

**THE CONVENING GENERAL CONFERENCE COMMUNITY:  
PLAN OF ORGANIZATION AND  
COVENANT FOR OUR LIFE TOGETHER**  
(As Of March 11, 2024)

*PREFACE*

Following the biblical admonition in Hebrews 12:15 and elsewhere, John Wesley early on encouraged his followers to “watch over one another in love,” first meeting with his brother Charles and a few other clergy in 1744 to consider “how we should proceed to save our own souls and those that heard us.” (*Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline (TBDD)*, ¶601). As the spiritual heirs of that tradition, our goal is still to peacefully work together for the common good of all in fulfilling the mission of the church. As members of the church of Jesus Christ, we also aspire to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our conferencing (Acts 15:28) and conform to God’s will by experiencing God’s transforming grace (Romans 12:2). Within the community of the General Conference, thus, the following are established to spell out how we can best respond in obedience to God’s will and go about our mission, while still caring for all and making a bold witness for Christ to the world.

*PLAN OF ORGANIZATION*

I. OPENING SESSION

The Global Methodist Church will hold its Convening Conference in the place and time recommended by the Commission on General Conference and set by the Transitional Leadership Council (TLC), beginning with a time of worship. The Conference will then be called to order by a bishop designated by the TLC, with the following order of business:

1. Recognition of delegations and delegates by the Transitional Connectional Operating Officer. The official roll call will be completed by the registration process.
2. Establishment of the voting bar of the Conference.
3. Report of the Commission on the General Conference.
4. Adoption of the Plan of Organization and Covenant for our community life as a Conference by a two-thirds vote. Prior to adoption, the Plan and Covenant may be amended from the floor by a majority vote.
5. Election of the General Conference Secretary upon nomination of the TLC (¶605.2, *Plan IV*).
6. Adoption of the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline (TBDD)* as the starting document outlining the governing principles and systems of the Global Methodist Church, subject to all amendments and additions as approved by the convening General Conference. At the end of the conference, the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* will be adopted as amended by majority vote and will no longer be considered “transitional.”

7. Adoption of the proposed limited agenda of the Convening Conference including worship services, special presentations, and specific paragraphs in the *TBDD* which are open to amendment or change as spelled out below. Additional paragraphs or topics may be considered by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference delegates.
8. Miscellaneous business

## II. PRESIDING OFFICERS

All plenary sessions of the General Conference will be guided by the active and bishops emeritus of the Global Methodist Church, as assigned by the Committee on Agenda (§ 605.1). Legislative Committees will be convened by one of the bishops in order to elect a chair, vice-chair, and secretary, who will then preside over committee meetings (see below).

## III. COMMISSION ON THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Prior to the convening conference, the TLC will have appointed a commission to oversee the preparations and recommend the optimal time and place for the conference. The Commission will also recommend to the TLC the total number of delegates, as well as recommend the formula for the equitable allocation of delegates to the entire global church and coordinate logistical arrangements for the successful operation of the Conference.

## IV. THE SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Prior to the General Conference, the TLC will appoint an acting Secretary. At the opening session of the General Conference, the TLC will nominate and the delegates will elect the Secretary of the General Conference. The Secretary will be accountable to the Commission on the General Conference, working closely with the presiding bishops and the TLC. The Secretary, assisted by volunteer or paid staff, will be responsible for implementing the daily agenda and for coordinating the work of the legislative committees in dealing with petitions and resolutions. Working with the Commission on the General Conference, the Secretary will initiate procedures to prepare all delegates for full participation in the General Conference by providing information concerning both the operation of the General Conference and materials it will consider. In addition, the Secretary will oversee the work of the administrative committees of the General Conference, serving as an *ex officio* member as indicated below. This position may be a paid staff position. If the position of Secretary becomes vacant in between General Conference sessions, the Connectional Council will elect a successor to serve until the next session.

## V. COMMITTEES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

### A. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

1. An **Agenda Committee** will be composed of eight delegates, half clergy and half lay from across the global church, as well as the chairs of each legislative committee and the Secretary of the General Conference who will be an *ex officio* member. The Committee will prepare the daily order of the plenary sessions, including the consideration of those petitions identified by each legislative committee as having the highest priority for conference action. They will also select the presiding officer for each plenary session. The agenda will be set in such a way as to rotate through each committee one such priority item at a time, with the allowance that related petitions within one area may be considered at the same time. The Committee will announce at the close of each plenary session a tentative agenda for the subsequent session.
2. A **Credentials Committee** will be composed of eight delegates, half clergy and half lay from across the global church who will consult with the Secretary of the General Conference and decide on all matters dealing with the approval of credentials and the seating of delegates.
3. A **Reference Committee** will be composed of eight delegates, half clergy and half lay from across the global church, who will refer all petitions and resolutions received to the appropriate legislative committees.
4. A **Courtesies Committee** will be composed of eight delegates, half clergy and half lay from across the global church, who will consider resolutions of commendation, courtesy, or appreciation submitted by delegates for presentation to the plenary session, as well as special guests who may be invited to address the conference.
5. A **Journal Committee** will be composed of three delegates, plus the Secretary of the General Conference, who will approve the daily proceedings, as well as reconcile all petitions which are passed by the Conference with other provisions within the TBDD.
6. A **Nominations Committee** will be composed of eight delegates, half clergy and half lay from across the global church, who will nominate a slate of persons to serve as members of the various general church commissions and councils.

### B. MEMBERSHIP OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEES

Members of Administrative Committees will be nominated by each delegation at least 60 days prior to the conference and elected by the TLC out of the pool of nominees for the convening General Conference, taking care to ensure representation across the geographical areas of the church. For subsequent General Conferences, nominations will be made to the Connectional Council for their election. Membership on an Administrative Committee does not prevent the person from serving on a Legislative Committee.

### C. LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Seven legislative committees will be established for the Convening General Conference, each composed of no more than sixty-five persons, half lay and half clergy from across the global church, with a minimum of thirty persons for each committee. The convening General Conference will have a limited agenda in order to allow time for the most significant decisions to be made affecting the development of the Global Methodist Church and to allow more input at the subsequent General Conference from congregations and areas across the world that may not yet be an official part of the GMC. Petitions related to paragraphs not listed in the limited agenda below will be referred to the next General Conference for consideration, unless by a two-thirds vote the conference agrees to take them up. Such petitions will not be translated before the convening General Conference. The petitions committee established by the Transitional Leadership Council will publicly report the disposition of each submitted petition, along with the rationale for its disposition (accepted, not accepted, referred).

In addition to the agenda listed under each legislative committee, the General Conference agenda will include the ability of any legislative committee to recommend forming working groups or task forces to develop proposals for a future General Conference. The agenda will also include the ability to pass petitions that make editorial changes to parts of the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* that are not otherwise considered part of the agenda. Such editorial petitions do not open those non-agenda paragraphs to other amendments without the two-thirds vote of the General Conference.

1. The **Conferences Legislative Committee** will establish or approve the boundaries and names of annual conferences, as well as the formula allocating delegates to the General Conference and the possibility of the creation of regional conferences. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 522, 523, 604, 609, 612, 613, and Part 6 editorial.
2. The **Connectional Organization Legislative Committee** will consider the process for nominating officers for the General Conference, as well as the establishment and work of ongoing commissions. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 605, 607, and all of Part 7 (including editorial).
3. The **Constitution Legislative Committee** will oversee the writing of a constitution for the Global Methodist Church for presentation and adoption by the General Conference. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraph within the *TBDD*: 301 and Parts 1 and 2 editorial.
4. The **Episcopacy and Superintendency Legislative Committee** will consider matters such as the question of a general or residential superintendency, episcopal compensation, the process for the election and assignment of bishops, including term limits, episcopal area boundaries, and the establishment of a Global Episcopacy Committee. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 502, 503, 504, 505, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 521, and Part 5 editorial.
5. The **Financial Administration Legislative Committee** will give oversight to connectional funding matters and caps, delegation of budgeting to the Connectional Council, as well

as implementing the Ministerial Training Fund. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 349, 411, and Part 9 editorial.

6. The **Judicial Administration Legislative Committee** will revise paragraphs relating to complaints against clergy and bishops, assigning responsibility to conference boards of ministry and a Global Episcopacy Committee, as well as revise the *Judicial Practices and Procedures* referred to in ¶802. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 520 and all of Part 8 (including editorial).
7. The **Ministry and Local Church Legislative Committee** will consider the educational requirements for ordination, create a mechanism to ensure that ministry candidates can be voted upon individually rather than in a block, revise procedures for the approval of chaplains and evangelists, define the membership standards, and designate the body responsible for upholding congregational fidelity. It will review petitions relating to the following paragraphs within the *TBDD*: 322, 354, 355, 407, 409, 410, 413, 414, 419, and Parts 3 and 4 editorial.

#### D. *MEMBERSHIP ON LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES*

Within each annual conference delegation, each delegate may indicate their first, second, and third preferences for which legislative committee on which to serve. Membership of each legislative committee will be determined by the Transitional Commission on the Convening General Conference or its designee, based on the preferences of the delegates, the minimum and maximum number of committee members, and the need for geographical diversity.

#### E. *PROCEDURES FOR LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES*

1. **Pre-Conference Meetings**—Legislative committees will meet virtually during the 90 days prior to the Convening General Conference to begin work on petitions and topics assigned to them. The work of legislative committees meeting prior to the convening of the General Conference must be completed seven days before the opening session. No later than 60 days prior to the convening of the General Conference, each legislative committee will meet electronically to elect officers, introduce members to one another, and set the agenda for their pre-conference meetings.
2. **Committee Officers**—The initial meeting will be presided over by an active or senior bishop. Subsequent meetings will be presided over by the elected committee officers. Each committee will elect from within its membership a chair, vice-chair, and secretary, as well as any subcommittee officers if such are needed. Election is by simple majority, and it is hoped that leadership will be reflective of the global and diverse nature of the church. The Transitional Commission on the Convening General Conference will provide training to the legislative committee officers once they are elected and prior to the committees beginning their regular virtual meetings.
3. **Parliamentarians**—To the extent possible, each legislative committee will have a volunteer parliamentarian who will not be a General Conference delegate. The

parliamentarians will attend all committee meetings, including virtual meetings in advance of the convening of General Conference, and advise the committee on the implementation of the Covenant for Our Life Together and parliamentary procedure. Additionally, this person may train the committee members on basic committee procedures.

- 4. Initial Meeting Introductions**—Each member of the legislative committee must submit his/her written introduction to the General Conference secretary's office not later than 72 hours before the initial scheduled committee meeting. This written introduction should include a picture, a brief summary of their history with the church, and areas of interest, experience, and expertise. The introduction should also indicate the person's interest in standing for election as a legislative committee officer. The secretary's office will then send the written introductions of all the members to the committee prior to its initial meeting. At the start of the initial meeting of the committee, each committee member will introduce themselves by giving their name, place of residence, lay or clergy status, and provisional annual conference or district.
- 5. Quorum**—A quorum is required for any legislative committee discussion or action on any item of business. One-half (1/2) of the membership of the committee constitutes a quorum in order to conduct business. A calling of the committee roll will occur before each committee may begin their business. A record of those present and absent is announced for the committee record at the start of each meeting by the chairperson or his/her designee. Proxy voting is not allowed.
- 6. Setting Meeting Days**--The date and time of the initial meeting of each legislative committee will be established by the Transitional Commission on the Convening General Conference based on polling of members' availability. Subsequent to the initial meeting, legislative committee officers will set the dates and times of virtual meetings. Every effort will be made to ensure global participation in virtual legislative committee meetings. Members will be notified of such committee meetings at least 72 hours in advance. If circumstances dictate, a special virtual meeting may be called by the chair or by a majority of the members, in which case the 72-hour notice must be waived by a two-thirds electronic vote of members prior to the meeting. Notification of meeting times and dates will be conducted via electronic means. If a delegate is unable to attend a legislative committee meeting, the head of the delegation should ensure that an alternate delegate attends in their place. Once the General Conference has convened, the agenda committee will determine committee meeting dates and times.
- 7. Agenda**-- The virtual meeting notification will include a written agenda together with any materials prepared by the staff or others relating to that agenda. After the agenda for a committee meeting is published and distributed, no non-germane items (as determined by the chair) may be brought up during that meeting unless at least two-thirds of the members present agree to consider those items.

- 8. Effect of Pre-Conference Actions**—All actions of a legislative committee during virtual meetings prior to the General Conference are to be considered provisional, with the exception of the officers elected by the committee. When the legislative committees meet at the site of the General Conference, their first act of business should be to ratify the actions taken during pre-conference meetings. Each petition that is modified or proposed by the legislative committee should be ratified individually as finally modified or proposed. Such ratification does not preclude additional subsequent changes to the petition during the conference. Any modified petition that is not ratified will revert to its original form.
- 9. Bringing a Matter to a Vote**—If the chair determines that a motion, petition, or amendment has been adequately debated, he/she may call for a vote on such petition, motion or amendment, and the vote will then be taken, unless the committee votes to continue debate. The vote on a motion to continue debate on any petition, motion, or amendment will be taken without debate. This motion to continue debate must occur prior to the vote on such petition, motion, or amendment, if presented in a timely manner. A majority affirmative vote is required to continue debate. Members on their own initiative may by a two-thirds vote end debate and proceed to act on a motion, petition, or amendment (call the question).
- 10. Public Announcement of Votes**—The results and vote totals of votes taken by the committee on any non-procedural measure, petition, or motion (or amendment thereto) must be announced publicly at the time of the vote and reported to the secretary of the General Conference for presentation to the plenary body.
- 11. Open Committee Meetings**—To the extent possible both in-person and virtual meetings of the legislative committees will be open to the public.
- 12. Minutes of Committee Meetings**
  - a. An accurate record must be kept of the committee’s actions, in the form of minutes. These minutes, and where applicable, a minority report, should be submitted to the secretary of the General Conference within 24 hours of a virtual meeting and by 10 PM on the day of the meeting at the site of General Conference. In addition to written minutes, the committee must make available a video or audio recording of any virtual meeting and copies of any materials offered during debate in the committee. The committee written documents will remain available on the denominational website, and electronic versions of any documents, petitions, or motions made or used throughout the General Conference will remain on the denominational website as archived for historical value and their legislative history value.
  - b. The work of the legislative committees meeting prior to the convening of the General Conference should be posted on the denominational website as the work progresses. That work should end seven days before the convening of the General

Conference. All work done by legislative committees prior to the General Conference will be compiled into a printed Pre-Conference Workbook available to delegates electronically and in print the day before the opening session.

- c. During the convening General Conference, any further changes made to petitions or topics assigned to legislative committees will be updated to the website and printed in the daily Conference Journal given to delegates each morning at the start of business.
- d. All versions will remain in the archives of the denominational website to preserve their historical and legislative historical value.

## VI. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

The Convening General Conference will elect members to serve on the following committees and commissions individually by majority vote, upon nomination by the Nominations Committee. Membership on a commission or council is not limited to General Conference delegates.

1. **Nomination Process.** Provisional Annual Conferences or Districts will be encouraged to submit nominations and resumes to the Committee at least 60 days prior to the General Conference. In addition, individuals interested in serving on one of these bodies may directly submit their names and resumes to the Committee at least 60 days prior to the General Conference. The Nominations Committee will funnel the names of potential individual nominees to the relevant Provisional Annual Conference or District Nominations Committee for vetting before being considered (if those names were not submitted by a PAC or PD). Each nominee may submit a brief biography of up to 100 words, which will be printed along with the nominee's name in any published slate of nominees.
2. **Representation.** The Nominations Committee will take care to consider geographical, racial/ethnic, gender, and age diversity in the makeup of the committees and councils, while also prioritizing members' gifts and experience. In casting their ballots, General Conference delegates should be mindful of these same values.
3. **Nominations Committee Process.** The Nominations Committee will publish a slate of nominees for each commission or council at least 30 days prior to the General Conference on the GC website.
4. **Additional Nominees.** Once the Nominations Committee slate is published, additional persons may be nominated or may nominate themselves at least 14 days prior to the General Conference, including a 100-word biography. The Nominations Committee will vet these additional nominees with the appropriate PAC or PD if needed. The full slate of Nominations Committee nominees and additional nominees will be published in the Preconference Workbook available the day before the conference. Those nominated by the Nominations Committee will be indicated by an asterisk.
5. **Additional Members.** Within ninety days following the election of the councils or commissions, the Connectional Council is empowered to add additional members to any of the councils or commissions, including itself, in order to ensure both diversity and expertise



if needed. The number of additional members may not exceed twenty percent of the membership of the council or commission. Respecting the need to preserve the balance between the seven lay and clergy members who rotate majorities each six years, the Connectional Council on Appeals shall not be subject to this provision for additional members.

6. **Council and Commission Officers.** Each committee, commission, or council will elect its own chairperson and such other officers as it deems necessary from among the members of the body.
7. **Councils and Commissions to Be Elected.**
  - a. Connectional Council (if formed)
  - b. Commission on Evangelism, Missions, and Church Planting (§ 705.1)
  - c. Commission on Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry (§ 705.2)
  - d. Commission on Ministry (§ 705.3)
  - e. Commission on Communications (§ 705.4)
  - f. Commission on Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits (§ 705.5)
  - g. Wesleyan Unity Commission (§ 522)
  - h. Commission on the General Conference (if formed)
  - i. Global Episcopacy Committee (if formed and to be elected by the General Conference)
  - j. Connectional Council on Appeals (and alternates) (§ 820)

## VII. DELEGATE EXPENSES

Full travel, lodging, and *per diem* expenses for delegates who need it will be the responsibility of each provisional annual conference or district (through connectional funding, special fundraising, or other creative means), provided that the expenses of delegates from outside of the United States may be covered through the general church or by partnership arrangements with other conferences. Air travel will be arranged through the travel agency designated by the Transitional Commission on the Convening General Conference to allow for the most economical round-trip coach airfare directly to and from the site of the General Conference. Additional expenses may be allowed for delegates from conferences outside of the country where the General Conference meets for arrival and departure not to exceed two days before or after the General Conference is scheduled to meet. Delegates may pay their own expenses for food and lodging to extend their stay before or after the conference. When one or more delegates travel to the site of the General Conference in the same automobile, the owner will be reimbursed for the actual cost of travel, including parking, tolls, and mileage according to a standard amount announced by the Commission on the General Conference.

## VIII. DELEGATION ORGANIZATION

- A. Each delegation will identify its own delegation head by the means determined by the delegation or by its annual conference.
- B. The delegation head's responsibilities will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Organize and orient the delegation, including alternate delegates, to their responsibilities leading up to and during the General Conference.
2. Serve as the primary contact person between the general church and the delegates, including facilitating two-way communication.
3. Review with delegates the Plan of Organization and Covenant for Ordering Our Life Together of the General Conference.
4. Create a process to review and discuss legislative proposals coming before the General Conference.
5. Submit as requested delegate preferences for serving on legislative committees.
6. Facilitate the process for the delegation and the annual conference to submit nominations for general church councils and commissions.
7. Authorize the substitution of alternate delegates in legislative and plenary sessions when appropriate, using the processes developed by the Credentialing team.

#### IX. MARSHALS, PAGES, AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

- A. The Transitional Commission on the General Conference or its designee will be responsible for recruiting and overseeing marshals, pages, and parliamentarians to serve at the conference site. Marshals and pages will serve as volunteers without compensation, except that a freewill offering of the delegates and visitors may be accepted to help defray their expenses.
- B. Marshals are responsible to provide order and security by ensuring that only authorized persons are present within the bar of the plenary or committee sessions of the conference. They may also assist in providing directions and otherwise safeguarding the orderly function of the conference.
- C. Pages are to be available to serve the delegates by distributing materials, serving as vote tellers (if needed), carrying communications, and running brief errands.
- D. Parliamentarians will be provided for both the plenary and legislative committee sessions. Such parliamentarians will not be General Conference delegates and will be volunteers. The budget for the General Conference will include providing for the expenses of the parliamentarians to attend and participate.

### *COVENANT FOR ORDERING OUR LIFE TOGETHER*

#### I. DAILY SCHEDULE

The Agenda Committee will set the daily schedule and agenda, with all plenary and legislative committee meetings between the hours of 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. A particular legislative committee or the plenary body may vote by two-thirds to hold an evening session in consultation with interpretation services.

## II. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF DELEGATES

Delegates and reserves will be seated in order of their election, except in the case of special need as determined by the delegation chair in consultation with the affected delegates. Reserves will occupy the seat of the delegate for whom the substitution is made. Reserves will not be seated for delegates presenting on the platform. Reserves chosen to be seated will be of the same order (lay or clergy) as the absent delegate.

## III. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this Covenant and *Robert's Rules of Order* is to provide a fair and orderly way for the General Conference to make decisions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, neither this Covenant nor *Robert's Rules* should be used to block the body's ability to make decisions, to silence a minority perspective, or to disadvantage any person or group. Presiding officers should work toward consensus and seek to provide fair opportunities for all views to be heard. They should assist members of the body in understanding and applying the processes outlined in this Covenant for communal decision making and using them in that spirit.
2. **Consensus.** Wherever possible, the Conference will strive for consensus decisions that embody the unity of the whole Church. Beyond such, as per ¶606, the convening General Conference will operate under *Robert's Rules of Order* and such supplemental rules as adopted by the Conference.
3. **Quorum.** The convening General Conference requires the presence of a majority of the whole number of delegates to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business; but a smaller number may take a recess or adjourn from day to day in order to secure a quorum, and at the final session may approve the journal, order the record of the roll call, and adjourn *sine die* (¶ 606.2)
4. **Consent Agenda.** Petitions receiving the vote of 90 percent or more of a legislative committee may be placed upon a consent agenda for approval, disapproval, or referral at the beginning of each day, provided that an item may be removed from the consent agenda upon the motion of ten delegates.
5. **Agenda.** The Agenda Committee will recommend an agenda at the beginning of each day's business, which would then be adopted by majority vote of the body, with or without amendment. The Secretary of the General Conference will maintain and guide the agenda, which includes the orders of the day and the reports of committees. Business placed on the agenda will be considered in the order of the adopted agenda unless by two-thirds vote of the Conference an item is taken up out of order.

6. **Presenters.** Proposals supported by the vote of the legislative committee will be presented to the plenary body by the chair of the committee or his or her designee. If there is a minority report from the committee, that will be presented after the committee's report is presented but prior to action on the committee's motion (see Covenant III.14).
7. **Speaking.** Delegates wishing to speak must first be recognized by the presiding officer and unless raising a point of order or parliamentary inquiry, delegates may not speak unless given the floor. Delegates so recognized must begin by sharing their name, conference membership, and the reason for speaking, before beginning their speech. Delegates recognized by the presiding officer may not yield the floor to others to speak.
  - 7.1. The presiding officer should operate in a transparent way, taking care to consider the various sections of the meeting room, as well as the breadth of the global church, in calling upon speakers.
  - 7.2. Unless debate is extended by vote of the delegates, discussion on motions will be limited to three speeches for and three against the proposal, with each speech no longer than three minutes.
  - 7.3. No delegate may speak more than once on the same subject under the same motion unless responding to a question or misrepresentation. However, the chair or delegate presenting the petition or minority report is entitled to make closing remarks before the vote is taken for up to three minutes.
  - 7.4. The number limit and length of speeches may be modified by the body by majority vote at any time and for any duration.
8. **Ending Debate.** The motion to call the previous question is not debatable but it is likewise not in order without an opportunity having been given for at least two speeches for and two against a proposal. The motion requires a two-thirds vote of those present and voting for its adoption.
9. **Point of Order.** A delegate wishing to raise a point of order may do so when recognized by the presiding officer and must first cite the rule involved and then state the point as briefly and concisely as possible. A point of order is decided by the presiding officer without debate unless submitted to the body for advice or decision. The ruling by the presiding officer may be appealed to the body, in which case only the presiding officer and the appellant may speak to the appeal before the vote is taken, with each speech no longer than three minutes.
10. **Motions.** The right to make or second motions is restricted to voting delegates. Motions coming from a committee or commission do not require a second. All motions and

amendments should be presented in writing to the secretary to ensure accurate wording.

11. **Elections.** A valid election occurs when the number of valid ballots cast for a nominee meets or exceeds the required percentage of the total valid votes cast. To be valid, ballots must contain votes for the same number of nominees as there are vacancies to fill, and no more than one vote may be cast for the same nominee, nor for individuals who have already been elected.

12. **Voting.** Voting may be done by electronic ballot or show of hands.

12.1. Delegates must be within the bar of the Conference in order to vote, and proxy voting for others is not allowed.

12.2. If circumstances require that a vote be taken by show of hands, before or immediately after such a vote is taken, any delegate has the right to call for a count vote on any question. If electronic balloting is not available, a count vote would consist of a standing vote, with the pages acting as tellers. If electronic balloting is not available, a call for a secret ballot vote using paper ballots must be approved by majority vote, with the pages acting as tellers of the secret ballot vote.

12.3. A simple majority of those delegates who are present and voting suffices to pass all motions with the following exceptions:

- a. A non-delegate may be invited to address a legislative committee by invitation of the chair or a one-third vote.
- b. A tie vote sustains the presiding officer.
- c. A two-thirds vote is required:
  - i. To adopt, suspend, or amend the rules after initial adoption
  - ii. To adopt or amend the Constitution
  - iii. To set aside a special order of the day
  - iv. To sustain a call for the previous question
  - v. To consider business out of the order of the adopted agenda
  - vi. To consider business originally ruled as not within the parameters of the limited legislative agenda
  - vii. To hold a session outside the hours specified in this Covenant

13. **Non-debatable Motions.** The following motions will be acted upon without debate:

- a. To adjourn, when unqualified, except for final adjournment
- b. To suspend the rules.
- c. To lay or remove a motion from the table.
- d. To call for the previous question when in order.
- e. To reconsider a non-debatable motion.
- f. To limit or extend the limits of a debate.
- g. To pause for prayerful discernment.

14. **Substitutions and Minority Reports.** Resolutions or petitions may be amended by substitution provided that the substitute is germane to the topic and an alternative to what is before the body and not simply a negation of the main motion. Substitute motions coming from a legislative committee minority would be in the form of a minority report, which is presented at the same time as the majority action of the legislative committee.

14.1. The main motion or majority action of the legislative committee is presented first, followed by the presentation of the substitute. The main motion is perfected first by entertaining any proposed amendments. Then the substitute is perfected by entertaining any proposed amendments. Finally, the question is whether to adopt the substitute in place of the main motion.

14.2. If the motion to substitute prevails by majority vote, the substitute motion becomes the main motion. If the motion to substitute fails to receive a majority vote, the original main motion remains pending until acted upon.

14.3. Motions for the previous question are not in order on a motion to substitute until opportunity has been given for at least two speakers on each side of the question.

14.4. Delegates wishing to offer a minority report must notify the chair of the legislative committee in writing within one hour (excluding breaks) of final committee action on the relevant petition. The notification of a minority report must be signed by five persons or ten percent of the legislative committee membership (whichever is less) who voted against the proposal, whose names and email addresses must be attached to the written request.

14.5. Following notification (14.4), the delegates must submit the actual proposed wording of the minority report (see also Par. 14 introduction above) accompanied by a rationale up to 100 words. The minority report must be submitted by the printing deadline of the day following notification, unless that day is the last day of the General Conference. If the following day is the last day of the General Conference, the minority report must be submitted as soon as possible, but no later than 10 PM on the day of notification, with the expectation that the report will be printed and distributed separately from the Daily Conference Journal, if necessary.

15. **Reconsideration.** A motion to reconsider an action of the body is in order at any time if offered by a delegate who voted with the prevailing side. If the motion proposed for reconsideration was non-debatable, the motion to reconsider is likewise non-debatable.

16. **Adjournment.** A motion to adjourn is in order when made by a duly recognized delegate and is not debatable. It is not in order when another delegate has the floor, when a question is pending or a vote is being conducted, when the previous question has been

ordered and action is pending, when a motion to adjourn has been defeated and no business or debate has intervened, or when the motion to fix the time for the Conference to adjourn is pending.

**17. *Unfinished Business.***

All valid petitions submitted to the General Conference must be acted upon by a legislative committee (approve, disapprove, refer). All petitions approved by a legislative committee must be acted upon by the plenary session (approve, disapprove, refer).

**IV. DECORUM AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

- A. Delegates and guests of the General Conference are expected to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the biblical virtues of kindness, compassion, charitable conversation, and respect for all individuals as those who bear the image of God. Non-delegates are not allowed within the bar of the General Conference except by the approval of the voting delegates. Delegates are also expected not to distract others with cell phone usage during proceedings of the body or committee. Likewise, the use of social media to denigrate others is neither in keeping with the spirit of Christ or the spirit of the General Conference.
- B. Demonstrations designed to disrupt or delay the work of the Conference will not be allowed within the spaces where plenary sessions or committee meetings are being held, including virtual electronic meetings. The presiding officer of the affected meeting may use his or her discretion to have any who violate the decorum of the Conference, including those within the gallery, immediately removed from the assembly room or virtual meeting. Such removal covers only the current session unless there are repeated violations. The presiding officer's decision to expel a person may be overturned by a majority vote of the body. Marshalls may be asked to assist in the removal of such violator(s).
- C. Should there be undue tensions or anxieties affecting the work of the delegates, the presiding officer may also pause the proceedings of the Conference at any moment in order to have a time of prayer. For security reasons, sessions of the General Conference may be closed to non-delegates upon a two-thirds vote of the body. In such cases, the sessions should continue to be live-streamed, unless security reasons warrant otherwise.
- D. Distribution of materials that are relevant to the issues under consideration may be made outside of the bar of the Conference or a legislative committee provided that such distribution is done in a way that is respectful and non-invasive of the delegates' personal space or privacy. Distributors are responsible for the disposal of any unused or unclaimed materials.

- E. Distribution of non-legislative materials to the delegates within the bar will be allowed only upon the permission of the Agenda Committee. Distribution within the bar of legislative materials not part of the limited agenda, as determined by the petitions secretary and the Reference Committee, will be allowed only upon approval of a two-thirds vote of the delegates.

## V. AMENDING THE PLAN AND COVENANT

Adoption of the Plan of Organization and the Covenant for Ordering Our Life Together at the beginning of the conference is by two-thirds vote, but amendments at that time only require a majority vote for approval. Subsequent to the initial adoption, the Plan and Covenant may be amended, changed, or suspended by a two-thirds vote of the General Conference. In any parliamentary situation not covered under this Plan or Covenant, the General Conference will be governed in its action by the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.