a representative for the church.
4. The committee may request written material prior to its meeting according to the guidelines it establishes.

5. The committee will inform those appearing before the committee at least 30 days in advance of the committee's meeting the process that will be followed and the particular areas of focus during the gathering.
6. Any written materials to be used during the committee's review of the matter will be provided 30 days prior to the meeting to all parties and to the members of the review committee.

The review committee shall use the guidelines for holy conferencing found in paragraph 700 of The Connection and any other guidelines it establishes. It shall base its decision on The Connection of The United Methodist Church, the teachings of the church, the polity of the church and the policies of the connectional church. The committee has 60 days to complete its work and recommendations once a case has been referred to them.

The review committee meetings are not open to the public. The committee may make their recommendations public when it believes transparency is warranted.

### **Review Committee Decision Options**

After appropriate inquiry, the review committee shall identify one of the following paths with specific dates by which time items are to be completed.

1. Dismiss the matter. The individual may continue in their membership and any roles within the congregation.
2. The committee identifies a set of requirements to repair the harm done to individuals and/or the church. The individual member may continue as a member and in any role within the congregation. The council sets a timeline with specific dates as to when the requirements are to be completed and how the lay member is to demonstrate that the requirements are completed.
3. The committee identifies a set of requirements to repair the harm done to individuals and/or the church. The lay member is discontinued as a member in a United Methodist congregation. A report is sent to the district superintendent. If at any point the lay person would like to be considered for membership in the future, the individual shall have completed all of the requirements, demonstrated that they are not at risk to do future harm, and begin the process of becoming a lay member again. Any lay person who has been discontinued as a lay member must have the permission of the district superintendent to begin the process of lay membership again.

The cabinet shall assign a trained individual or team to work with any party that has been harmed as a result of the misconduct in order to offer support during the process so that the party understands the process, is aware of help that is available, and has access to resources to aid in healing.

A lay person may appeal the decision of the review committee within 30 days to the connectional conference council of laity who shall also conduct a review of the matter. Nine members of the council of laity must be present for a review of the case. If the council of laity concurs with the review committee, there is no further appeal. The council of laity has 30 days to hear the appeal and may modify the decision as it determines. The decision of the council of laity is final.

## **MINISTRY**

The ministry of the congregation shall be organized to accomplish the mission of The United Methodist Church – to make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. Its ministry shall focus on supporting disciples to grow in their faith and connect and engage with the people in the community for ministries of witness, mercy and justice. Transformational congregational leadership is essential to the fruitfulness of a Wesleyan congregation.

A transformational leader, through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, casts a compelling vision and challenging goals, and is one whose leadership inspires change and growth.

The board of stewards shall establish the strategies and goals for congregations to do the following:

1. Make new disciples.
2. Create inspiring worship that connects with and attracts people from the community.
3. Deepen the faith of disciples and increase the number of disciples in small groups (class meetings) and develop the faith of students through children and youth ministries.
4. Engage disciples in risk-taking hands-on mission and works of justice and advocacy, and increase the number of disciples engaged in such ministry.
5. Increase money given to mission and prioritize 100% apportionment giving as the first mission giving of the congregation.
6. Develop lay leadership to carry out the ministries of the congregation.
7. Administer the life of the congregation, personnel, finance and property effectively and with excellence.

Congregations that have difficulty carrying out their ministry, goals, property maintenance or financial obligations are to evaluate their challenges and adjust ministry goals and budget to achieve them. A congregation that continues to encounter challenges shall work with the district superintendent or the superintendent's designee to assess the challenges and set a realistic path forward.

A congregation with 15 or fewer people in worship that sets a path for health and fruitfulness, and yet continues to struggle in carrying out its ministry and meeting its goals, and is not meeting financial and property obligations, shall assess its future and either discontinue or merge with another congregation unless the cabinet determines the congregation should continue for strategic reasons.

Congregations with more than 15 people in worship that are not meeting any one or more of the following objectives: making new disciples, engaging in ministry and mission in their community, paying their bills, maintaining their building (s), or giving 100% of their apportionments are to be reviewed by a process established by the connectional church board of stewards to consider their viability for effective mission and ministry. A plan may be established for congregational renewal. The connectional church board of stewards may recommend to the connectional church annual conference session to

discontinue congregations that are not making progress toward the minimal expectations of a congregation – to make new disciples, engage in ministries with the community, pay its bills, address building maintenance and give 100% of apportionments.

District superintendents, in consultation with congregations and the cabinet, may align congregations into cooperative ministries such as circuits or parishes in order to strengthen congregational ministry and better serve the community. These alignments may take a variety of forms and include two or more congregations. The district superintendent or the superintendent's designee will work with the congregations to develop the purpose, organization, ministry, shared governance, personnel, and finance and administration for the cooperative ministry.

## **PERSONNEL**

Depending on the size of the congregation and missional needs, the board of stewards may create a committee that reports to the board of stewards to oversee personnel matters including the leadership and evaluation of the pastor and the hiring and evaluation of any additional staff needed to carry out the mission and ministry of the congregation. The congregation shall have personnel policies that guide paid and volunteer personnel decisions.

The connectional church shall provide best practices for personnel policies that give attention to different sized congregations and staffing.

The following are the volunteer and paid personnel of a congregation. A congregation may add to these positions to fulfill the mission.

### **Chairperson of the Board of Stewards**

The chairperson of the board of stewards, who shall be a professing member of the congregation, in consultation and collaboration with the lead pastor organizes the work of the board of stewards and leads its meetings. The chairperson in consultation and collaboration with the pastor keeps the congregation informed of the local church's mission and ministry, particularly regarding vision, goals, progress, challenges and how the congregation can engage in the ministries of the church at all levels. As a member of the Executive Committee, the chairperson participates in the evaluation of the lead pastor. The lead pastor in consultation with the board of stewards evaluates or oversees the evaluation of other staff. The chairperson of the board shall also serve as the lay leader of the congregation.

### **Delegate to the Connectional Church Conference**

The delegate to the connectional church annual conference session, who shall be a professing member of the congregation, attends annual conference sessions and reports to the congregation the outcome of each annual conference session. The delegate to the connectional church annual conference session shall serve as an ex-officio member of the board of stewards and is counted as part of the 7-18 members of the board of stewards. There shall be one lay delegate to the connectional conference for each

appointed clergy person to the congregation. If there is more than one lay delegate from the congregation to the connectional conference, the congregation's nomination process will determine which lay member will be the ex-officio member to the board of stewards. Other lay delegates may be elected to the board of stewards, but it is not required.

### **Treasurer**

The treasurer shall be a member of the board of stewards and serve as the treasurer of all congregational funds except those funds which pertain to groups that are not elected by the charge or church conference. The treasurer shall be bonded and prepare monthly financial statements and pay bills. There may also be one or more assistant treasurers. The board of stewards or the personnel committee is to assign someone not related to the treasurer or assistant treasurers to make deposits and receive and review bank statements.

### **Financial Secretary**

The financial secretary shall be a member of the finance committee and shall oversee the recording of individual donations and review bank statements of the congregation and all other responsibilities as assigned by the finance committee.

### **Secretary**

A secretary of the board of stewards shall be elected by the board to take and record the minutes of the board of stewards, charge conference and church conference meetings. Other duties may be assigned such as membership secretary for the congregation.

### **Clergy**

The bishop appoints clergy persons which include the lead pastor and any associate pastors to the congregation. The priority of the appointed clergy person(s) is to call and nurture disciples to discover, understand and live their calling to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This requires clergy to lead the congregation to turn outward to be in ministry with the people in the community and the world. The district superintendent is the supervisor of appointed clergy. Day-to-day oversight of a clergy person's leadership is conducted through the board of stewards or the committee assigned to this work and the chairperson of the board of stewards.

The core responsibilities of the lead pastor are to:

1. Deepen the spirituality and faith of the lay disciples so that the laity are working together to continually renew and nurture their faith and the mission of the church in the world.
2. Cast a vision for making disciples and growing fruitful Wesleyan congregations to transform the world so that goals are established and achieved, and the mission is advanced.
3. Grow the teaching ministry of the church to increase disciples' knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, theology, church, mission and ministry.
4. Lead disciples into the world to witness, act justly and show mercy so that transformation is occurring in the people of the community and world.

5. Develop leaders within the congregation or extension ministries so that leaders continue to grow in their ability to lead the mission and ministry of the church.
6. Unify the church through common values, doctrine, heritage, witness and mission so that people work together for witness, mission and ministry in the community and world.
7. Organize the life of the church to fulfill the mission, grow congregational vitality, meet the budget, and complete administrative tasks on time and accurately.

The bishop, for missional or pastoral reasons, may appoint an interim clergy person; and with the cabinet, align the congregation to be on a charge with another congregation; assign a student pastor; assign a certified lay minister, or appoint a clergy person on loan from another denomination to serve the congregation.

The board of stewards is to encourage and support clergy to schedule one full day off per week. Full time appointed clergy persons are entitled to the following paid benefits from the congregation in any given year.

1. Four weeks of vacation including Sundays.
2. Twelve weeks of maternity or paternity leave.
3. Up to six weeks every six years for study and renewal for full time clergy. The study and renewal leave is to be approved by the district superintendent in consultation with the board of stewards. A clergy person may take the six weeks at the same time or divide the weeks over several years. The request for study and renewal leave must identify the learning that will be accomplished and how this will forward the mission of the congregation.
4. Six sick days and three personal days.
5. Two weeks of paid family leave to care for a spouse, child, parent(s) or sibling(s).
6. As provided through the connectional church or regional church, a pension and benefit program.

Part time clergy benefits are to be established by the policies and procedures of the connectional church.

A full-time itinerant clergy person after 10 years under appointment may take an uncompensated sabbatical leave for up to one year with the guarantee of being appointed to a congregation at the start of the next appointment season. The board of stewards may provide compensation during the sabbatical, but it is not required. The pastor may return to the same appointment if the congregation's board of stewards and the superintendent agree prior to the sabbatical. The congregation is responsible for the salary and benefits of an interim pastor. A sabbatical must be requested six months prior to the start of a new appointment year or in rare cases the cabinet and congregation's board of stewards may approve a sabbatical requested in less than six months.

Non-itinerant clergy are subject to the compensation policies of their employers. When a non-itinerant clergy person is employed by a local church, the compensation and benefits must conform to the minimum standards established by The Connection and/or the connectional conference standards.

## **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

The finances and administration of the congregation shall be overseen by the board of stewards. The board may work through a finance committee to assist with its work.

The responsibilities for the finance committee are listed with the board of stewards' committees.

## **PROPERTY**

All personal and real property of the congregation is held in trust for The United Methodist Church. This phrase is to be incorporated in the deed(s) of all real estate and buildings purchased and owned by the congregation or donated to the congregation. The trust clause is to be acknowledged by the board of stewards each year in the charge/church conference report to the connectional church.

The property of a United Methodist congregation should be welcoming, available to the community, and used to further the mission of The United Methodist Church. The congregation's board of stewards in consultation with the lead pastor may set building use policies including building use for weddings.

Before a congregation purchases, sells or leases its real estate and building(s), or constructs a building or addition, or renovates existing property in excess of a dollar amount set by the connectional church board of stewards, the congregation must follow the approval process set by the connectional church board of stewards. At a minimum it shall include the approval of the cabinet and any staff person designated by the connectional church board of stewards.

The connectional church board of stewards may establish a property committee to review property requests from congregations. The property committee may have subcommittees for individual districts or groups of districts. All proceeds from the sale of property are to be used for capital projects. The congregation may invest the proceeds from the sale of the property and use the proceeds for ministry as long as it does not decrease the initial amount of money. Any use other than property and capital expenditures must be approved by the cabinet. Any congregation that ceases to exist or disaffiliates with The United Methodist Church forfeits all real and personal property to the connectional church except when the processes for disaffiliation or affiliation are followed.

### **Affiliation and Disaffiliation**

Congregations may decide to affiliate with another or new Wesleyan denomination or disaffiliate without joining an existing or new Wesleyan denomination. At this time in the life of The United

Methodist Church, we recognize that blessing and multiplying may be best for the church. The following are the guidelines for affiliation and disaffiliation.

A congregation that decides to affiliate with another Wesleyan denomination with all real and personal property may do so through the annual conference sessions of 2021 - 2023 if the following conditions are met.

1. The denomination is found on a current list of Wesleyan denominations approved by the global conference. New denominations may be approved between global conferences by the council of bishops and General Board of stewards of The United Methodist Church.
2. The Wesleyan denomination has at least 150 congregations and 100 clergy full members or equivalent.
3. The denomination participates in Wespath and ensures its clergy pensions are paid in full or, if they are not a part of Wespath, the affiliating congregation is to pay their pension liability to the connectional church prior to affiliation with another Wesleyan denomination.
4. The congregation affiliates with all assets and liabilities and the Wesleyan denomination guarantees the debt will be paid to creditors.
5. The denomination has the following characteristics.
  - a. Salvation by grace as a core belief.
  - b. Embraces ethnic diversity.
  - c. Has a bishop(s) who appoints clergy to congregations and a polity that treats men and women as equal in appointing clergy and all aspects of leadership within the church.
  - d. Apportions congregations and connectional bodies for mission and ministry.
  - e. Utilizes a trust clause. For the first eight years following affiliation, if a congregation discontinues, merges or leaves to be independent or join with another denomination, the real and personal property shall revert to the connectional United Methodist Church it once belonged to and after eight years to the new denomination it joined. The trust clause is triggered if the congregation decides to leave the new denomination, or it merges with another congregation, or it discontinues worship, or discontinues as a congregation.
6. The bishop/head of communion of the receiving denomination is to send a letter to the bishop of the connectional church in which the congregation presently resides outlining the denomination's polity, specifically identifying where in the polity items 2-5 are satisfied.
7. A vote of 75% by the professing members of the congregation approves affiliation with another denomination at a duly called and announced church conference presided by the district superintendent. The affiliation legislation to be voted on shall be approved by the district superintendent and shall contain items 1-6.
8. The connectional church board of stewards shall review all the materials and if everything is in order, the stewards shall vote to approve the congregation affiliating with another denomination.
9. A majority vote by the connectional church at its annual conference session is the final approval for affiliation of a congregation with another Wesleyan denomination.
10. A congregation that affiliates with a Wesleyan denomination has no claim on personal or real property of the denomination or the connectional church except for its real and personal



property. A grant allocated through the global church conference (general conference) guidelines may be given to the formation of a new Wesleyan denomination that may benefit a congregation indirectly that affiliates with a Wesleyan denomination.

11. A clergy person who affiliates with an existing or new denomination or on their own has no claim on personal or real property or other benefits of the denomination or the connectional church except for their pension.

A congregation that decides to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church and not join with another Wesleyan denomination because of theological reasons and take all real and personal property must complete the following approvals and payments before disaffiliation and the changing of the deed.

1. The connectional church board of stewards will set the financial amount for settlement that will include:
  - a. Any debt owed to the connectional church or any United Methodist entity must be paid in full.
  - b. The pension and health liability as calculated by Wespath and the connectional church.
  - c. Any apportionments and billables owed to the connectional church for the current and previous year.
  - d. An amount set by the connectional board of stewards for all real and personal property.
  - e. If there is a cemetery and the congregation is not assuming ownership of the cemetery after disaffiliation, an amount for the perpetual care of the cemetery calculated by the connectional board of stewards.
  - f. Any other fees and charges set by the connectional board of stewards.
2. A theological rationale shall be drafted by the leadership of the congregation that indicates where and how the congregation's theology is different than The Connection of The United Methodist Church or the policies and practices of a connectional church. This will be reviewed and approved by the board of stewards of the congregation and the cabinet.
3. A vote of 66% by the professing members of the congregation at a duly called and announced church conference presided over by the district superintendent using the actual disaffiliation legislation that has been approved by the district superintendent and includes the above items.
4. A majority vote by the connectional church at its annual conference session.
5. A congregation that disaffiliates with The United Methodist Church has no claim on personal or real property of the denomination or the connectional church except the personal and real property that is part of the agreement.
6. A clergy person who disaffiliates with The United Methodist Church and/or leaves with a non-United Methodist or Wesleyan congregation has no claim on personal or real property or other benefits of the denomination or the connectional church except for their pension.

# THE CONNECTIONAL CHURCH

A connectional church is a group of congregations that are connected for developing and carrying out the mission of the church, and for superintending congregations, laity and clergy in the area served by the connectional church. The connectional church is the primary connectional body responsible for developing leaders and congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and to connect congregations with the larger global mission of The United Methodist Church. The norm for a connectional church is to have 100 congregations or more, but because of context, geography and mission, there may be fewer congregations. The size and boundaries of connectional churches are determined by the regional church in consultation with the leaders from the region.

Because the connectional church is the primary connectional body, the regional church and global church and their agencies shall be organized to support and resource the connectional church to assist congregations in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

## **PURPOSE**

The connectional church exists to resource congregations to develop and shape disciples to turn outward to the community and connect with the people in the community to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. An essential priority for the connectional church is the development of transformational leaders and fruitful Wesleyan congregations.

*For a description of the terms disciple, fruitful Wesleyan congregation, transformational leader, and transformed world, refer to Paragraph 600 regarding the mission of The United Methodist Church.*

The connectional church also assesses the urgent spiritual and missional needs of the people and communities within the area served by the connectional church and organizes ministries and strategies to meet the larger spiritual and missional needs within the area.

A connectional church may be called The United Methodist Church of (name of region) and/or The United Methodists of (name of region).

## **ORGANIZATION**

The connectional church may be organized into districts for superintending clergy and congregations. Districts may be aligned geographically. On occasion, congregations may align across district boundaries into larger parishes or groupings for missional and contextual purposes. The board of stewards of participating congregations must approve the participation of their congregation. If congregations in adjacent connectional conferences wish to be part of the same larger parish or grouping based on missional needs or context in order to better serve the mission of The United Methodist Church, they must seek the approval of the bishops and cabinets in each conference. The participating bishops will

assign a superintendent to work with the congregations and clergy that work across conference boundaries. The participating congregations and clergy in such a parish or grouping shall retain their membership with their current connectional church.

The following are the organizations of the connectional church.

### **Connectional Church Conference**

The connectional church convenes annually in a conference session to set the vision, mission, goals, and budget for carrying out the mission of The United Methodist Church within the boundaries of the connectional church area. The annual conference session may consider legislation and resolutions related to the connectional church.

The delegates to the annual conference session shall be all of the members of the council of clergy, the lay delegates from congregations and equalizing lay delegates. Equalizing lay delegates are added to achieve a balance of clergy and lay voting at an annual conference session. The equalizing lay delegates shall be appointed by the connectional church nominating committee. Because all clergy delegates do not attend the connectional church annual conference session due to health and travel distance, the number of equalizing lay delegates is to be determined by the average registration of clergy delegates of the previous two annual conference sessions. At no time shall the registration and participation of the clergy be more than the registration of the laity. Included in the equalizing laity delegates shall be deaconesses and home missionaries from the connectional church, the connectional presidents of United Methodist Women and Men, the connectional board of stewards, and at least one youth and one young adult delegate representing each district within the connectional conference.

A special connectional church conference session may be called by a two-thirds vote of the board of stewards at the request of two-thirds of the cabinet, including the bishop. The date, time, location, and agenda for a connectional conference session shall be set together by the cabinet and board of stewards in consultation with the bishop. Legislation for the connectional conference may be submitted by a delegate or group of delegates to the connectional conference. Others who would like to submit legislation are encouraged to work through the clergy and elected lay delegates to submit legislation. If a United Methodist individual or congregation cannot identify a lay or clergy delegate to submit the legislation, it may be submitted directly and will be considered after all other legislation submitted by delegates has been voted on.

The rules of order of the connectional conference shall be developed and amended by the connectional conference session upon recommendation of the board of stewards or a committee assigned by the board of stewards to do the work.

### **Nominations Committee**

The connectional church shall have a nominations committee of 6-18 members elected by the connectional church conference. The number of members shall be determined by the connectional church conference. The committee assesses the gifts, abilities and experience of laity and clergy to

nominate individuals who represent the diversity of the connectional church and will lead with excellence. The chairperson of the council of laity shall serve as the chair of the committee. The bishop or the bishop's designee shall serve as an ex-officio member of the nominations committee with voice, but not vote. The nominations committee shall recommend to the connectional church annual conference session the terms and classes of all elected individuals. The committee shall nominate, and the connectional church membership shall elect, the following officers and members:

1. The members of the board of stewards
2. The officers of the board of stewards, including but not limited to the chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary and chief financial officer/treasurer. The chief financial officer/treasurer, a paid position, shall be hired by the board of stewards' and nominated by the nominations committee
3. Committee members and chairpersons of any committees of the connectional church or board of stewards. Members of the board of stewards shall serve on the committees of the board of stewards in addition to those elected by the connectional church conference
4. The discernment council
5. The council of ministry and its chairperson
6. The chancellor who shall be identified by the officers of the board of stewards and the bishop.

In order to secure experience and stability, the nominations committee is to develop a policy to rotate leadership so that new people are participating in the organizational life of the connectional church.

**Outcome** – A gifted, engaged and diverse team of clergy and laity leaders are leading the connectional church to accomplish the vision, mission and goals of the United Methodist Church in the region.

### **Board of Stewards**

A connectional church shall have a board of stewards of 12-23 members, of which at least 66% shall be laity. Clergy members of the board of stewards are to be ordained full members. At least one-half of the board of stewards is to be women and the board of stewards is to represent the diversity of the conference including at least 15% being adults between the ages of 18 and 35. The connectional church annual conference shall determine the number of and elect the members of the board of stewards. The bishop shall be an ex-officio member with voice but not vote and included as one of the 12-23 members of the board of stewards.

The board of stewards oversees the mission, ministry, personnel, property, finances and administration of the connectional church. The board of stewards is responsible for the following.

1. Develop a plan to equip the lay and clergy leadership to lead congregations to make disciples and grow fruitful Wesleyan congregations for the transformation of the world.
2. In consultation with the cabinet, assess the strengths, challenges and opportunities within congregations and set a plan and goals to nurture the health and fruitfulness of the

congregation including connecting with the people in the community to make disciples and engage in transformational mission.

3. In consultation with the cabinet, identify and launch new faith communities, congregations and mission organizations to strengthen and expand the mission.
4. In collaboration with the bishop, assess and set a plan and goals to address the spiritual and missional needs of the connectional church area working through congregations, mission organizations, districts, ecumenical and interfaith partners, community and region-wide organizations.
5. In consultation with the bishop, identify global mission partnerships with other connectional churches.
6. Identify and implement strategies and goals to grow the connectional church younger and more diverse.
7. Develop the intercultural competence of the lay and clergy leadership and the disciples within the connectional church and work to end tribalism, xenophobia, racism, privilege and oppression.
8. Assess the needs of immigrants and identify how the connectional church and congregations will be in ministry with immigrants.
9. Prepare for and provide relief and recovery following disasters.
10. Encourage local, connectional, national and global volunteer mission teams to serve where invited by other connectional churches.
11. Oversee the personnel, finance and administration and property of the connectional church.
12. Engage legal counsel as necessary to defend the connectional church or initiate legal action to safeguard the connectional church in any matter including but not limited to property, ministry, finances and administration.

The board of stewards shall determine the appropriate committees and teams to carry out the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church in the region. The board of stewards in consultation with the nominations committee, shall appoint its members to committees of the board. When there is an opening on the board or any of its committees between annual conference sessions, the board of stewards appoints committee members who must then be nominated and elected at the next annual conference session. The board of stewards and its committees are to represent the diversity of the region.

### **Committees**

The board of stewards shall have the following committees in addition to any others it may deem necessary to carry out the ministry and mission of the connectional church.

*Executive Committee* – comprised of the officers of the board of stewards, the committee chairpersons of the board of stewards and the bishop to evaluate the leadership and ministry of the bishop, review and approve the bishop's goals, affirm what is going well, recommend actions, directions and improvement for leading the seven core responsibilities of a bishop. The executive committee shall conduct the annual review of the bishop developed by the regional episcopacy committee and shall

participate in the creation of a development plan for the bishop, and shall receive regular progress reports from the bishop on the completion of the development plan.

The committee shall develop a connectional church profile that is approved by the board of stewards as part of the consultation process with the regional episcopacy committee for assignment of bishops.

**Outcome** – The bishop understands the hopes and needs of the connectional church, is leading well and the connectional church is progressing toward its vision, ministry and goals.

*Ministry Committee(s)* – one or more committees of 6-12 members for each committee including any board of stewards' members that with the approval of the board of stewards plan and implement ministries to support congregations to develop transformational leaders to lead the congregation to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow fruitful Wesleyan congregations for the transformation of the world. The board of stewards' ministry committees shall also plan for the following ministry through congregations or by the connectional church.

1. Ministries to develop transformational leaders and fruitful Wesleyan congregations.
2. Ministries to engage the church in social witness and action.
3. Ministries to engage the church in local and global mission, including disaster response.
4. Ministries to make and grow disciples.
5. Ministries with ecumenical and interfaith partners.
6. Ministries to develop the faith and leadership of young people and students, particularly on college campuses.
7. Ministries to address tribalism, racism, oppression and privilege.
8. Ministries that develop the role and status of women.
9. Ministries of communications.
10. Ministries that preserve and archive history.

**Outcome** – New disciples of Jesus Christ are being made, disciples are growing in their faith, transformational leadership is recruited and equipped, fruitful Wesleyan congregations are growing and new ones are being started and congregations and the connectional church is engaged with its community through ministries of witness, mercy and justice.

*Personnel* – a group of 6-12 members including any board of stewards' members that with the approval of the board of stewards plans and implements ministries, policies and practices that develop paid staff and volunteer leadership, create policies to hire, compensate and oversee staff, implement safe sanctuary policies, and establishes procedures to evaluate staff. The personnel committee shall also review clergy compensation and recommend equitable compensation for clergy each year to be approved by the connectional church conference.

**Outcome** – The paid staff are fairly compensated, growing in their abilities, are clear about their expectations and are evaluated and given feedback so that they along with the elected

leadership continue to lead the connectional church and its congregations to make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ and grow fruitful Wesleyan congregations, and congregations turning outward to the community to connect with their neighbors through ministries of witness, mercy and justice.

*Finance* – a group of 6-12 members including any board of stewards’ members that with the approval of the board of stewards plans and implements ministries, policies and practices to grow giving and financial resources for the ministry and administration of the connectional church, ensure giving is accurately recorded and reported, ensure the finances are audited each year, recommend the budget to the board of stewards and manage the approved budget, in collaboration with the personnel committee recommend staff compensation to the board of stewards, prepare financial statements and reports for the regular meetings of the board of stewards, ensure there are safeguards for counting money and writing checks, ensure that bank statements are reviewed by someone other than the treasurer, collaborate.

Funds of the connectional church are to be invested wisely and with social responsibility so that they continue to grow assets for mission and ministry. Socially responsible investing includes but is not limited to refraining from investing in companies that produce or sell weapons of war or companies that perpetuate addictive behaviors (alcohol, gambling, and tobacco). Socially responsible investing seeks out companies engaged in social justice, environmental sustainability, and alternative energy or clean technology efforts. Congregations are to consider investing through the connectional church foundation where such foundations operate.

**Outcome** –the mission, ministry and administration is fully funded including 100% apportionment giving to the global and regional church and all bills are paid fully and on time, and there is transparency and accurate accounting of all the funds and finances of the connectional church.

*Property* – a group of 6-12 members including any board of stewards’ members that with the approval of the board of stewards plans and implements ministries, policies and practices that assess and address all property needs, develop a plan to address any deferred maintenance, annually tour the parsonage(s) and recommend to the board of stewards a plan and budget to address issues, establish and recommend property use policies, ensure the property is adequately insured, review and recommend to the board of stewards all leases and capital projects, and ensure that the trust clause is included in any deeds of the congregation. It reviews property requests from congregations and may have subcommittees for individual districts or groups of districts.

**Outcome** – the property glorifies God, is welcoming, is available for community ministry and is enhancing and supporting the mission and ministry of the congregation.

The connectional church annual conference session and the board of stewards operate in accordance with The United Methodist Church's doctrine, teachings, theological task, Wesleyan Path and framework for organizing a connectional church (all of these are found in The Connection of The United Methodist Church). The boundaries and member churches of a connectional church are set by the regional church at the regional church conference.

One or more connectional churches form an episcopal area that is overseen by a bishop. Connectional churches that form an episcopal area are to proportion the costs of a bishop using a formula agreed upon by the boards of stewards for each participating connectional church.

### **Cabinet**

The cabinet is composed of the district superintendents appointed by the bishop to serve the connectional church. The normal term for a district superintendent shall be up to six years, but this may be extended to no more than up to eight years at the discretion of the bishop, in consultation with the cabinet and the district where the superintendent is assigned. No superintendent shall serve for more than eight years consecutively. No clergy person shall serve as district superintendent for more than twelve years in total. There may also be an area cabinet comprised of the cabinets of two or more connectional churches in the same episcopal area to better facilitate strategic mission and appointment making.

The cabinet is an extension of the ministry and leadership of the bishop. Together, the bishop and the cabinet are the chief mission strategists for the connectional church and its districts. Superintendents oversee one or more districts and together with the bishop superintend the connectional church's clergy and congregations to accomplish the mission.

While the bishop makes appointments, the cabinet's role is essential in providing clarity about the spiritual, ministry, leadership and organizational needs of congregations, clergy and the communities. A process of consultation with congregations and clergy, and a means to assess the community shall be developed by the cabinet, promoted within the connectional church and utilized prior to a clergy person being appointed to a congregation and community.

### **Council of Laity**

There shall be a council of laity who advises the bishop, cabinet, and board of stewards about lay leadership development and lay life in the connectional church and congregations. This advice is to be incorporated as appropriate in the practices and procedures of the bishop, cabinet and board of stewards, particularly as it relates to the development and deployment of laity for ministry. The board shall consist of 12 members, all nominated by the nominations committee and elected by lay delegates of the connectional church conference. The lay leader shall be the chair of the council of laity.

The council of laity shall be responsible for the following.



1. Review strategies for lay leadership development programs and ensure the programs are in alignment with developing lay transformational leaders, making disciples, growing fruitful Wesleyan congregations and community and world transformation.
2. Ensure that at least 50% of those leading laity training are laity.
3. Appoint equalizing delegates to the connectional church annual conference session.
4. Review and recommend anyone who seeks to be a certified lay minister.
5. Hear appeals of a lay member from a congregation who has been removed from membership for misconduct. The council of laity is to hear the appeal to determine if any procedural issues were not followed that affected the outcome of the vote by the charge conference. If there were procedural issues, the case is to be heard by another charge conference identified by the district superintendent.

### **Council of Clergy**

The clergy in a connectional church shall be members of the council of clergy. Bishops are ordained clergy members who are consecrated for episcopal leadership. A bishop's membership is transferred to and resides with the council of bishops upon their election and consecration as a bishop. There shall be a chairperson of the council of clergy, an ordained full member elected by the clergy, who shall convene and chair the clergy membership meetings. All other offices and committees of the council shall be organized by the clergy membership of the connectional church.

The clergy membership has authority and responsibility to determine the qualities, character and proficiency of its members based on the doctrine, teachings, Wesleyan Path, mission and polity of The United Methodist Church. The clergy members are to evaluate and approve candidates for membership by a two-thirds vote. When a clergy person is approved for membership in the council of clergy, it makes them available for an appointment by the bishop. The clergy membership is also responsible for the discontinuance of clergy membership as established by their policies and process in accordance with the doctrine, teachings, Wesleyan Path and polity of The United Methodist Church.

Each council of clergy is to elect a clergy relations committee of 30 clergy members of which 9 are to be drawn by lot to hear matters related to clergy misconduct. Any of the 9 members who have a conflict of interest are recused and additional names are to be drawn by lot. The 9 clergy relations committee members who hear a case are to decide the clergy person's membership status when there are allegations of misconduct. At least 7 of the 9 clergy who hear the case must agree to the decision. If seven cannot agree either to continue or terminate clergy membership, the matter is to be reheard by a different group of clergy. The decision of the clergy relations committee is final unless the clergy person appeals the decision within 30 days.

The clergy council shall have an appeals committee of 12 clergy members of which at least 9 are to review any appeal to determine if there were procedural issues. If there were procedural issues that affected the decision, the matter is to be referred to a new hearing with different clergy members to rehear the case. If there were not sufficient procedural issues to alter the outcome, the decision of the clergy relations committee shall stand.

When there are not enough clergy persons to complete the process in a connectional church, clergy from a neighboring connectional church may assist to fulfill the process.

The decision of the clergy relations committee is final unless appealed within 30 days. The council of clergy has the sole authority to govern clergy membership.

### **Council of Ministry**

There shall be a council of ministry to review and credential clergy members and review and approve candidates for certified lay ministry. They shall recommend to the board of stewards ordained full member clergy for guaranteed appointment.

The council shall be comprised of 16 - 20 individuals, half laity and half ordained clergy from the connectional church nominated by the nominations committee and elected by the connectional church conference. A council member serves a four-year term and may serve up to three terms upon reelection after completion of each term. The members shall be divided into four classes so that generally no more than three members leave or join the council in any given year. A member's term begins at the same time each newly elected connectional church office holder begins.

While the council of clergy reviews candidates for membership based on understanding the Bible, theology, leadership, ethics, the practice of ministry and polity, the council of ministry focuses instead on ability to lead and grow a congregation or extension ministry, application of ministry and a cultural fit with the mission and Wesleyan Path.

Once a candidate has been approved by the council of clergy, the council of ministry reviews candidates for ministry, and may approve:

1. Full members for ordination
2. Affiliate members for recognition of orders
3. Associate members for consecration
4. Local pastor members for anointing
5. Certified lay ministers for licensing.

Approved candidates will be recommended to the board of stewards for licensing. The criteria for guaranteed appointment shall be set by the board of stewards in consultation with the cabinet, council of laity and the officers of the clergy council. For full member itinerant clergy, licensing is a guarantee of appointment. An individual who is not approved has 30 days to appeal to the discernment council for a review of the process. The discernment council has authority to ensure the process was followed but not to review the character or ability of an individual.

The council of ministry also reviews the guaranteed status of itinerant ordained clergy members when after evaluations, a full member's effectiveness is in question in regards to but not limited to making disciples of Jesus Christ, growing a fruitful Wesleyan congregation, engaging the congregation in

community ministry and leading the congregation to sustainability. When there is a concern raised about the leadership of a clergy person by the congregational board of steward's chairperson and/or the district superintendent, the clergy person is to develop an improvement plan. When the plan is agreed to by the chairperson of the board of stewards and the district superintendent, the plan and requirements are to be placed in the clergy person's file. The goal is for everyone to work together to assist the clergy person to return to a path of faithful and fruitful ministry.

If there are not sufficient demonstrable results determined by the board of stewards' chairperson and/or the district superintendent, the district superintendent shall refer the matter to the council of ministry. If at least 90 days before the end of the appointment year, the council concurs with the cabinet and/or congregation, the council can recommend to the bishop to discontinue the clergy person in an itinerant appointment at the end of the appointment year. The bishop must appoint the full member unless the recommendation by the council is not to appoint the full member. The decision shall be documented by the superintendent and placed in the clergy person's file. There is no action necessary by the clergy membership. The clergy person may continue as a full member of the clergy. The clergy person may find an extension ministry or work on the issues raised during the process in order to return to itinerant ministry. The council of ministry must recommend to the connectional church board of stewards approval for the return of a full member to itinerant ministry.

The council of ministry reviews and approves candidates for certified lay ministry who have been approved and recommended by the council of laity for licensing. Certified lay ministers continue to be licensed as long as the district superintendent continues to assign the lay person to a congregation in consultation with the pastor.

### **Discernment Council and Addressing Clergy Misconduct**

The connectional church shall have a discernment council to review matters where there is an allegation of character or ethical misconduct by a clergy person. A clergy person's appointment or employment and a clergy person's membership in the council of clergy are two distinct and different matters. The discernment council reviews a clergy person's appointment and employment within The United Methodist Church. The council of clergy is responsible for the clergy person's membership.

The purpose of the discernment council is to review an allegation forwarded by the district superintendent. The council is to help clergy pursue a path of faithful Christian discipleship and identify a just resolution. A just resolution focuses on repairing harm to people and communities, achieving accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. The discernment council is to hear from people in their own words and to make a decision for how the person(s) and/or church may stay on the path of following Jesus Christ and serving in The United Methodist Church.

The council shall be comprised of 12 United Methodists, 6 laity and 6 ordained clergy members nominated by the nominations committee and elected by the connectional church conference. Fifty

percent of the council shall be women and the council shall represent the diversity of the region. A council member serves a four-year term and may serve up to three terms upon re-election after completion of each term. The members shall be organized into four classes so that ideally no more than three members leave or join the council in any given year. The members' term begins at the same time each newly elected connectional church office holder begins. The council shall choose their convener and set the practices for spiritual discernment that seek Godly wisdom and just resolution. Nine members at any duly called meeting shall represent a quorum. Those appointed to the discernment council shall have a deep faith, ability to listen and discern, intercultural competence and a deep love for God, people and the church.

### **Misconduct Affecting the Appointment of A Clergy Person**

The United Methodist Church believes that grace and redemption are available to all people through Jesus Christ, but it also recognizes the need for appropriate accountability when harm has been done. A clergy person who has:

1. harmed children, youth or adults in any one or more of the following ways - spiritually, physically, emotionally, or sexually in or outside the church,
2. has used their leadership and position to further their personal aims or desires in relationships,
3. been unfaithful in their family relationships,
4. committed financial malfeasance,
5. engaged in conduct unbecoming of a clergy person,
6. undermined the ministry of another clergy person or the church,
7. engaged in harassment, or
8. discriminated against another based upon race, gender, color, national origin, status, ability, or economic condition,

is to have their discipleship and leadership reviewed. Where appropriate the clergy person shall be removed from an appointment until the issues are addressed and the church can be assured that the individual will not engage in the same behavior again. A connectional church may further elaborate and give specificity in their policies to any of the misconduct listed above.

The process for alleged misconduct by a clergy person involves two separate and distinct paths – 1) appointment and 2) membership. Appointment concerns relate to employment with The United Methodist Church, and is separate from the matter of membership. A clergy person's membership resides with the connectional church's council of clergy just as laity membership resides with a congregation and a bishop's membership resides with the council of bishops. If there are concerns about a clergy person's membership, those concerns are to be referred by the district superintendent to the council of clergy who under their policies and procedures are to review the issues and make any determination about membership.

When an allegation of misconduct has been made in writing, the district superintendent is to notify the bishop, and the bishop and cabinet shall identify someone to research the allegations to determine if the allegations have merit and identify where the specific misconduct is cited in The Connection or the

policies of the connectional church. If the allegations have merit, the district superintendent is to refer the matter to the discernment council. If a secular law has been violated, the individual is to be reported to secular authorities.

The discernment council shall invite the individual who is bringing the matter before the council and the accused individual to appear before it. Each individual may bring one other person with knowledge about the matter but in no instance shall it be their attorney. The council may request the bishop to provide a representative for the church.

The discernment council may request written material prior to its gathering according to the guidelines it establishes. The council will inform those appearing before the council at least 30 days in advance of the council's meeting the process that will be followed and the particular areas of focus during the gathering. Any written materials to be used during the council's review of the matter will be provided 30 days prior to the meeting to all parties and for the members of the council. The council shall use the guidelines for holy conferencing found in paragraph 700 of The Connection and any other guidelines it establishes. It shall base its decision on The Connection of The United Methodist Church, the teachings of the church, the polity of the church and the policies of the connectional church. The council has 70 days to complete its work and recommendations once a case has been referred to them.

The council of ministry may suspend an individual with pay and benefits if the council of ministry believes it is in the best interest of individuals and/or the church for the individual to be suspended. The district superintendent and/or the chairperson of the board of stewards may request a suspension.

Discernment council meetings are not open to the public. The council may make their recommendations public when it believes transparency is warranted.

### **Discernment Council Decision Options**

After appropriate inquiry, the discernment council shall identify one of following paths with specific dates of when items are to be completed.

1. Dismiss the matter and the individual may continue in their current role. If it is a clergy person, the clergy person may continue in the current appointment or be reappointed by the bishop.
2. The council is to identify a set of requirements to repair the harm done to individuals and/or the church. The clergy person may continue in their current appointment or be reappointed by the bishop while the clergy person fulfills the requirements. The council is to set a timeline with specific dates as to when the requirements are to be completed and how the clergy person is to demonstrate that the requirements have been completed.
3. The council is to identify a set of requirements to repair the harm done to individuals and/or the church. The clergy person is not to continue in their current appointment or be reappointed by the bishop while the clergy person fulfills the requirements. A report is to be sent to the chairperson of the council of clergy. The council is to set a timeline with specific dates as to

when the requirements are to be completed and how the clergy person is to demonstrate the requirements have been completed.

4. The council is to identify a set of requirements to repair the harm done to individuals and/or the church. The clergy person is not to continue in an appointment. A report is to be sent to the chairperson of the council of clergy with a recommendation to discontinue the clergy person's membership. The council of clergy is to address membership issues through their policies and procedures. If at any point the clergy person would like to be considered for ministry in the future, the clergy person shall have completed all of the requirements, demonstrated that they are not at risk to do future harm and begin the process of becoming a clergy person again.

Any recommendations by the discernment council for the connectional church or any of its bodies is to be given to the connectional church board of stewards for appropriate and corrective action. If corrective action involves a congregation, the discernment council shall make its recommendations to the cabinet and the congregation's board of stewards.

The cabinet shall assign a trained individual or team to work with any party that has been harmed as a support during the process so that the person understands the process, is aware of help and has access to resources to aid in an individual's or group's healing.

A clergy person may appeal the decision of the discernment council within 30 days to the council of ministry who shall also conduct a review of the matter. If the council concurs with the discernment council, there is no further appeal. The council of ministry has 30 days to hear the appeal and may modify the decision as it determines. The council on ordained ministry's decision is final.

Causes for immediate removal from an appointment and the surrendering of credentials includes the following.

1. The fourth option above has been required and the clergy person does not appeal the matter within 30 days.
2. The fourth option above has been required and upon appeal, the council of ministry concurs with the decision of the discernment council.
3. The clergy person does not fulfill the requirements according to the specific dates identified by the discernment council or under appeal by the council on ordained ministry.

Once credentials are withdrawn, the individual is not available for an appointment by a bishop in The United Methodist Church.

In each of these three instances, the chairperson of the discernment council is to refer the matter to the chairperson of the council of clergy for a review of the clergy person's membership.

The information and outcome are to be summarized and placed in the individual's file and the summary is to be made available to any United Methodist congregation, council of clergy, council of ministry and

bishop interested in hiring or appointing the individual. Other denominations who seek information for hiring purposes are to be told that the individual was terminated and the summary may be released at the request of the clergy person. If at any point the clergy person would like to be considered for ministry in the future, the clergy person shall have completed all of the requirements, demonstrated that they are not at risk to do future harm and begin the process of becoming a clergy person again.

If the discernment council and under appeal the council on ordained ministry selects either option two or three above, the chairperson of the discernment council is to refer the matter to the chairperson of the council of clergy for a review of membership. If the clergy membership through its process decides to revoke clergy membership, the clergy person is no longer eligible to be appointed by a bishop of The United Methodist Church and is to surrender their credentials.

### **Statute of Limitations**

An instance of misconduct that occurred six or more years prior to receipt of a written allegation by a connectional church official has exceeded the statute of limitations and is not reviewable by the discernment council, except in the case of child abuse which has no statute of limitations.

### **Additional Organizations**

The connectional church may add additional organizations to carry out the mission and ministry of the connectional church. All organizations report directly to the board of stewards except for the nominations committee, the council of clergy that is responsible for its membership, and the council of laity who each report to the connectional church annual conference. The board of stewards report directly to the annual conference session.

## **MINISTRY**

The connectional church is the primary connectional body to lead and resource The United Methodist mission and connect congregations with the greater church and its priorities and mission. The connectional church shall be organized for the mission of The United Methodist Church: make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The connectional church's ministry is to focus on recruiting and developing lay and clergy transformational leaders to lead congregations and extension ministries to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Leaders who develop fruitful Wesleyan congregations are critical to this mission.

## **PERSONNEL**

The bishop shall appoint district superintendents who with the bishop align congregations into districts and charges and appoint and supervise clergy and congregations.

The board of stewards shall identify the paid personnel to carry out the mission, ministry and administration of the connectional church including depending on the context, budget and mission of the connectional church. Generally, staff are hired for superintending, connectional ministries, communication, finances and benefits and any other program and ministry staff needed to carry out the mission. The executive staff shall work together to accomplish the following.

1. Deepen the spirituality and faith of lay leadership and clergy so that the connectional church is working together to continually renew and nurture their faith and the mission of the church in the world.
2. Cast a vision for making disciples and growing fruitful Wesleyan congregations or extension ministries to transform the world so that goals are established, and the mission is advanced.
3. Grow the teaching ministry of the church to increase disciples' knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, theology, church, mission and ministry.
4. Lead disciples into the world to witness, act justly and show mercy so that transformation is occurring in the people of the community and world.
5. Develop leaders within congregations or extension ministries so that leaders continue to grow in their ability to lead the mission and ministry of the church.
6. Unify the church through common values, doctrine, heritage, witness and mission so that people work together for witness, mission and ministry of the church in the world.
7. Lead the organizational life of the church so that the church is organized to fulfill the mission, grow congregational vitality, meet the budget, and complete administrative tasks on time and accurately.

The board of stewards shall ensure through its personnel committee that there are personnel policies and job descriptions for the staff of the connectional church. It shall also develop best practices for congregations to use for hiring, supervising, developing personnel policies and supporting staff to excel in serving the mission, the congregation and the community.

No member of the bishop's family may be employed as a staff member of the connectional church, serve on the board of stewards of the connectional church or serve on the regional church episcopacy committee.

The following are volunteer and paid positions within the connectional church.

### **District Superintendents**

The district superintendents are appointed by the bishop as an extension of the ministry and leadership of the bishop. They along with the bishop are the chief mission strategists for the connectional church.

Their primary focus is to develop and supervise clergy leadership to grow fruitful Wesleyan congregations so that congregations make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Superintendents also do the following.



1. Consult with clergy and congregations about appointments and use the consultation to provide critical information for appointing clergy to congregations.
2. Convene and chair charge/church conferences.
3. Coach and mentor clergy.
4. Teach within the district about The Wesleyan Path and teachings of The United Methodist Church.
5. Develop and appoint teams to assist with the implementation of strategic mission in the district
6. Appoint circuit leaders, clergy who work with the superintendent to assist with the superintending of clergy and congregations.

As much as possible, the board of stewards is to ensure there are staff to work in collaboration with superintendents to handle issues related to the congregational matters of conflict, finances and stewardship, discontinuance of congregations and property so that superintendents may primarily focus on being mission strategists and supporting clergy and congregations to grow the mission.

**Outcome** - The outcome of superintending is that faith is deepening, leadership is emerging and growing, congregations are becoming more fruitful Wesleyan congregations and there is transformation in lives and communities.

#### **Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Stewards and Lay Leader**

The chairperson and vice chairperson shall rotate every four years between a lay person and clergy person. The chairperson or vice chairperson of the board of stewards depending on the election cycle shall be the lay leader. The lay leader shall chair the council of laity and serve on the regional church episcopacy committee. The chairperson and vice chairperson, one a lay person and the other a clergy person shall be elected by the annual conference upon the nomination by the nominating committee. The chairperson and the vice chairperson shall be the two representatives to the regional church episcopacy committee.

#### **Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer**

The CFO/Treasurer is hired by the board of stewards in collaboration with the bishop to oversee the finances and benefits of the connectional church and all other responsibilities as identified by the board of stewards.

#### **Connectional Church Secretary**

The Secretary is responsible for minutes of annual conference sessions and board of stewards' meetings and any other work assigned by the board of stewards. The Secretary shall be nominated by the board of stewards in consultation with the bishop and elected at the annual conference session. The secretary is included as one of the 12-23 members of the board of stewards.

#### **Chancellor**

The Chancellor is the legal officer of the bishop and the board of stewards. The bishop in consultation with the board of stewards shall nominate the chancellor for election by the annual conference session.

The board of stewards may identify additional paid and volunteer staff positions to further the mission of The United Methodist Church within the region. The board of stewards is to establish the evaluation process for all staff.

### **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

The finances and administration of the connectional church shall be overseen by the board of stewards. The board may establish committees and appoint its members to assist with the work of the board.

### **PROPERTY**

All personal and real property of the connectional church congregations is held in trust for The United Methodist Church. The property of congregations, through the trust clause, reverts to the connectional church when a congregation closes or seeks to leave the denomination without following the steps for disaffiliation or affiliation with another Wesleyan denomination that is found in the local church property paragraph. When the trust clause is enforced the proceeds are to be invested for the mission of the church in that region. If it is the sale of property in an underserved or a low-income community, the connectional church board of stewards is to ensure the proceeds are made available to that community or another like community by investing the funds and using the proceeds to fulfill the mission of The United Methodist Church.

All real estate and buildings purchased by the connectional church are to be approved by the annual conference session.