

## THE CONSTITUTION

¶ 201. From its earliest days, the Christian Church has been marked as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These four qualities, inseparably joined with one another, bear witness to the origin, nature, and mission of the Church as the Body of Christ called to reflect Christ's Lordship. As those who have experienced the redeeming love of God, the church exists to reflect God's holy and perfect love to all, to boldly proclaim God's Word, to edify all those who believe, and to work for the redemption of the world.

Following in the Methodist tradition of organizing together under a common discipline, the Global Methodist Church has adopted the following Constitution to enable us to "watch over each other in love."

### ¶ 202 SECTION ONE—FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

**Article I. Name**—The name of the Church shall be the Global Methodist Church. This name may be translated freely into languages other than English as the General Conference may determine.

**Article II. Doctrinal Foundation**—The doctrines of the Church shall be those embraced within the historic creeds of the church, our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, and the core Wesleyan tradition as defined within Part \_\_\_\_ of this *Book of Doctrines and Disciplines*, with the Holy Scriptures understood to be our primary rule for faith and practice.

**Article III. A Church For All**—All persons are made in God's image and of sacred worth. All are thus welcome within our churches join with others in the worship of God, to participate in its ministries, and upon repentance of their sin, professing faith in Jesus Christ, being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and evincing a sincere desire for a holy life, to become members in any local church within the connection.

**Article IV. The Church Universal**—The Global Methodist Church is a part of the greater Body of Christ, and we celebrate wherever God is named as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Jesus is named as Lord. We affirm the validity and value of each expression of the Trinitarian Christian faith that shares that common understanding, and we commit ourselves to work with others for the day when all may be one in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

## ¶ 203 SECTION TWO – ORGANIZATION

**Article V. The General Conference**—As per the Methodist tradition of “conferring together,” there shall be a General Conference of the Global Methodist Church that shall initially meet for a convening General Conference, then as a General Conference approximately two years thereafter. Subsequently, the General Conference shall meet once every six years. It shall be composed of no fewer than 200 nor more than 700 delegates, one half of whom shall be clergy and one half of whom shall be lay, elected by the annual or regional conferences on a proportional basis as determined by the General Conference. The General Conference may at its discretion include within its number a limited number of delegates, with or without voice and vote, from other autonomous Methodist bodies. A special session of the General Conference to deal with a particular issue or need may be called by a majority vote of the Conference or of its episcopal leadership. Such special session of the General Conference shall be composed of the delegates to the preceding General Conference or their lawful successors.

The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters that are distinctly connectional, including, but not limited to:

1. To define the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of those who serve as deacons, elders, other clergy categories, bishops, and other leaders within the Church.
2. To define and establish the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of church membership, which shall be open to all who believe, irrespective of race, color, ethnic or tribal identity, gender, or disability.
3. To determine the powers of annual conferences, regional conferences, and other connectional associations, allowing where appropriate each such body to adapt structures that may best maximize their mission.
4. To determine the boundaries of annual and regional conferences.
5. To define and establish a Connectional Council with delegated authority from the General Conference to address all matters entrusted to it between meetings of the General Conference subject to such limitations as the General Conference may from time to time impose and subject to ratification of its actions taken between General Conferences by the General Conference.
6. To establish and give oversight to such general commissions as shall be deemed helpful for strengthening and promoting the mission of the Church through the local church.
7. To provide for the selection, continuance, and discontinuance of members of the episcopacy, ensuring that bishops are accountable to the Church, and to define and establish an Assembly of Bishops.
8. To provide for the oversight and/or governance of institutions related to the Church such as hospitals, schools, or other entities.
9. To determine and administer a program for raising and distributing the funds that are necessary for the work of the Church.

10. To fix the ratio of representation for the General Conference, based upon the average worship attendance in each annual conference or geographic region of the Church.
11. To ensure the mission of the Church is kept foremost by all of the ministries, commissions, clergy, laity, and officers of the Church, affirming that disciples of Jesus are made at the level of the local church, and endeavoring to keep as many resources as possible at the local church level.
12. To approve and revise musical resources and worship rituals of the Church, providing for variations as shall be most helpful to particular contexts worldwide.
13. To provide a judicial system mandating uniform processes and procedures and protecting the rights of all those within the Church.
14. To act upon petitions received dealing with church organization and polity, and resolutions dealing with non-disciplinary matters. In order to effectively speak on behalf of the whole church, resolutions shall require the support of three-quarters of the General Conference, and shall remain in effect only until the next General Conference convenes.
15. To adopt or revise a statement of Our Social Witness, provided that such adoption or revision shall require a three-quarters vote of those present and voting.
16. To enact other legislation as it determines to be helpful to the mission of the Church.

**Article VI. Annual Conferences**—Annual conferences shall be formed for the purpose of connecting clergy and laity for shared ministry and accountability. The Annual Conference shall be composed of clergy, both active and retired, as well as an equal number of lay members elected by each charge or by the district or conference. Each charge shall be entitled to as many lay members as there are appointed clergy.

In addition to coming together for edification, fellowship, and inspiration, the Annual Conference shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. To create a program of ministry within its area that can fulfill the mission of the church and enhance its witness, including forming such commissions or agencies as may be required, specifying the composition of each body and electing the members thereof.
2. To determine and administer a program for raising and distributing funds necessary to conduct the work and mission of the Church in its region.
3. To establish the number of districts within the annual conference.
4. To elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference as per the number determined by the General Conference. Clergy delegates shall be members in full connection in good standing who have served a minimum of two years preceding their election. Lay delegates shall have been professing members of the Global Methodist Church, or its predecessors, for at least two years preceding their election. Both clergy and lay delegates shall be elected by a minimum of fifty percent of votes cast plus one with clergy voting for clergy delegates and laity voting for lay delegates.

5. To vote on all constitutional amendments as approved by the General Conference and distributed to the Annual Conferences for ratification.
6. To approve the ordination of clergy as recommended by the Annual Conference Board of Ministry and approved by the ordained clergy meeting in executive session, and to approve clergy status changes as recommended by the Annual Conference board of ministry and approved by the executive session of the ordained clergy.
7. To encourage and facilitate the planting of new churches, including the authorization of sponsorship by existing congregations, and to charter new congregations.
8. To establish minimum standards for parsonages and other ministry housing if desired.
9. To approved by simple majority vote the transfer of a congregation into or out of the annual conference to or from another annual conference.
10. To maintain the records of the annual conference, including the record of closed churches and annual reports from all local churches.
11. To adopt rules for its own governance, provided they do not conflict with the requirements of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.

**Article VII. Regional Conferences**—With the approval of the General Conference, regional conferences may be established for the purposes of coordinating and conducting the mission of the Church around the world, including within the United States. The regional conferences shall be composed of clergy and lay delegates in equal number from the annual conferences assigned to a regional conference, as determined by average worship attendance. If a regional conference is established, it shall meet once every six years preceding the General Conference. The General Conference shall specify the duties and responsibilities of regional conferences, which shall include but not be limited to:

1. To promote the mission of the Church in the area of the world in which it is located.
2. To recommend to the General Conference the boundaries of annual conferences within their respective areas.
3. To establish and give oversight to such commissions as may be helpful in the fulfillment of the Church's mission in their area.
4. To give oversight or provide governance to institutions related to the Church such as hospitals, schools, or other such entities within the boundaries of the regional conference.

Regional conferences have no authority to supersede or undermine the decisions of the General Conference.

**Article VIII. The Episcopacy** – The general superintendency of the Global Methodist Church shall be entrusted to bishops who shall provide spiritual leadership to the church and exercise temporal authority as adopted by the General Conference. Bishops shall be elected as per the procedures established by the General Conference and shall serve at its pleasure to guard the faith, order, unity, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church.

**Article IX. The Judiciary**—The General Conference shall create a Connectional Council of Appeals, determining the number, terms, and qualifications of its members, as well as their method of election and the filling of any vacancies. All decisions of the Council shall be final.

The Council shall have the authority and responsibility:

1. To determine the constitutionality or the meaning, application, or effect of any action or decision of the General Conference upon an appeal of one-fifth of the members of that Conference present and voting, or upon a majority of the active episcopal leaders of the church.
2. To determine the constitutionality or the meaning, application, or effect of any action or decision of an Annual or Regional Conference upon an appeal of one-fifth of the members present and voting of that conference.
3. To review and affirm, modify, or reverse any decision of law made by any bishop.
4. To act upon any petition for appeal seeking a ruling on the constitutionality, meaning, application, or effect of any provision in this *Book of Doctrine and Disciplines* to any action taken by the General Conference, any of its regional or annual conferences, or commissions created or authorized by the General, Regional, or Annual Conferences when such petition is granted by the Council.
5. To provide for its own methods of organization and procedure.
6. To fulfill such duties in the service of the Church as determined by the General Conference.

**Article X. Right of Appeal**--The General Conference shall establish for the Church a judicial system that shall guarantee to our clergy and to our members a right to trial and appeal.

#### ¶ 204 SECTION THREE – THE RESTRICTIVE RULE AND AMENDMENTS

**Article XI. The Restrictive Rule**—In continuity with the Wesleyan tradition and historic expressions of Methodism, the following is adopted as a restrictive rule which may be changed only by a three-fourths vote of the General Conference, followed by the ratification of three-fourths of the membership in the annual conferences world-wide.

The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our doctrinal foundations as established by the Church and embodied within our constitutive standards, or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our existing standards. This restrictive rule shall not apply to the development of a combined Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith as approved by the church. Any successor document to the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith shall be adopted by a three-fourths vote of the General Conference.

**Article XII. Amendments**—Amendments to the Constitution may originate in the General Conference, a regional conference, or an annual conference. Except in the case of the Restrictive Rule which shall require a three-fourths majority of those members present and voting of both the General Conference and the annual conferences, amendments shall be made

upon a two thirds majority of the General Conference present and voting, followed by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the annual conferences present and voting. Following its ratification, the amendment voted upon shall become effective upon the announcement of its approval. Where appropriate, the General Conference may choose to enact enabling legislation for an amendment that shall be contingent upon the ratification of the amendment by the required vote of the General Conference and the annual conferences.