

## VII. PLAN OF ORGANIZATION AND RULES OF ORDER AND PROCEDURE

### PART I. PLAN OF ORGANIZATION

Pursuant to the action of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church as contained in sections IX and X (¶¶ 601-672) of *The Book of Discipline* (2016), the following plan of organization and rules of order and procedure of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference are hereby established.

#### A. MEMBERSHIP

1. a. All clergy of the conference in full connection and provisional and associate membership, and all local pastors under full-time (¶ 318.1) or part-time (¶ 318.2) appointment;
- b. One lay member from every pastoral charge of the conference, elected as provided in ¶ 32 of the *Discipline*; provided, that each pastoral charge served by more than one clergy member under appointment shall be entitled to as many lay members of the conference as there are eligible clergy members appointed to that charge (see 1.a.);
- c. The diaconal ministers of the conference;
- d. The active deaconesses under episcopal appointment within the bounds of the conference;
- e. The conference president of United Methodist Women;
- f. The conference president of United Methodist Men;
- g. The conference lay leader;
- h. The conference president of United Methodist Youth;
- i. The chairperson of the conference college student organization;
- j. The district lay leader from each district;
- k. The president or equivalent officer of the conference young adult organization;
- l. The conference director of lay servant ministries.
- m. The conference secretary of global ministries (if lay).
- n. Two young persons between the ages of twelve and seventeen and one young person between the ages of eighteen and thirty from each district, elected by the district Program Ministries Council or equivalent structure; and,
- o. Such additional lay members as may be necessary to equalize the lay and clergy membership of the conference, as provided below, based on the clergy membership as of July 1 of the previous year.
2. The district shall select from its district additional lay members so that the total number of lay members equals the total number of clergy members. The additional number of lay members from each district shall be determined in an equitable and proportional manner by the conference secretary based upon membership as recorded in the most recent conference *Journal*. Alternates to such additional lay members may be chosen at the discretion of the district superintendent and district lay leader and may be seated in place of such members who are unable to be present.
3. The completed registration process shall constitute the official membership roll of the annual conference.
4. A quorum for the transaction of business in any annual conference session shall be the number of registered conference members present and voting.

#### B. OFFICERS

1. **The Presiding Officer:** The presiding officer of the conference shall be the resident bishop.
2. **Conference Secretary:** The secretary of the conference shall be elected quadrennially by the conference at the annual session of the conference following each General Conference on nomination by the Committee on Conference Staff Relations and shall assume full responsibility of the office upon adjournment of the annual session at which he/she is elected, provided that the outgoing secretary shall be responsible for editing and publishing the journal of that session. If a vacancy occurs during the quadrennium, the bishop, after consultation with the district superintendents, shall appoint a person to act until the next annual session, at which time a successor shall be elected as provided herein. Upon nomination by the Committee on Conference Staff Relations, the conference may elect a conference secretary-designate for a term which the conference shall determine.
3. **Associate and Assistant Secretaries:** Upon nomination by the conference secretary, the conference shall annually elect an associate secretary and a sufficient number of assistant secretaries to handle the work of the conference.
4. **Conference Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services:** At the first session of the conference following the General Conference, a conference treasurer/director of administrative services shall be elected by the conference for the quadrennium upon nomination by the conference Council on Finance and Administration. If a vacancy occurs during the quadrennium, the Council on Finance and Administration shall fill the vacancy until the next session of the conference, at which time a successor shall be elected as provided herein. The DAS shall include the responsibility of the conference statistician and the Conference Benefits Officer.

5. **Conference Chancellor:** Upon nomination by the bishop, the conference may annually elect a layperson who is a member in good standing of one of the local churches of the conference, or a clergyperson who is a member of the annual conference, and who is a member of the bar of the state of North Carolina as conference chancellor to serve as legal advisor to the bishop and to the conference.
6. **Conference Parliamentarian:** A conference parliamentarian may be appointed annually by the bishop after consultation with the district superintendents.
7. **Conference Director of Connectional Ministries:** The conference director of connectional ministries shall function as a communication link between the conference and general church agencies, give leadership in the implementation of ¶ 608 of the *Discipline*, and relate to directors of connectional ministries in annual conferences throughout the connection.
8. **Conference Lay Leader:** The conference lay leader shall be elected for a four-year term by the conference upon nomination by the Board of Laity. No person shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms in this office. A vacancy in this office during the quadrennium shall be filled by the Board of Laity, which shall name a new lay leader for the remainder of the quadrennium, subject to confirmation at the following annual session of the conference.

## C. CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

### 1. Committees on Nominations:

- a. For the purpose of nominations to the conference entities, there shall be a conference Committee on Nominations, composed of the bishop, who shall be chairperson; the conference secretary, who shall be secretary; the district superintendents; the director of connectional ministries; the assistant to the bishop; the conference lay leader; the conference president of United Methodist Men; the conference president of United Methodist Women; the chairperson of the conference Council on Youth Ministries; a lay leader from each district and two laywomen and two laymen to ensure diversity, elected quadrennially by the conference upon nomination by this committee. Unless otherwise provided herein or by *The Discipline*, all members of conference entities prescribed herein shall be elected by the annual conference upon nomination by the conference Committee on Nominations.
- b. There may be in each district a district Committee on Nominations or equivalent structure, composed of the district superintendent, who shall be chairperson; the district lay leader; and others who could include: the district president of United Methodist Men; the district president of United Methodist Women; a youth; two pastors who have served in the district for at least two years, named by the district superintendent; and two laywomen and two laymen who have been members of The United Methodist Church for at least four years. This committee may prepare nominations from the district for consideration by the conference Committee on Nominations and shall care for other necessary nominations within the district and for action by the conference.
- c. The conference Committee on Nominations shall nominate the conference entities to be elected by the annual conference unless otherwise specified herein. Quadrennial nominations shall be submitted to the conference secretary and shall be printed prior to annual conference.
- d. The districts and the conference Committee on Nominations shall take care that each of the various constituencies of the conference, is represented throughout the organizational life of the conference insofar as possible. Persons shall be selected for nomination based upon their demonstrated or expressed desire, interest, concern, and/or involvement in the organization of the conference. The foregoing shall not preclude nominations from the floor of the conference at the time of the election (as allowed by *The Book of Discipline*).
- e. Unless otherwise provided by *The Discipline*, the Connectional Table shall act to fill any vacancies on any of the conference entities which shall arise in the interim. Persons so appointed shall hold office until the next regular election of the members of the agencies involved.
- f. **Terms of Service:** Except as hereinafter provided, no person shall serve simultaneously on more than one of the quadrennial or term election agencies of the conference, except in cases of *ex-officio* membership, nor for more than eight consecutive years on any one such agency, except in cases of *ex-officio* membership; provided, however, in the case of membership on a quadrennial agency, that, unless prohibited by *The Discipline*, a person elected to fill an unexpired term of two years or less shall be eligible to serve for a maximum of eight consecutive additional years on the same agency, and a person elected to fill an unexpired term of more than two years shall be eligible for a maximum of four consecutive additional years on the same agency. The Committee on Episcopacy, the Committee on Nominations, the Conference Committee on Organization and Rules, and the Petitions Committee shall not be included in the prohibition of simultaneous service. If a member of said agencies is appointed to the district superintendency, his or her agency membership shall terminate, unless the membership be *ex officio*, and any vacancy thus created shall be filled as heretofore set out. If a member of a conference entity is absent from two consecutive regular meetings of the entity without a reason acceptable to the entity, his or her membership thereon shall cease, and he or she shall be so notified. Such a vacancy shall be filled as heretofore set out.
- g. **Convening for Organization:** The terms of service of the members of quadrennial or term agencies of the conference shall begin July 1. Each agency will organize at an event convened by the bishop and scheduled as soon as possible following the adjournment of the annual conference session at which they were elected.
- h. Members of general church boards and agencies will be *ex-officio* members (with vote) of the conference entity to which the general board or agency most closely aligns, or as indicated in *The Book of Discipline*.

2. **Connectional Table:** This team shall be constituted quadrennially. The purpose of the Connectional Table is to connect the ministry and resources of the Annual Conference in order to increase and strengthen the number of vital congregations and conference entities and to coordinate, promote, and encourage the development of faithful disciples and fruitful leaders across the conference so that, lives and communities are transformed by the power of God. The Connectional Table shall consist of the chairpersons of the Council on Finance and Administration, the Conference Board of Trustees, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Leadership Development Team, the Church Vitality Team, the Justice and Reconciliation Team, the Mission Engagement Team, the Council on Camp and Retreat Ministry, and the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry; the presidents of United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, and the Conference Council on Youth Ministries; the director of church development, the president of the United Methodist Foundation, the conference treasurer/director of administrative services, the director of ministerial services/conference secretary, the director of communications, the director of connectional ministries, the resident bishop, the assistant to the bishop, and a district superintendent. The director of connectional ministries and the conference lay leader shall serve as co-chairpersons. Additional members may be nominated and elected to ensure diversity and inclusiveness. One young adult clergy person shall be a member.
3. **Councils:**
  - a. **Conference Council on Finance and Administration:** There shall be constituted quadrennially a conference Council on Finance and Administration as provided in ¶ 611 and following of *The Book of Discipline*. The resident bishop, the assistant to the bishop, the conference treasurer/director of administrative services, and one district superintendent named by the cabinet shall be *ex-officio* members without vote.
  - b. **Council on Camp and Retreat Ministry:** This council shall be constituted quadrennially and be composed of eight to twelve members. Special attention will be given to the election of persons knowledgeable and passionate in the areas of camp, retreat, and outdoor ministry, non-profit board experience, and business management. The council will promote all existing WNCUMC camp and retreat centers. This includes camp facilities and cooperative ministry with the local church, districts, and conference. The council is responsible for establishing, implementing, and maintaining financial oversight of the Camp and Retreat Ministry Endowment fund. The Council will submit a yearly request to the Annual Conference for financial support on behalf of the camp and retreat centers. The council will be a source for support in non-profit board development, will encourage and support sustainable best practices for all current camp and retreat centers, and maintain positive relationships with each of the camps and their staff and board of directors. The Conference Coordinator of Camp and Retreat Ministry shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote.
4. **Boards:**
  - a. **Board of Trustees:** An incorporated conference Board of Trustees shall be constituted annually as provided in ¶ 2512 of *The Discipline*. The conference treasurer/director of administrative services, the bishop, the assistant to the bishop, and a cabinet representative shall be *ex-officio* members without vote.
  - b. **Board of Ordained Ministry:** This board shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of forty-five elders in full connection, including one district superintendent named by the bishop; nine deacons in full connection; fifteen lay persons, and the conference lay leader; and, at least four associate members or local pastors who have completed the Course of Study; elected as provided in ¶ 635 of the *Discipline*. The director and associate director of ministerial services shall be *ex-officio* members without vote.
  - c. **Board of Laity:** This board shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of the conference lay leader, who shall be president; the president of conference United Methodist Men; the president of conference United Methodist Women; the vice-chairperson of the conference Council on Youth Ministries; the district lay leaders; the conference prayer advocate; twelve lay persons elected to ensure that the total membership of the council is representative of the various constituencies of the conference; and other persons deemed by the board as necessary to its work. The board shall foster an awareness of the role of the laity in achieving the mission of the church, and enabling and supporting lay participation in the planning and decision-making process of the conference, the districts, and the local churches. One district superintendent shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote.
  - d. **Board of Pension and Health Benefits:** As specified in ¶ 639 of the *Discipline*, an incorporated Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of twelve members, arranged in two classes. The treasurer of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits, Inc., shall be an *ex-officio* member, without vote. One district superintendent named by the cabinet and the conference treasurer/director of administrative services shall be *ex-officio* members without vote. As a sub-committee within its structure, the board shall quadrennially appoint a Health Benefits Committee, composed of such members of the board and other persons as the board may determine.
  - e. **Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry:** This board shall be constituted quadrennially in fulfillment of the portions of ¶ 634 of the *Discipline* pertaining to campus ministry and shall be composed of twelve members, nominated by the conference Committee on Nominations and elected by the conference, with special attention being given to the election of persons knowledgeable in the areas of campus ministry, finance, marketing, and management. The associate director of ministerial services, shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote.
5. **Ministry Teams:** There shall be constituted quadrennially four Ministry Teams of the Annual Conference:
  - a. A **Church Vitality Team** consisting of 12-15 persons. The team will provide vision for and oversee the structures, processes and resources needed, to help existing church leaders know and practice vitality; help potential planting

partners in finding, assessing and equipping leaders for new church development; assess effectiveness of current resources; learn and share best practices; and, coordinate funding for vitality and development projects. The nominations committee will name the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the committee and other officers will be chosen as needed by the committee. One member will be chosen by each District Church Vitality Team, resulting in 8 members. Other team members are to be nominated on the basis of giftedness and passion for the particular ministries for which the team is responsible. Conference staff members serve on the team for organizational support and to encourage the full implementation of team initiatives, without vote.

- b. A **Justice and Reconciliation Team** consisting of 12-15 persons. This team will promote excellence and fruitfulness in congregational life and ecclesial structures that reflect the full diversity of the reign of God; works of justice bringing reform to social, ecclesial, and civic structures and institutions; and, participation of all the people of God in realizing the vision of following Jesus, making disciples and transforming the world. Included in the membership will be conveners of the following groups, named by the nominating committee: Religion and Race, the Status and Role of Women, African American Ministries, Asian American Ministries, Native American Ministries, Hispanic/Latino Ministries, and Ministries of Creation Care led by a Conference Earth-keeper. Each of these groups will be convened within 30 days of the organizational meeting by gathering persons with a passion for the ministry involved. The Justice and Reconciliation Team shall have a task force that will review the Ethnic Local Church Concerns grants. The work of Church and Society and Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, Peace with Justice Ministries, and the ministries and connection to the NC Council of Churches are a part of this team. The nominations committee will name the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the committee and other officers will be chosen as needed by the committee. Team members are to be nominated on the basis of giftedness and passion for the particular ministries for which the team is responsible. Conference staff members serve on the team for organizational support and to encourage the full implementation of team initiatives, without vote.
- c. A **Leadership Development Team** consisting of 12-15 persons. The purpose of leadership development is “To grow the capacity of leaders to Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, and Transform the World.” The task is to help shape a culture where life-long growth and development are expected to promote and support life-long fruitful ministries. The team will promote leadership excellence among congregational ministers (both clergy and lay professionals). It will also champion the development of the future leaders of the church with special emphasis on youth and young adults. Finally, it will encourage congregational ministers in the development of leadership among the laity within the congregation. The team will network with those entities in the conference who share in its purpose. The nominations committee will name the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the committee and other officers will be chosen as needed by the committee. Team members are to be nominated on the basis of giftedness and passion for the particular ministries for which the team is responsible. Conference staff members serve on the team for organizational support and to encourage the full implementation of team initiatives, without vote.
- d. A **Mission Engagement Team** consisting of 12-15 persons. The team will engage and actively facilitate the connection of congregations and disciples to service in their local communities and the world at large. They will work to encourage general church mission efforts and emphases, provide appropriate avenues for training of mission leaders, and promote and foster abiding relationships with mission projects and mission workers throughout the world. This will include the traditional work areas of Disaster Response Ministry, the Mission Response Center, Volunteers in Mission Building Teams, and other historically related ministries. The nominations committee will name the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the committee and other officers will be chosen as needed by the committee. Team members are to be nominated on the basis of giftedness and passion for extending the mission witness of the conference. Conference staff members serve on the team for organizational support and to encourage the full implementation of team initiatives, without vote.

#### 6. Administrative Commissions:

- a. **Commission on Archives and History:** This commission shall be constituted quadrennially (¶ 641) and shall be composed of twelve members at large, the conference secretary, and the president or designated representative of the executive committee of the Conference Historical Society. The conference archivist shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote. Its membership shall not be subject to the limitations on terms of service set forth above.
- b. **Commission on Communications:** This commission shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of twelve elected members at large, up to five additional members selected by the commission for expertise in the areas of communication and technology. It shall function as a service agency for the entire conference in the area of communication and interpretation. The conference director of communications shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote.
- c. **Commission on Equitable Compensation:** As specified in ¶ 625 of *The Discipline*, this commission shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of fourteen persons, plus one district superintendent, named by the cabinet. The fourteen elected members shall consist of seven lay persons and seven clergy persons, including at least one lay person and one clergy person from charges of fewer than two hundred members which are receiving equitable compensation funds at the time of the election of commission members. The assistant to the bishop and one district superintendent shall be *ex-officio* members without vote.

**7. Committees:**

- a. **Committee on Conference Staff Relations:** This committee shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be composed of the bishop; the assistant to the bishop, the conference lay leader; the president of the conference Council on Finance and Administration; and the following members at-large: two ordained elders, one deacon in full connection, and three lay persons. The director of human resources shall serve as an *ex-officio* member of the committee, without vote. The chairperson shall be elected by the committee from among the at-large members. The committee shall support and provide oversight to the work of the human resources department within the annual conference.
- b. **Petitions Committee:** This committee shall be constituted quadrennially in order to do the following: (a) receive and review petitions to the annual conference; (b) prepare a calendar of petitions for each plenary session; and, (c) ensure that all petitions are in front of the conference until adjournment. This committee shall consist of 4-6 members, reflecting the diversity of the conference. The conference secretary shall be an *ex-officio* member without vote.
- c. **Conference Committee on Organization and Rules:** This committee shall be constituted quadrennially and shall be the primary steward of the Western North Carolina Plan of Organization and Rules of Order. Its work shall include the following: receive and review proposed changes and/or additions to the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order and report to the annual conference recommended changes to the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order to keep them in compliance with *The Book of Discipline*. This committee shall consist of 4-6 members, reflecting the diversity of the conference. The conference secretary, resident bishop, and director of connectional ministries shall be *ex-officio* members without vote.
- d. The following committees shall be constituted as required by *The Book of Discipline*: Committee on Episcopacy (§637), Episcopal Residence Committee (§638), Committees on Investigation (§2703), Administrative Review Committee (§636), and Joint Committee on Medical Leave (§652).

**D. CONFERENCE JOURNAL**

1. The conference secretary shall be the editor of the conference journal, assisted by the conference statistician in the publication of statistical data.
2. The journal shall be edited in keeping with the *Discipline* and other regulations of the General Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference under the direction of the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting.
3. The annual journal shall contain the proceedings of the most recent conference session and the statistical tables for the calendar year preceding that session.
4. In the event that the plan of organization and rules of order and procedure of the conference are published apart from the journal, this document shall be considered part of the journal.
5. In view of the obvious difficulties and inequities involved in singling out one or more persons worthy of special recognition, the journal shall not be dedicated to the memory or honor of any person.

**E. DISTRICTS, DISTRICT CONFERENCES, AND DISTRICT COUNCILS**

1. There shall be a total of eight districts in this annual conference, the boundaries of which shall be determined by the bishop after consultation with the cabinet.
2. At the discretion of the district superintendent, a District Conference may be held in each district (according to Chapter 4, Section X, §658ff of *The 2016 Book of Discipline*.) The membership of a District Conference shall consist of the lay and clergy members of the district of the Annual Conference session of the current calendar year.
3. The district lay leaders shall be selected by the district for a four-year term and confirmed by the annual conference. No person shall serve as a district lay leader for more than two consecutive terms.
4. District organization for missional purposes and impact: Each district may organize leadership teams that carry out the strategy and mission of the district within its context. Each team will reflect the diversity of the district.
5. The district Board of Church Location and Building (§2519), the district Board of Trustees (§2518), the district Committee on the Ordained Ministry (§666), and the Committee on District Superintendency (§669) shall be organized in each district as provided for in *The Book of Discipline*.

**F. ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO GENERAL AND JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES**

1. Lay and clergy members as designated by *The Book of Discipline* shall be eligible to vote and to be elected as a delegate.
2. Those voting must vote within the voting bar of the conference and at the time specified by the presiding officer for that ballot. Ballots shall be cast only in the manner provided and designated by the conference.
3. Vote counting procedures shall be the responsibility of the conference secretary, assisted by tellers duly elected by the conference from among the lay members and the ordained ministerial members in full connection upon nomination by the district superintendents. In addition, upon nomination by the conference secretary, the conference shall elect two chief lay tellers from among the lay members of the conference and two chief ordained ministerial tellers from among the ordained ministerial members of the conference in full connection.
4. A simple majority of the valid ballots cast shall be required for election.
5. The results of the ballots shall be announced by the presiding officer as follows:
  - a. First Ballot for General Conference Delegates and First Ballot for Jurisdictional Conference Delegates: The names of all persons receiving ten or more votes shall be announced, with the total vote for each, in descending order.

- b. Second Ballots: The names of all persons receiving twenty or more votes shall be announced.
  - c. Third and All Subsequent Ballots: The names of all persons receiving thirty or more votes shall be announced.
- NOTE: A person's name not being announced because his or her vote total was less than the number necessary for announcement does not mean that the person is necessarily ineligible for election.

6. Individual ballots shall be valid only when cast for the prescribed number of eligible persons to be elected on each ballot and cast in the manner provided for and designated by the conference. Inclusion of the name of a person already elected, the name of an ineligible person, or an illegible name shall invalidate that entire individual ballot. Adjudication of illegibility shall be the responsibility of the chief tellers.

## PART II. RULES OF ORDER

### A. PRESIDING OFFICER:

**Rule 1. Authority of the Chairperson:** The resident bishop or the presiding officer designated by the bishop to preside in the bishop's temporary absence shall be the chairperson of the conference. The chairperson shall decide points of order raised by the members and shall rule on points of order not raised by the members as the chairperson deems necessary to conform to these rules of order, subject, in both cases, to an appeal to the conference by any member without debate, except that the chairperson and the appellant, in that order, shall each have five minutes for a statement in support of their respective positions. A tie vote in the case of appeal shall sustain the chairperson. When any member raises a point of order, the member shall cite, by number, the rule alleged to have been violated. The chairperson shall have the right to recess a session of the conference at any time in the chairperson's discretion and to reconvene at such a time as the chairperson shall announce, with only members, authorized personnel, and authorized guests permitted to attend such a session following recess.

### B. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS:

**Rule 2. Frequency and Length of Speeches:** No member shall speak a second time on the same question if any member who has not spoken desires the floor, no more than twice on the same subject under the same motion, and no longer than three minutes unless the member's time shall be extended by the conference, except as provided in Rule 24. This three-minute limit may be reduced by a majority vote of the conference at any time and for any period of duration. The provisions of this rule shall likewise apply to the asking of a question or questions by an individual and to answers to that individual by the person or agency to whom the questions are directed.

**Rule 3. Total Time for Debate on an Individual Proposal:** When a proposal is to be presented as the main motion for debate, the conference may, by majority vote upon motion by any member, set a time limit for the total debate on that question, including any amendments or other secondary motions related thereto, provided that such limitation shall not be construed to conflict with Rule 2 or Rule 24. If such a limitation is set, the chairperson may direct the coordinator of calendar to allocate the total time among speakers for and against the question by such means as the coordinator deems appropriate, consistent with the provisions of Rule 2, and provided that the previous question may be ordered at any time as specified in Rule 20.

**Rule 4. Voting Bar of the Conference:** At the organizational session of the conference, the voting bar of the plenary sessions of the conference shall be set by vote of the members. When a vote is taken on any question, only those members within the voting bar of the conference shall be entitled to vote.

**Rule 5. Voting Procedure:** Voting shall be by show of hands or otherwise as ordered by the chairperson or by the conference. At the discretion of the chairperson, a count vote may be taken. A count vote may also be ordered at the call of any member supported by one third of the members present and voting, in which case the members shall rise from their seats and be counted. The count shall be made by tellers appointed by the conference secretary and shall include the votes of members in the portions of the voting bar separate from the main assembly. No other business shall be in order when a vote is being taken or when the previous question has been ordered, unless the process is completed, except such as relates to the vote itself, or that which can be appropriately fitted into the time while waiting for the report of the tellers on a count vote.

**Rule 6. Division of Question:** Before a vote is taken, any member shall have the right to call for a division of any question, if it is subject to such division as the member indicates. If no member objects, the division shall be made. If there is objection, the chairperson shall put the question of division to vote, not waiting for a second.

### C. BUSINESS PROCEDURE:

**Rule 7. Organizational Session:** The opening or organizational session of the conference shall include at least the following:

- a. Roll call of conference members (see Part I.A.3).
- b. Setting of the voting bar (see Rule 4).
- c. Adoption of conference agenda.
- d. Report of Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting.
- e. Ordering to record of reports of boards and agencies not requiring conference action.
- f. Election of associate and assistant secretaries and associate and assistant statisticians.
- g. Election of coordinator of calendar (if warranted).
- h. Announcement of necessary revisions of printed reports and recommendations.

**Rule 8. Petitions:** Petitions may be made to the conference by conference entities; the cabinet; lay and clergy members of the conference; councils, boards, and committees of the districts of the conference; and councils, boards, committees, and professing members of local churches of the conference. Each petition must be submitted to the conference secretary in writing, preferably by electronic means, by a date determined and announced by the conference secretary prior to the convening of the conference; must be signed by the maker(s) thereof (understood to mean the chairperson and secretary in the case of a petitioning group); and must contain information sufficient to validate the source (church or charge name, district, address, email address, etc.). Any petition containing personal references or dealing in personalities may be returned to the originator(s) with an explanation. The petitions committee shall review all petitions and assign a number and give a subject title to each petition prior to its publication.

**Rule 9. Pre-Conference Publications:**

- a. **Booklet of *Program and Reports*:** All annual reports and petitions of conference entities shall be submitted in writing, preferably by electronic means, to the conference secretary by a designated date prior to the convening of the conference. Under the direction of the secretary, this publication shall be made available electronically for print.
- b. **Supplement:** A *Supplement* to the booklet of *Program and Reports* shall be distributed to the members of the conference at the time of registration of members.

**Rule 10. Referral of Matters with Financial Implications:** All petitions and motions requesting a special offering or financial appeal or otherwise having financial implications for conference funds shall be referred to the conference Council on Finance and Administration, which shall offer its recommendations concerning the matter prior to action by the annual conference.

**Rule 11. Consideration of Business Items:** All petitions and other motions, including proposed amendments to the plan of organization and rules of order, printed and distributed in accordance with Rule 9, subject to correction of grammatical and editorial errors, shall be the property of the conference at the time of the opening of the conference without formal reading and shall be in order for consideration at any time thereafter.

**Rule 12. Availability of Conference Actions:** No later than ten days after the adjournment of the annual session, the conference secretary shall provide copies of all resolutions, proposals, and recommendations acted upon by the conference to the bishop, the conference director of connectional ministries, and the conference director of communications.

**Rule 13. Special Study Reports:** Special study reports ordered by a previous annual session shall be presented directly to the organizational session of the conference for such disposition as the conference may make, including referral if the conference so chooses.

**Rule 14. Distribution of Unofficial Material:** No leaflet, brochure, questionnaire, or other material shall be distributed on the floor of the conference or in the registration area except by prior approval of the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting or by the order of the conference.

**Rule 15. Consent Calendar:** All petitions from conference entities printed in the booklet of *Program and Reports*, with the exception of the proposals of the Council on Finance and Administration concerning conference funds and financial policies, and upon recommendation of the petitions committee, shall constitute the consent calendar and shall be so designated in that booklet. At the request of any member, the conference may, by majority vote, lift any item from the consent calendar for consideration in plenary session. All items not lifted from the consent calendar shall be acted upon at one time in plenary session at such time as the chairperson shall direct. The proposals of the Council on Finance and Administration related to conference funds and financial policies, petitions which have been lifted from the consent calendar, and other petitions conforming to Rule 8 shall be presented for conference action in plenary session.

**Rule 16. Undebatable Motions:** The following motions shall be acted upon without debate:

- a. To adjourn, when unqualified, except to adjourn the conference finally.
- b. To suspend the rules.
- c. To lay on the table, except as provided in Rule 24.
- d. To take from the table.
- e. To call for the previous question.
- f. To reconsider a non-debatable motion.
- g. To limit or extend the limits of debate.
- h. To call for the order of the day.

**Rule 17. Precedence of Secondary Motions:** If any one or more of the following motions shall be made when one or more other motions are pending, the order of their precedence in relation to one another shall be in the following order:

- a. To fix the time to which the conference shall adjourn, which motion is subject to amendment or may be laid on the table.
- b. To adjourn.
- c. To take recess.
- d. To lay on the table.
- e. To order the previous question.
- f. To limit or extend the limits of debate.
- g. To postpone to a given time.
- h. To commit or refer.
- i. To amend or substitute (one amendment being allowed to an amendment).
- j. To postpone indefinitely.

**Rule 18. Referring Reports:** The conference may refer any report, recommendation, or resolution, or any part thereof, which is before the conference for consideration, or any amendment offered thereto.

**Rule 19. Consideration of Substitutes:** A substitute motion may be offered for any report, recommendation, or resolution under consideration. The conference shall then first perfect the original, and then perfect the substitute. The question shall then be put first on the motion to substitute, followed by the motion to adopt the report, recommendation, or resolution.

**Rule 20. Previous Question:** When any member moves the previous question (that is, that the vote now be taken on the motion or motions pending), the member shall indicate to what he or she intends it to apply, if any secondary motion or motions are also pending. If the member does not so indicate, it shall apply only to the immediately pending question. This motion shall be taken without debate and shall require a two-thirds vote of those present and voting for its adoption.

**Rule 21. When Motion to Limit or Stop Debate Not in Order:** When the conference is considering a petition or other motion, no member, immediately after discussing the pending question and before relinquishing the floor, shall make a motion which, if adopted, would limit or stop debate.

**Rule 22. Reconsideration:** A motion to reconsider an action of the conference shall be in order at any time if offered by a member who voted with the prevailing side. If the motion it is proposed to reconsider is non-debatable, the motion to reconsider may not be debated (Rule 16).

**Rule 23. Calendar:** The conference secretary, in consultation with the coordinator of calendar, shall keep a chronological record of orders of the day, reports, and other business items as recommended by the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting and adopted by the conference as its agenda.

**Rule 24. Speakers For and Against:** Except for undebatable motions, a question under consideration shall not be adopted until the presiding officer has given opportunity for at least two speeches for and two speeches against said proposal, alternately, so long as any member desires to speak on the other side thereof, provided that the right is claimed before the person presenting the proposal is recognized to close debate. After three speeches for and three speeches against the motion, or when (and after) the previous question has been ordered, the vote on the motion shall then be taken; provided, however, that the person presenting the proposal shall be entitled to speak before the vote is taken. This right to close debate shall prevail in like manner to a limit of two minutes when a vote is about to be taken on a motion to amend, to substitute, to postpone, to refer, or to lay on the table or any other motion whose adoption would vitally affect the matter under consideration.

**Rule 25. Consideration of Agenda Items:** Items on the agenda of the conference shall be taken up on the day scheduled. Any calendar items for a certain day that are not received on that day or are not completed before adjournment shall not take precedence over calendar items for the day to which said item or items have been postponed. After the calendar items for that day have been completed, postponed calendar items shall be considered.

**Rule 26. Motion to Adjourn:** The motion to adjourn, when unqualified, shall be taken without debate and shall always be in order, except:

- a. When a member has the floor.
- b. When a question is actually being put, or a vote is being taken, and before it is finally decided.
- c. When the previous question has been ordered and action thereunder is pending.
- d. When a motion to adjourn has been lost and no business or debate has intervened.
- e. When a motion to fix the time to which the conference shall adjourn is pending. The foregoing does not apply to a motion for final adjournment of the conference.

**Rule 27.** Between sessions of the Annual Conference, the Connectional Table shall be empowered to complete any unfinished or emergent business of the Annual Conference that does not violate *The Book of Discipline* (2016), Judicial Council rulings, and/or Robert's Rules of Order.

#### **D. AUTHORITY, SUSPENDING, AMENDING, AND SUPPLEMENTING:**

**Rule 28. Authority:** The plan of organization and rules of order of the annual session of the conference shall be the plan of organization and rules of order of the preceding annual session until and unless they have been amended or modified by the action of the annual conference.

**Rule 29. Suspension:** The operation of any of the provisions of these rules of order may be suspended at any time by a two-thirds vote of the conference, except as may otherwise be provided by Robert's Rules of Order.

**Rule 30. Amendments:** The plan of organization and rules of order may be amended or changed by a two-thirds vote of the conference, provided that the proposed change or amendment has originated in the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting and has been presented to the conference in writing or, if from a source other than this committee, has been presented to the conference in writing and referred to this committee. As identified in the Plan of Organization (E1), the number of districts may not be amended later than the second morning of the annual session. Changes and amendments printed in the booklet of *Program and Reports* shall be in order for consideration by the conference at any time during the annual session, provided that notice of such shall have been given in writing to the Committee on the Annual Conference Meeting prior to the opening of conference (see Rule 11). Otherwise, no proposed change or amendment shall be submitted to vote until and unless one day has elapsed from the initial presentation to the conference.

**Rule 31. Supplemental Authority:** In any parliamentary situation not clearly covered by the plan of organization and rules of order, the conference shall be governed in its actions by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

**Rule 32. Telephonic or Virtual Meetings of the Annual Conference:**

- a. Annual Conference Session. Upon a determination of exigent circumstances (such as war, civil emergency, public health emergency, natural disaster, terrorism, economic disaster, or similar events), in the discretion of the Bishop and majority of the cabinet, any regular and/or specially called meetings of the Annual Conference may be held telephonically or virtually, including both the general session or the clergy session of the Annual Conference.
- b. Notification of such meetings shall be subject to the requirements for Annual Conference meetings specified in *The Book of Discipline*. The notice of an electronic meeting must include an adequate description of how to participate in it (for example, the telephone number to call for a teleconference must be provided, URL, etc.).
- c. The conferencing platform must ensure that all people participating in the meeting can hear each other, can vote (if so entitled) and can have their attendance and vote recorded.
- d. The Bishop and a majority of the cabinet shall set the rules and procedures for credentialing, parliamentary process, balloting and voting and shall publish those rules at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the session.
- e. Conference Boards, Councils, Committees, and Teams may also conduct telephonic or virtual meetings, unless their governing documents expressly provide otherwise. If any such bodies have already adopted rules regarding such meetings, their own rules and procedures shall control but they must, at a minimum, provide adequate notice to participants of the meeting(s) and agenda and allow all participants to participate, hear, speak and vote. This rule shall in no way apply to separately incorporated entities governed by the North Carolina Non-Profit Corporation Act or the North Carolina Limited Liability Company Act.



*Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, churches have looked far from normal on Sunday mornings.  
Bryson City UMC - photo by Wayner Dickert*