

E. 2023 SESSION PETITIONS

The petitions are printed as approved, and are not in every case identical to the original submission. In the interest of clarity and economy, the texts of petitions which were not adopted or referred by the conference are not printed. Whenever the text of a petition is printed elsewhere in the journal, as in the case of proposals from conference agencies, the reader will be referred to the appropriate section. Actions and related discussions are recorded in the Daily Minutes, Section IV.C., page 134.

- PETITION 1** **2024 Conference Funds and Financial Policies (1a) and 2024 Budget (1b)**
 Submitted by: Irish Gaymon-Spencer, President, on behalf of the Council on Finance and Administration
 Text: See Section VIII.A.1, pages 219 and 222
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 17, 2023
- PETITION 2** **Pension Programs and Policies (2a) and Health Benefits Program and Policies (2b)**
 Submitted by: Sarah Kalish, President, on behalf of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits
 Text: See Section VIII.A.2, Page 225 and 228
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 17, 2023
- PETITION 3** **Equitable Compensation Policies and Guidelines**
 Submitted by: Brad Treece, Chairperson, on behalf of the Commission on Equitable Compensation, and
 Brandon Lazarus, Chairperson, on behalf of the Just Compensation Task Force
 Text: See Section VIII.A.3, page 231
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 4** **Boards of Directors for Western NC Conference Camps**
 Submitted by: Tresca McSwain, Member At Large, on behalf of the Council on Camp and Retreat Ministry
 Text: See Section VIII.B.3, page 244
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 5** **Campus Ministry Boards**
 Submitted by: Cindy Turner, Chairperson, on behalf of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries
 Text: See Section VIII.B.5, page 249
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 6** **Advance Specials**
 Submitted by: Brian Mateer, Director of Missional Engagement, on behalf of the Mission Engagement Team
 Text: See Section VIII.B.9, page 255
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 7** **Board of Directors of Aldersgate Life Plan Services, Inc. (7a),
 Board of Directors of Aldersgate Retirement Community, Inc. (7b), and
 Board of Directors of Aldersgate At Home, Inc. (7c)**
 Submitted by: Brooks Shelley, Chief Branding and Community Engagement Officer
 Text: See Section VIII.D.1.a, page 261
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 8** **Board of Directors of Arbor Acres**
 Submitted by: Andrew W. Applegate, President and CEO, and John Willingham, Chairperson, Board of Directors
 Text: See Section VIII.D.1.b, page 261
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 9** **Board of Directors of Givens Communities**
 Submitted by: Kevin Schwab, Chief Executive Officer
 Text: See Section VIII.D.1.e, page 264
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 10** **Trustees of UMAR Services, Inc.**
 Submitted by: Andra Eason, Chief Development Officer
 Text: See Section VIII.D.1.g, page 266
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 11** **Board of Directors of Wesley Community Development**
 Submitted by: Joel A. Gilland, President, and Randolph H. Harry, Chairperson, Board of Directors
 Text: See Section VIII.D.11, page 272
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 12** **Trustees of Brevard College**
 Submitted by: Bradley J. Andrews, President
 Text: See Section VIII.E.1.f, page 283
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)
- PETITION 13** **Trustees of High Point University**
 Submitted by: Nido R. Qubein, President
 Text: See Section VIII.E.1.f, page 283
 Conference Action: Adopted Petition June 16, 2023 (on the consent calendar)

Local Church Creation Care Teams

Petition 14 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, scripture proclaims God created all—from Earth’s hospitable atmosphere, mighty seas, abundant forests, and other plants to nutrient-rich soil, from majestic whales to the tiniest microbes and all sentient and non-sentient beings in between; Scripture also proclaims God called humans to be caretakers of creation (Genesis 1–2). Jesus declared the Greatest Commandments are to love God and to love neighbor, especially the most vulnerable (Luke 10:25-37). Persons living in poverty, persons of color, and indigenous people in this country and throughout the world are harmed first and most by the degradation of creation, and these same groups have the fewest resources to recover from that harm. Thus, care for creation is clearly a matter of justice. Creation, including all people, is already or will be affected by the current and coming level of danger from climate change and its consequences that intersect with multiple expressions of injustice. It follows that loving God, the Creator, means loving God’s creation and that loving neighbors in distress requires stopping harm and righting wrongs, in other words, working for justice; and,

Whereas, tradition for United Methodists includes John Wesley’s Three Simple Rules for living faithfully: First, do no harm; second, do all the good you can; and third, stay in love with God. Proposed Social Principles for the next General Conference begin with “The Community of All Creation,” outlining the care and justice work that is needed in the midst of the multiple crises that are adversely affecting God’s creation and our neighbors. The 2009 Pastoral Letter of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, *God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action*, pledges leadership in addressing the work of renewal. The 2016 *Book of Discipline* (§ 254) includes an Earth Advocacy ministry group as a way “to fulfill the mission of the local church.” It follows that the church provides both a mandate and guidance for doing what is needed; and,

Whereas, reason is a God-given gift. Our reasoning capabilities are informed by modern scientific research and practices. The scientific community has given clear warning that creation is under tremendous strain due to the poisoning of air, water, and land; habitat destruction; the unsustainable consumption of earth’s finite resources; and the rapidly accelerating extinction of species. Scientists have sounded the alarm of catastrophic harm to creation if global warming and associated climate change are not halted and reversed. They point to how rising temperatures have already intensified wildfires, hurricanes, drought, and sea-level rise throughout the world with devastating impacts. Our reasoning capabilities are also informed by the examples of indigenous peoples whose traditional wisdom and practices honor living in harmony with nature. It follows that, globally, humans have the capacity for understanding the damage and danger and for stopping or mitigating the effects. Individuals and congregations have access to trustworthy knowledge and the reasoning ability to discern what is needed and how to carry out plans in their local situations; and,

Whereas, experience is honored by United Methodists as a way of recognizing lifetime gains of knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and practices of individuals, which they all bring to the work before them. Functioning as a team, they become stronger in their efforts (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Experience is also honored as the varied ways in which humans encounter God. For many people that meeting is through God’s gift of the natural world. It follows that a group of people caring about creation and justice, working together, can use their wisdom and passion to create faithful and meaningful experiences that help others love God and neighbor; therefore, be it; therefore, be it

Resolved, that every local church is urged to form a Creation Care Team or strengthen an existing one for action in five areas each year—Worship, Discipleship, Stewardship, Mission, and Evangelism—providing children, youth, and adults of all ages with inspiration, knowledge, encouragement, and practical means for caring for creation and justice. These actions include:

- One or more occasions of worship, celebrating God’s grace, glory, and beauty in creation and connecting creation care and justice to the scriptural call to love God and neighbor.
- One or more discipleship (educational) opportunities, held within and for the congregation and/or community, related to some aspect of creation care and justice.
- One or more positive changes in the stewardship practices of the church’s life and/or to the church building or grounds.
- One or more evangelism activities that put your creation care initiatives into action, and/or connect, with your community to help others become involved.
- One or more mission activities that advocate for change in systems that perpetuate injustice and harm to creation and communities either locally, regionally, nationally, or globally; and, be it further

Resolved, that every local church is urged to integrate creation care and justice in all areas of ministry and mission, including preaching, liturgy, communications, education, outreach, and advocacy so that the church will become an increasingly effective witness of loving God and neighbor; and, be it further

Resolved, that every local church is urged to communicate any actions taken as an idea exchange and inspiration throughout the connection. They can be reported at charge conference and could be celebrated locally, in the annual conference, and beyond; and, be it further

Resolved, that the annual conference will assist churches with resources and mentors, through the WNCC Mission Engagement office and WNCC Creation Care Team, as needed. [Support and resources for creation care ministry actions can be found at <https://www.wnccumc.org/wncc-creation-care-ministry>; CreationCareWNCC@gmail.com; www.umcreationjustice.org.]

Submitted by: Rev. Jonathan Brake, St. Luke’s UMC, Hickory, and

Kim Richmond, Maple Springs UMC, Winston Salem
 Karlah Burton, Saint Matthews UMC, Greensboro
 Ellen Van Velsor, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro
 Julia Gibson, Green Street, Winston-Salem
 Gary Mahathey, Loves UMC, Walkertown
 James Tolbert, Skyland United Methodist Church, Skyland

Laura Byrch, Boone UMC & Blackburns’ Chapel, Boone & Todd
 Jeremy Benton, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro
 Nicole Jones, Smokey Mountain District Office
 Brian Mateer, WNCCUMC Creation Care Team Member; and
 Cole Altizer, Maggie Valley UMC, Maggie Valley
 Bryan Betts, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro

PETITION 14 Cont. Kerry Purselle, FUMC, Brevard
 Nancy Keziah, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Mary Taylor Setliff, Maple Springs UMC, Winston-Salem
 Jennifer Kerrigan, Maple Springs UMC, Winston-Salem
 Gaye Smith, St. Stephen, Charlotte
 Rev. Dr. Catherine Davis, Mt. Zion UMC, Piney Creek
 Patsy Sheppard, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Philip Setzer, FUMC, Newton
 Nina Wynn, Charlotte
 William Garrard, St. Lukes, Hickory
 James Ross, Maple Springs UMC
 Erin Moses, Maple Springs UMC
 Belinda Worsham, Mount Pleasant, Sherrills Ford
 Lisa Szymanski, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Karen Crutchfield, Central UMC, Asheville
 Linda Johns, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Sharon Leduc, Central UMC, Asheville
 Ellen Furney, Central UMC, Asheville
 Janet Imig, Central UMC, Asheville
 Sam Keziah, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Tommy Sprinkle, Maple Springs UMC, Winston Salem
 Louise Woods, Central UMC, Charlotte
 Margaret Graham, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Kelly Regueira, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Raquel Ramirez-Harrison, HUMC

Dale Carpenter, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Brian Elwell, First UMC, Stanley
 James Pugh, Providence UMC, Charlotte
 Lynda Morris, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Susan Wilson, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Stephen Duraski, Providence UMC, Charlotte
 Mandy Chandler, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Beverly Smith, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Katharine Parker, First UMC, Brevard
 Billy Clark, Harrison UMC, Charlotte
 Paul Richards, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Karlah Burton, Saint Matthews UMC, Greensboro
 Diane Rutledge, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Kelly Cunningham, Maple Springs UMC
 Renee Hayes, Trinity Memorial UMC, Trinity
 Joe Donoghue, First UMC, Hendersonville
 Linda Greer, FUM, Taylorsville
 Charles DiRico, Assurance, Huntersville
 Charlotte Alwine, Maple Springs UMC, Winston-Salem
 Amy Mateer, Harrison, Charlotte
 Martha Carpenter, Charlotte
 Mark Casper, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 William L Ester, First UMC, Brevard
 Sharon Leduc, Central, Asheville
 Janice Wakefield, Green Street, Winston-Salem

Add Fossil Fuels to United Methodist Investment Screens

Petition 15 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, The United Methodist Church in its 1980 General Conference resolution on energy policy was the first denomination to link the burning of fossil fuels to what was then called “global warming” and urged that nations and the church make renewable energy and conservation the main energy priorities; and,

Whereas, that resolution has been updated almost every General Conference since 1980 and as of 2016 declares that “The burning of fossil fuels causes large-scale pollution and seriously alters the environment by increasing the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.” (<https://www.umc.org/en/content/book-of-resolutions-energy-policy-statement>); and,

Whereas, the church has been calling for the nations of the world and the church to quit relying on polluting fossil fuels for energy for more than four decades and instead rely on renewable energy and serious conservation efforts. It is time that the church cease investing its money in fossil fuel mining and use and put its investments where its resolutions have been calling for so long; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church calls for “fossil fuels” to be added to the investment screens in ¶717 of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* as follows:

¶ 717. Sustainable and Socially Responsible Investments—In the investment of money, it shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administration agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds with policies and practices that are socially responsible, consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles. All United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to seek investments in institutions, companies and corporations, or funds that promote racial and gender justice, protect human rights, prevent the use of sweatshop or forced labor, avoid human suffering, and preserve the natural world, including mitigating the effects of climate change. In addition, United Methodist institutions shall endeavor to avoid investments in companies engaged in core business activities that are not aligned with the Social principles through their direct or indirect involvement with the production of anti-personnel weapons and armaments (both nuclear and conventional weapons), **fossil fuels**, alcoholic beverages or tobacco; or that are involved in privately operated correctional facilities, gambling, pornography or other forms of exploitive adult entertainment. The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to environmental, social, and governance factors when making investment decisions and actively exercise their responsibility as owners of the companies in which they invest. This includes engaging with companies to create positive change and hold them accountable for their actions, while also considering exclusion if companies fail to act responsibly; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Conference Secretary will forward this resolution as a petition calling the 2024 General Conference to include “fossil fuels” in the list of investment screens in ¶717.

Submitted by: Rev. Jonathan Brake, St. Luke’s UMC, Hickory, and

Kim Richmond, Maple Springs UMC, Winston Salem
 Karlah Burton, Saint Matthews UMC, Greensboro
 Ellen Van Velsor, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro
 Julia Gibson, Green Street UMC, Winston-Salem
 Laura Byrch, Boone UMC & Blackburns’ Chapel, Boone & Todd
 Jeremy Benton, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro

Nicole Jones, Smoky Mountain District, Waynesville
 Brian Mateer, WNCUMC Creation Care Team
 Cole Altizer, Maggie Valley UMC, Maggie Valley
 Bryan Betts, West Market Street UMC, Greensboro
 Kerry Purselle, FUMC, Brevard
 Nancy Keziah, Harrison UMC, Pineville

Mary Taylor Setliff, Maple Springs UMC, Winston-Salem
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 Rev. Dr. Catherine Davis, Mt. Zion UMC, Piney Creek
 Gaye Smith, St. Stephen, Charlotte
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 Nina Wynn, Charlotte
 William Garrard, St. Lukes, Hickory
 James Ross, Maple Springs UMC
 Erin Moses, Maple Springs UMC
 Belinda Worsham, Mount Pleasant UMC, Sherrills Ford
 Lisa Szymanski, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Karen Crutchfield, Central UMC, Asheville
 Linda Johns, Skyland UMC, Skyland
 Sharon Leduc, Haywood Street, Asheville
 Ellen Furney, Central UMC, Asheville
 Sam Keziah, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Janet Imig, Central UMC, Asheville
 Louise Woods, Central UMC, Charlotte
 Margaret Graham, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
 Kelly Regueira, Harrison UMC, Pineville
 Raquel Ramirez-Harrison, HUMC
 Dale Carpenter, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte

Brian Elwell, First UMC, Stanley
 Ben Sloan, Wesley Memorial, Winston-Salem
 Lynda Morris, St. Stephen UMC, Charlotte
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 Charles DiRico, Assurance, Huntersville
 Amy Mateer, Harrison UMC, Charlotte
 Martha Carpenter, Providence UMC, Charlotte
 William L Ester, First UMC, Brevard
 Sharon Leduc, Central, Asheville
 Janice Wakefield, Green Street, Winston-Salem

Parental Leave in the Western North Carolina Conference

Petition 16 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, The Book of Discipline ¶355 allows for parental leave of up to one quarter of a year for all appointed clergy, but only requires compensation be maintained for the first eight weeks of leave; and,

Whereas, generous parental leave policies contribute to the wellbeing of families and serve as a helpful incentive for the recruitment and retention of clergy because young clergy discuss how support varies among the various annual conferences and across denominations; and,

Whereas, clergy serving churches with limited resources often feel pressure from their congregation to not take all of their available leave because of the additional expenses it places on their appointment; and,

Whereas, across the connection, congregations have disproportionate access to resources and opportunities for support; and,

Whereas, within the connectional system we have a responsibility to support each other across district boundaries, however an uneven distribution of financial resources across our districts leads to differing levels of support for clergy leave based solely on geography; and,

Whereas, paid parental leave builds necessary bonds between parents and children for healthy thriving relationships; and

Whereas, our conference has consistently made decisions based on the welfare of children, and the children of our clergy are part of our baptismal covenant where we promise to “nurture these children in Christ’s holy Church” and “surround these persons with a community of love”; and,

Whereas, supporting our clergy families across the connection enables us to live up to our calling to welcome all generations as Christ welcomes children (Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:15, Luke 18:16); therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Conference:

1. Expand the clergy parental leave policy to allow all clergy under appointment who apply for parental leave to have their compensation maintained for the full one quarter of year of leave.
2. Establish a fund that provides at least \$1,000 for each clergy member granted parental leave to assist with the arrangement of pastoral responsibilities of the church or churches involved (pulpit supply, leadership, and pastoral care coverage) per leave request.
3. The Conference Council on Finance and Administration will determine the most appropriate source of funding.
4. Encourage local churches to offer a corresponding parental leave policy for their lay employees.

Submitted by: Rev. John Bryant, Rev. Kathy Randall Bryant, Rev. Jessica Dayson, and Rev. Sarah Howell-Miller

Encouraging Leadership with Integrity

Petition 17 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, the vibrant future of The United Methodist Church requires deep commitment and loyal leadership at every level, and,

Whereas, grounded in a sense of duty and loyalty to the mission of the church, leaders are counted on and expected to make decisions about the future of The United Methodist Church with the absolute best interest of Christ’s church at heart, and,

Whereas, the selection, election, and appointment of clergy and lay leaders throughout The United Methodist Church includes the implicit understanding that leaders will ethically serve in each of their leadership roles with the utmost integrity, and,

Whereas, leaders who do not intend to remain in The United Methodist Church entangle themselves in a significant conflict of interest, and,

Whereas, the service of a leader whose call to discipleship is aligned with The United Methodist Church is prevented by the continued leadership of an individual who has made a private decision and/or public declaration to leave The United Methodist Church, and,

Whereas, in November of 2022, and in historic fashion, a resolution in support of leading with integrity was adopted at all five Jurisdictional Conferences; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference expresses both respect and gratitude to those who have voluntarily stepped away from positions of leadership as they journey away from membership in The United Methodist Church; and, be it further

Resolved, that, as we continue this period of transition the Western North Carolina Annual Conference calls upon every United Methodist, as a disciple of Jesus the Christ, to move forward in fairness and with integrity; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference asks all lay and clergy members who intend to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church to recuse themselves from leadership roles in all areas of the church, including the local church, district, conference, jurisdictional, and general church level committees, boards, agencies, delegations, and episcopal leaders; and, be it further

Resolved, that we encourage the Western North Carolina Conference Board of Trustees to develop codes of conduct to manage conflicts of interest that may arise around discussions of disaffiliation agreements.

Submitted by: Rev. Veranita Alvord, Emma Austin, Rev. Sarah Belles, Erin Betlej, Rev. Dr. John S. Boggs, Rev. Ben Carson, and

Rev. Amy L. Coles	Lynne Gilbert	Tom Jordan	Helen Ryde
Rev. Ashley Crowder Stanley	Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand	Rev. Uiyeon Kim	Rev. Josh Sherfey
Jennifer Pharr Davis	Havaleh Havelka	Tonya Lanier	Matt Sink
Rev. Darryl Dayson	Sandy Hieronymus	Rev. Dr. In-Yong Lee	Rev. Julia Trantham Heckert
Amy Devore	Rev. David Hockett	Linda Linfors	Rev. Jeremy Troxler
Rev. Carter Ellis	Rev. Dr. James C. Howell	Dana Lyles	Rev. Shelly Webb
Rev. Lynda Ferguson	Rev. Lory Beth Huffman	Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr.	Caroline Wood
Kathy FitzJefferies	Amy Johnson	Rev. Sally M Queen	Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley

Voting at Church Conferences

Petition 18 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, paragraph 248 of the *Discipline* provides for the Church Conference setting “to encourage broader participation by members of the church”, the Church Conference extends the vote to “all professing members of the local church present at such meetings;” and,

Whereas, the purpose of these occasional decision-making settings is to give the full membership of the church a voice in matters of supreme importance to the whole congregation – like sale and acquisition of property, the encumbrance of debt and, in the past 3 years, disaffiliation from the denomination; and,

Whereas, in the last few years, the unrestricted scope of voting members of a Church Conference has been misused against its purpose of integrity to give all active members a voice in decisions involving their congregation. The broad term “all professing members” (meaning all names on the membership role) has been used as an open door for people who are inactive in every way to be recruited to be full participants in determining critical decisions of the church. Recruiting people to come vote at Church Conference has been a legal – though not honorable—way for inactive people to, in many cases, actually determine the vote of a church and over-ride the votes of those members who are active and faithful to their membership vows. When churches have not reached out to inactive members or kept the membership rolls current through the *Discipline*’s provision of reading inactive names for 3 years to remove them, the names of these inactive members—many of them completely inactive for decades—stay on the roll and, when there is an upcoming Church Conference have full eligibility to vote. Without any amending the current provisions for voting at the Church Conference, long inactive members become a pool of potential voters. Without another option for eligibility for the Church Conference vote, these inactive members are fully eligible to vote at a Church Conference when they have shown no other signs of participation or support of the church. The practice of recruiting inactive members to vote has become a manipulation of the inclusive intent of the Disciplinary provision and a weapon to draw uninvolved people into the church’s decision; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, meeting at Lake Junaluska June 16-18, 2023 send the following amendment to the 2024 General Conference for ¶248: **The Church Conference**. (The amendment by addition is in bold):

To encourage the broadest possible participation of active members of the church, the charge conference may be convened as the church conference, extending the vote to all professing members of the local church present at church meetings.

The vote of the Church Conference shall be extended to any and every member who has shown evidence of faithfulness to the membership vows for which there are quantifiable measures: attendance (presence), financial support (gifts) and acts of service in and through the church. (The membership vows of prayers and witness are important but impossible to quantify).

For integrity of the vote, at the prospect of a Church Conference, each Administrative Council (or equivalent governing group) shall determine the baseline standards for the three quantifiable categories of membership vows (presence, gifts, and service) and name a group of no fewer than 3 people to develop a list of eligible voters for the Church Conference.

The minimum standards for voting which a church establishes shall be approved by the church’s governing body and well publicized ahead of the church conference. Once the membership list of eligible professing members is developed, any member(s), upon request, shall have access to the list to clarify their eligibility and have a chance to appeal to the church-appointed eligibility committee. The list of eligible members to vote at a Church Conference shall be finalized at least one week prior to the Church Conference. Professing members eligible to vote at a Church Conference shall have some evidence of fidelity to the quantifiable membership vows at least within the 5-year period prior to the announcement of the church conference.

The amount of financial giving to a church shall continue to be kept strictly confidential. When the financial baseline standard for a church is set by the Administrative Council (or equivalent governing group) and a Church Conference eligibility list developed, the Financial Secretary shall confidentially review said list to be sure the names of everyone on the list meet the church's standard and to ensure that no member who meets the giving threshold has been omitted.

This provision does not change the membership status of any member. It only changes the eligibility of members to vote at a Church Conference to those who have some measurable signs of faithfulness to their membership vows.

Submitted by: Dr. Mary John Dye, Rev. Duke Ison, Rev. Frank Stith III, and Rev. Michelle Chappell

In Support of Creating a U.S. Regional Conference

Petition 19 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, the seven Central Conferences and five U.S. Jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church engage in mission together in 136 countries; and,

Whereas, the connectional ties between the church in the United States and the Central Conferences are significant and vital to the continued mission and ministry of the worldwide United Methodist Church; and,

Whereas, the existing structure of The United Methodist Church at the general church level has historically impeded each region from effectively tailoring its ministry to its specific contexts; and,

Whereas, the existing structure of The United Methodist Church at the general church level diminishes our ability to be a vital and effective church and needs to be re-envisioned to achieve more fair and equitable church governance; and,

Whereas, the Apostle Paul offered a beautiful example making clear the value of a church established in diverse places with shared beliefs, alongside local and regional differences in structure, worship, and style best suited to particular contexts; and,

Whereas, the creation of a U.S. Regional Conference and the conversion of the Central Conferences to Regional Conferences, as outlined in the *Christmas Covenant*, developed by Central Conference leaders in Africa and the Philippines, would establish structural parity throughout the worldwide church; and,

Whereas, the creation of a U.S. Regional Conference, as outlined in legislation put forward by *the Connectional Table* will establish the governance necessary to allow each region to design ministry for its particular contexts, and thus more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world; and,

Whereas, the Western North Carolina Annual Conference aspires to vital, thriving, multicultural, and diverse ministries that are open to all people and can be a beacon of hope for the worldwide United Methodist Church, and,

Whereas, in November of 2022, and in historic fashion, a resolution in support of a U.S. Regional Conference was adopted at all five Jurisdictional Conferences; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference supports the expressed intents of the Christmas Covenant and Connectional Table legislation, including the creation of Regional Conferences in Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the U.S., respectively; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference recognizes and supports the leadership of our Central Conferences in the creation and furtherance of the Christmas Covenant as well the Connectional Table's future visioning on behalf of our worldwide fellowship; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference urges the Council of Bishops to expedite the process of voting on the constitutional amendments necessary to enact the regional conferences legislation, calling special sessions of annual conferences where necessary; and, be it further

Resolved, that in line with the intent of the non-disciplinary petition submitted by the Connectional Table, the Western North Carolina Annual Conference requests the Council of Bishops to immediately appoint a 20-25 member Interim Committee on Organization for a US Regional Conference to develop and propose to the 2024 general conference the structure and organization of a US Regional Conference. In line with the CT's legislation, this body would organize and plan for the establishment and functioning of a new United States Regional Conference comprising the five jurisdictions of the United States. Committee membership should have a minimum of 3 members of each US jurisdiction, 3 central conference members and shall meet standards of racial and gender diversity. The Committee should recommend a structure for the US Regional Conference including considerations such as its membership, committee structure, meeting time, agency, and function; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference secretary and communications office shall send copies of this resolution to the Commission on General Conference and the Council of Bishops; as well as, include the action in the Annual Conference report to the denomination and issue a press release to UMNS.

Submitted by: Rev. Veranita Alvord, Emma Austin, Rev. Sarah Belles, Erin Betlej, Rev. Dr. John S. Boggs, Rev. Ben Carson, and

Rev. Amy L. Coles	Lynne Gilbert	Tom Jordan	Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley
Rev. Ashley Crowder Stanley	Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand	Rev. Uiyeon Kim	Helen Ryde
Jennifer Pharr Davis	Havaleh Havelka	Tonya Lanier	Rev. Josh Sherfey
Rev. Darryl Dayson	Sandy Hieronymus	Rev. Dr. In-Yong Lee	Matt Sink
Amy Devore	Rev. David Hockett	Linda Linfors	Rev. Julia Trantham Heckert
Rev. Carter Ellis	Rev. Dr. James C. Howell	Dana Lyles	Rev. Jeremy Troxler
Rev. Lynda Ferguson	Rev. Lory Beth Huffman	Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr.	Rev. Shelly Webb
Kathy FitzJefferies	Amy Johnson	Rev. Sally M Queen	Caroline Wood

Removal of Discriminatory Language**Petition 20** (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, a more diverse and fully welcoming UMC is a testament to a more complete image of God, which includes persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and,

Whereas, a more diverse and fully welcoming UMC allows all United Methodists to offer their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, as followers of Jesus, to further Christ's mission, and,

Whereas, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God calls and includes all persons into the life and leadership of the Church, transcending the limitations of human categorization, and,

Whereas, the current language in *The Book of Discipline* places limits on Christ's teaching and example of God's universal love, and,

Whereas, the current language in *The Book of Discipline* falls short of embodying the spirit of John Wesley's simple rules to do no harm, do all the good we can, and love God, and,

Whereas, legislative changes to *The Book of Discipline* would reduce barriers and allow movement toward wider diversity and inclusion in our United Methodist Church; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference supports the removal of all discriminatory policies and harmful language related to sexual orientation, and urges delegates to adopt the following petitions; petitions already submitted and that will be before the voting body of the next General Conference:

Petition No: 20730-CB-¶161-G | Entitled: Revised Social Principles-161 and 162 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 1, Page 208*

Summary: Removes the statement that affirms marriage as only between "one man and one woman." Removes the statement that only affirms "heterosexual" marriage. Removes, "The UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

Petition No: 20177-FO-¶304.3 | Entitled: A Simple Plan #3 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 624*

Summary: Removes ¶304.3 which states, "self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church." Also removes the corresponding footnote stating that "self-avowed practicing homosexual is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual; or is living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual."

Petition No: 20469-OM-¶341.6 | Entitled: A Simple Plan #5 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 1041*

Summary: Removes ¶341.6, which states (under unauthorized conduct), "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches."

Petition No: 20181-FA-¶613-G | Entitled: A Fully Inclusive Way Forward-Part 6 of 8 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 1, Page 504*

Summary: Removes ¶613.19, which prohibits annual conferences from giving "United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality . . ."

Petition No: 20190-FA-¶806-G | Entitled: A Fully Inclusive Way Forward-Part 7 of 8 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 1, Page 508*

Summary: Removes ¶806.9, which tasks GCFA with "ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council gives United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group . . ."

Petition No: 20304-HS-¶415.6-G | Entitled: Next Generation UMC #11—Amend Episcopal Responsibilities | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 977*

Summary: Removes statements prohibiting bishops from commissioning, ordaining, or consecrating persons determined to be "self-avowed practicing homosexuals."

Petition No: 20387-JA-¶2711.3-G | Entitled: Next Generation UMC #22—Penalties | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 933*

Summary: Removes predetermined, mandatory minimum penalties for clergy who officiate same sex weddings.

Petition Number: 20365-JA-¶2702.1-G | Entitled: Next Generation UMC #21 - Chargeable Offenses | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 924*

Summary: Removes chargeable offenses that target "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" and clergy who conduct same-sex weddings.

Petition No: 20420-OM-¶310.2d-G | Entitled: A Simple Plan #4 | *ADCA Vol 2, Sec 2, Page 1022*

Summary: Removes statements from Footnote 3 that repeat phrases being removed from other paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline*; and be it further

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference secretary and communications office shall send copies of this resolution to the Commission on General Conference and the Council of Bishops; as well as, include the action in the Annual Conference report to the denomination and issue a press release to UMNS.

Submitted by: Rev. Veranita Alvord, Emma Austin, Rev. Sarah Belles, Erin Betlej, Rev. Dr. John S. Boggs, Rev. Ben Carson, and

Rev. Amy L. Coles	Lynne Gilbert	Tom Jordan	Helen Ryde
Rev. Ashley Crowder Stanley	Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand	Rev. Uiyeon Kim	Rev. Josh Sherfey
Jennifer Pharr Davis	Havaleh Havelka	Tonya Lanier	Matt Sink
Rev. Darryl Dayson	Sandy Hieronymus	Rev. Dr. In-Yong Lee	Rev. Julia Trantham Heckert
Amy Devore	Rev. David Hockett	Linda Linfors	Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley
Rev. Carter Ellis	Rev. Dr. James C. Howell	Dana Lyles	Rev. Jeremy Troxler
Rev. Lynda Ferguson	Rev. Lory Beth Huffman	Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore, Jr.	Rev. Shelly Webb
Kathy FitzJefferies	Amy Johnson	Rev. Sally M Queen	Caroline Wood

Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People

Petition 21 (Approved June 17, 2023)

Whereas, in a groundswell response to the passage of harmful legislation at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, Annual Conferences elected queer clergy and lay persons to be General and Jurisdictional Delegates in record numbers, for the first time empowering queer delegates to speak and act from our diverse experiences; and,

Whereas, the 2019 Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference passed the Traditional Plan, which increased penalties for United Methodists clergy who are LGBTQIA+ and for clergy who support the LGBTQIA+ community through officiating their weddings; and,

Whereas, in an attempt to address the divide within The United Methodist Church, an abeyance or moratorium was proposed to the General Conference, referenced below,² by the authors of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, and,

Whereas, we understand our call and responsibility as United Methodists to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God; and,

Whereas, we call straight and cisgender allies to do good by using their voice and vote to support, empower, and amplify the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community in The United Methodist Church; and,

Whereas, 46 queer General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates from across all five jurisdictions wrote the original resolution which was historically adopted at all five jurisdictional conferences in November 2022; therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church:

1. Supports and amplifies the queer delegates' call to justice and empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ community throughout the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, within and beyond our local churches, districts, departments, centers, and committees;
2. Until changes can be made in *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, implores our Annual Conference to resolve in a timely fashion through a process of just resolution any complaints against clergy regarding their sexual orientation or the officiating of weddings of LGBTQIA+ persons;
3. Aspires to become a United Methodist Church in which LGBTQIA+ people will be protected, affirmed, and empowered throughout our life, mission, and ministry together;
4. Commits itself to protecting, affirming, and empowering LGBTQIA+ people within the life and ministry of the churches of our Conference, particularly as Laity and on boards and agencies;
5. Requests the Bishop and Cabinet to form a conference-level LGBTQIA+ Ministries Team consisting of Laity and Clergy, tasked with creating/collecting/sharing resources to equip and empower local churches to do ministry to and with people of the LGBTQIA+ community. This team should collaborate with other ministry-specific areas, particularly Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, and Campus Ministry in order to most effectively and safely minister to and with LGBTQIA+ people of all ages.

Submitted by: Rev. Veranita Alvord, Emma Austin, Rev. Sarah Belles, Erin Betlej, Rev. Dr. John S. Boggs, Rev. Ben Carson, and

Rev. Amy L. Coles	Lynne Gilbert	Tom Jordan	Helen Ryde
Rev. Ashley Crowder Stanley	Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand	Rev. Uiyeon Kim	Rev. Josh Sherfey
Jennifer Pharr Davis	Havaleh Havelka	Tonya Lanier	Matt Sink
Rev. Darryl Dayson	Sandy Hieronymus	Rev. Dr. In-Yong Lee	Rev. Julia Trantham Heckert
Amy Devore	Rev. David Hockett	Linda Linfors	Rev. Jeremy Troxler
Rev. Carter Ellis	Rev. Dr. James C. Howell	Dana Lyles	Rev. Shelly Webb
Rev. Lynda Ferguson	Rev. Lory Beth Huffman	Rev. Sally M Queen	Caroline Wood
Kathy FitzJefferies	Amy Johnson	Rev. Dr. Samuel Moore Jr.	

1. The queer delegates chose to describe themselves using the umbrella term "queer," but refer to the broader community of persons with the LGBTQIA+ acronym.

2. "Effective immediately upon adjournment of the 2020 General Conference, no complaint proceedings (including, without limitation, a bishop's supervisory response, suspension proceedings, attempts to achieve a just resolution, or referral of a complaint) shall be initiated, and all current or pending complaint proceedings shall be suspended, insofar as the alleged Book of Discipline violation asserted in the complaint is that the respondent is a 'self-avowed practicing homosexual' (however that term may be defined, including, without limitation, living in a same-gender marriage, domestic partnership or civil union); that the respondent has conducted, officiated, performed, celebrated, or blessed a same-gender wedding or other same-gender union; that the respondent has certified, licensed, commissioned, ordained, consecrated, or appointed a 'self-avowed practicing homosexual'; that the respondent has provided 'funds to any gay caucus or group' or used funds 'to promote the acceptance of homosexuality'; or that the respondent has otherwise engaged in conduct that The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church currently states is 'incompatible with Christian teaching' as it pertains to LGBTQ relationships. This moratorium on all new and pending complaint proceedings concerning human sexuality provisions applies not only to charges that are explicitly based on ¶2702.1b, but also to any charge that the same alleged underlying conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision of the Discipline, including (without limitation) 'immorality' under ¶2702.1a; 'disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church' under ¶2702.1d; and 'dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church' under ¶2702.1e. This moratorium is inclusive of charges related to the following paragraphs: ¶161, ¶304.3, ¶310.2, ¶341.6, ¶613.19, ¶806.9, and ¶2702.1b. This moratorium does not apply to charges under any of these provisions in which the underlying alleged actions address a different subject matter, including but not limited to sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. This moratorium shall remain in effect until the close of the first General Conference of The United Methodist Church after other denominations separate. Any complaints pertaining to this paragraph filed during this period shall be held in abeyance, and no time limits shall commence until the above-referenced General Conference has concluded." -From the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation