

Part Five

THE SUPERINTENDENCY

¶ **501. THE NATURE OF SUPERINTENDENCY.** From apostolic times, certain persons have been set apart and entrusted with the task of defending the Apostolic faith and leading the church's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. While shared by the whole people of God, this apostolic task is most clearly expressed in the historic office of the *episkopos* (meaning overseer or bishop).

Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishops, exemplified an evangelistic and missionary spirit that we trust will be shared by every bishop in the Global Methodist Church. The Global Methodist Church is led, equipped, and supervised by an episcopacy modeled after that of the early centuries of Christianity and stemming from the historic line of Methodist bishops.

We share John Wesley's conviction that bishops and elders are expressions of the same New Testament order. Therefore, bishops in the Global Methodist Church represent a specialized ministry rather than a separate order and are consecrated rather than ordained to their office.

The role of bishop is a sacred trust held for a time as *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of our church allows. It is not a lifelong office.

The episcopal office is to keep the church focused outward toward our mission field. Our bishops must not lean on the trappings of ecclesial office but lead us from an authentic, humble, and evangelistic love for God and neighbor.

When convened together, the bishops of the Global Methodist Church constitute a general superintendency that leads our church in spiritual and temporal matters. The call to order the church extends beyond the episcopacy to conference superintendents, presiding elders, and elders who each possess distinct and collegial responsibilities.

Section I.

The Office of Bishop

¶ **502. ROLE AND QUALIFICATIONS OF BISHOPS.** Bishops are elected from among the order of elders and set apart for a ministry of visionary servant leadership, general oversight, and supervision in support of the Church in its mission. As followers of Jesus Christ, bishops are charged with guarding the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church. The basis of such leadership rests in a life characterized by personal integrity, rigorous discipleship, and the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Bishops shall be persons of genuine faith and upstanding moral character. They should possess the gift of encouragement, a vital and renewing spirit, and a commitment to the vision of the Church adopted by the General Conference. Candidates for the episcopacy should also have a strong record of effectiveness in leading the church in evangelism, discipleship, and mission. Bishops shall be unwaveringly committed to upholding the doctrines and polity of our church and able to effectively communicate the historic Christian faith from a Wesleyan perspective (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

¶ **503. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF BISHOPS.** As general superintendents of the Church, bishops are entrusted with the following responsibilities:

1. Lead and oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Global Methodist Church which confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and particularly to lead the Church in its mission of witness and service in the world.
2. Guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and Tradition and understood from a Wesleyan perspective.
3. Reclaim and exercise the historic teaching office of the episcopacy by grounding the church in the *Faith once delivered* (Jude 3) and train lay and clergy leaders to apply our theology to the challenges and opportunities of the present age.
4. Defend, communicate, uphold, and enforce the order, doctrines, and disciplines of the church as contained in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
5. Preside in the General, regional, and annual conferences as assigned.
6. Appoint conference superintendents to the annual conferences.
7. Fix the clergy appointments in each conference in consultation with the conference superintendent and conference cabinet.
8. Consecrate bishops, ordain elders and deacons, and commission missionaries, entering the names of those individuals into the appropriate records and furnishing proper credentials to each. As these services are acts of the whole church, texts and rubrics shall be used in the form approved by the General Conference.
9. Promote, support, and model generous Christian giving, with special attention to teaching the biblical principles of giving.
10. Provide leadership in the quest for Christian unity in ministry and mission and in the search for strengthened relationships with other Christians communities.
11. Promote and support the evangelistic witness of the whole Church.
12. Travel through the connection at large to implement the missional strategy of the Global Methodist Church and to foster relationships among various parts of the connection.

¶ **504. ELECTION OF BISHOPS.** Bishops of the Global Methodist Church are elected by the General Conference. With the 2026 General Conference, bishops shall be elected according to the following process:

1. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall recommend the number of bishops to be elected by each General Conference.
2. A bishop may serve a maximum of two six-year terms, except that Bishops Scott J. Jones and Mark J. Webb shall be permitted to stand for election at the 2026 General Conference and those persons elected as interim bishops at the 2024 Convening General Conference other than Bishops Jones and Webb shall only be permitted to stand for election at the 2026 General Conference if each such person receives a two-thirds majority vote of delegates present and casting ballots affirming the person's inclusion in the episcopal election process at the 2026 General Conference.

3. Annual conferences and/or their delegations are invited to endorse up to one candidate from their conference and up to one candidate from another conference. After the 2026 General Conference, such endorsements will not normally be extended to bishops already in office who may be eligible for a second term.

4. The General Committee on Episcopacy is charged with developing the plan to identify nominees for the episcopacy from the whole church. The committee is to produce a vetted slate containing not fewer than twice the recommended number of bishops. This slate is to reflect the rich diversity of our movement as much as possible. The nominating process is to be published not less than twelve months before each General Conference.

a. No member of the Committee on Episcopacy shall be eligible for nomination or election during their term of service on the committee.

b. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall sponsor whatever forums they deem appropriate to assist the General Conference in the election process.

c. Active bishops eligible for an additional term who wish to continue in office shall be automatically included as nominees (except as described in ¶ 504.2).

d. Information on each candidate shall be made available to delegates to the General Conference at least sixty days prior to the opening of General Conference.

5. There shall be a prayerful balloting process for the election of bishops at General Conference. The Commission on General Conference shall provide for presiding officers not included on the ballot. At least sixty percent support, plus one vote, shall be required for election.

6. Those elected to the office of bishop shall be consecrated at General Conference according to the historic manner.

7. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall assign the bishops to episcopal areas as best meets the missional needs of the church.

8. The actual term of service for bishops begins sixty days following the close of the General Conference at which bishops are consecrated, unless determined otherwise by the General Conference.

Section II.

The General Committee on Episcopacy

¶ 505. THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY. There shall be a General Committee on Episcopacy consisting of twelve members elected by the General Conference.

1. The Connectional Council shall receive nominations of persons to serve on the General Committee on Episcopacy and produce a slate of six lay and six clergy nominees diverse with respect to geography, ethnicity, and gender which shall be released publicly thirty days before the General Conference. Delegates to the General Conference may nominate additional persons from the floor. All nominees, with their consent, shall be included in a balloting process to elect six lay and six clergy members. All delegates shall be empowered to vote for both lay and clergy nominees. A minimum of sixty percent support plus one vote of delegates present and casting valid ballots shall be required for election. No one may serve more than two consecutive six-year terms. Following the conclusion of the election, the

Connectional Council may add two additional clergy members and two additional lay members to the General Committee on Episcopacy to ensure diversity.

2. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall determine and elect its own officers. The Connectional Operating Officer shall chair the meeting at which such officers are elected.

3. If a member of the General Committee on Episcopacy is elected to serve as a bishop of the Church, that member's service on the General Committee shall terminate upon election to the episcopacy. The remaining members of the General Committee on Episcopacy shall elect a clergy person to serve the remainder of that person's term.

4. While those elected shall begin their term sixty days following the close of the General Conference session at which they are elected, those selected may participate with voice (not vote) in any sessions of the Committee on Episcopacy held between their selection and their term of service. Those elected in 2024 begin service upon election.

5. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall meet at least semiannually to fulfill the following responsibilities:

- a. To foster a healthy and effective episcopacy in the Global Methodist Church.
- b. To communicate the work, needs, expectations, and challenges of the episcopacy to the church.
- c. To evaluate each active bishop annually using a process that includes input from the bishop's assigned area.
- d. To guide the nomination process for new bishops as described in ¶504.
- e. To approve sabbaticals, resignations, and other leaves of duty for bishops.
- f. To receive and investigate complaints against bishops. The committee shall be empowered to suspend a bishop, arrange for responses aimed at resolution and, as necessary, provide for a trial for a bishop in keeping with the *Judicial Practice and Procedure Rules of the Global Methodist Church*.
- g. To establish compensation amounts, adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living, the average salary of pastors in the episcopal area, and the currency exchange rate. The responsibility for providing appropriate compensation, health insurance, pension contributions, and travel and office expenses for bishops shall be borne by the general church. The General Committee on Episcopacy shall adhere to the limits of the general budget.
- h. To develop a proposal for the shared expense for bishops to be brought to each General Conference in collaboration with the Connectional Operations Officer.

Section III. The Assembly of Bishops

¶ 506. **THE ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS.** By virtue of their election and consecration, bishops, including interim bishops, are members of the Assembly of Bishops and are bound together in special covenant. As the collegial expression of episcopal leadership, the Assembly of Bishops speaks pastorally to the church and from the church to the world. The Assembly of Bishops is composed of all active bishops and shall have the following responsibilities:

1. Provide a faith community of mutual trust, concern, and accountability which results in the sanctification and well-being of its members.
2. Watch over one another in love, in cooperation and consultation with the General Committee on Episcopacy.
3. Plan for the growth, vitality, and extension of the church.
4. Organize the assembly as deemed most helpful to the mission of the church.
5. Issue teaching documents as may correct errors, provide theological and moral guidance, and deepen faith.
6. Exercise temporal leadership as defined by *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
7. Ensure effective consultation in the appointment process.
8. Develop and administer plans of resolution when complaints against bishops are referred to the Assembly of Bishops by the General Committee on the Episcopacy.
9. Designate trained and qualified persons to preside over church trials as described in *The Judicial Practice and Procedure Rules of the Global Methodist Church*.
10. Nominate the Connectional Operation Officer to be elected by the Connectional Council.
11. Lead the ecumenical work of the Global Methodist Church and shepherd the Church toward greater unity.

SECTION IV.

Conference Superintendents

¶ 507. **CONFERENCE SUPERINTENDENTS** are elders who are appointed by the bishop, after consultation with the annual conference connectional council or equivalent and affirmation by the annual conference, to provide spiritual and temporal leadership to each annual conference. By vote of the annual conferences involved, two or more conferences may agree to be led by a single conference superintendent. Conference superintendents serve an initial term of six years and may be extended annually for up to twelve total years of service.

1. A conference superintendent shall have the following responsibilities:
 - a. Collaborate with annual conference leaders to set vision and build a clear and articulated missional strategy for the conference in keeping with the vision and mission of the Global Methodist Church.
 - b. Encourage, inspire, and motivate the clergy, laity, and churches of the annual conference to embrace and implement the vision and missional strategy of the annual conference.
 - c. Strengthen and multiply local churches, providing spiritual leadership to both laity and clergy.

- d. Provide general oversight for the fiscal and program operations of the annual conference(s).
 - e. Ensure fair process for clergy and laity in administrative and judicial proceedings.
 - f. Form the districts (or equivalent) after consultation with the presiding elders and bishop.
 - g. Recommend the presiding elders for appointment by the bishop.
 - h. Convene together and supervise the cabinet of the annual conference.
 - i. In consultation with the presiding elders, present appointments in the annual conference(s) to be fixed and approved by the bishop as *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* directs (§ 510).
 - j. Divide or unite circuits, charges, stations, or missions as judged necessary and to recommend appropriate appointments.
 - k. Transfer, upon the request of the receiving conference superintendent, clergy member(s) of one annual conference to another, provided said member(s) agrees to said transfer; and to send to the secretaries of both conferences involved and to the conference Boards of Ministry timely written notices of the transfer of members.
 - l. Ensure that an appropriate personnel and supervisory record is kept and maintained on each clergy member as required. There shall be only one file maintained for each member, containing both personnel and supervisory information. Clergy shall have access to the entirety of their file and shall have the right to add a response to any information contained therein.
 - m. Chair the conference leadership team (or equivalent) as provided in the established rules of the conference.
 - n. After consultation with the Board of Ministry chair and the presiding elders, the conference superintendent shall nominate clergy and laity to serve on the Board of Ministry.
 - o. Nominate the committee on investigation and committee on administrative review per the *Judicial Practice and Procedure Rules of the Global Methodist Church*.
 - p. Represent the bishop in his/her absence as assigned.
 - q. Discharge such other duties as *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* may direct.
2. There may be a *conference committee on superintendency* elected to foster a healthy relationship between the conference and conference superintendent. Each conference superintendent shall be evaluated annually in a process approved by the bishop.

Section V.

The Office of Presiding Elder

¶ 508. SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT OF PRESIDING ELDERS. An elder in full connection may be appointed to lead a district (or its equivalent) by the bishop as a presiding elder upon recommendation by the conference superintendent. A presiding elder is appointed annually after evaluation for effectiveness. A presiding elder may not serve more than twelve years in the aggregate

unless the delegates to the district conference to which he or she is to be appointed affirm such an appointment by majority vote of the delegates present who cast valid ballots. In the selection of presiding elders, bishops and conference superintendents shall give due consideration to the inclusiveness of the Global Methodist Church (§ 306).

¶ 509. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRESIDING ELDERS. As an extension of the office of bishop and conference superintendent, the presiding elder shall oversee the ministry of the clergy and churches in the communities of the district to which they are appointed. The presiding elder is the acting administrator of any pastoral charge in which a pastoral vacancy may develop, or where no pastor is appointed. The presiding elder has the following specific responsibilities:

1. Offer support, care, and counsel to churches and clergy concerning matters affecting their ministry.
2. Together with the bishop, guard, transmit, and proclaim the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition from a Wesleyan perspective, communicating and defending the doctrines and discipline of the church as provided for in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
3. Be the district's chief mission strategist, providing missional accountability, collaborating with congregations and communities within the district to assess and understand their context and develop their leadership needs.
4. Collaborate with the bishop, conference superintendent, and cabinet in the process of appointing and assigning clergy and qualified lay ministers.
5. Develop an effective system for recruitment of candidates for ministry.
6. Establish working relationships with clergy and lay leaders to develop faithful and effective systems of ministry within the district.
7. Encourage covenant groups, class meetings, and band meetings among both the clergy and laity of the district.
8. Maintain regular contact with the clergy for counsel and supervision and receive written or electronic evaluations which include each appointed clergy or assigned layperson's continuing education, spiritual practices, current ministry work, and goals for future ministry.
9. Maintain the appropriate records of all persons appointed or assigned to the charges, including clergy in extension ministry.
10. Maintain appropriate records dealing with property, endowments, and other tangible assets of the district.
11. In consultation with the bishop and cabinet, work to develop the best strategic deployment of clergy possible in the district, including realignment of pastoral charges, larger parishes, cooperative parishes, multiple staff configurations, new church starts, and ecumenical shared ministries.
12. Assume other leadership responsibilities as determined by the conference superintendent and/or bishop for the health and effectiveness of the local churches in the district or annual conference.

Section VII.
Additional Provisions

¶ 511. TRANSFERRING BISHOPS.

1. A bishop of an autonomous Methodist church may join the Global Methodist Church by clergy transfer. Application for transfer shall include an explicit written affirmation of the doctrines, Social Witness, and church government set forth in this *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. Transferring bishops shall also agree to uphold *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. Such a transfer is subject to the approval of the General Committee on Episcopacy and the Assembly of Bishops. When a bishop is received between sessions of General Conference the Assembly of Bishops and General Committee on Episcopacy shall inform the church of their episcopal assignment. All transferred bishops must stand for election at the next General Conference and shall be eligible to serve one six-year term provided that they are elected at the next General Conference following their reception as a bishop by transfer.

2. A retired bishop joining the Global Methodist Church shall become a senior elder and may bear the title of bishop emeritus if granted by the General Committee on Episcopacy and Connectional Council. A bishop emeritus shall be a clergy member of the annual conference of their choice and may serve in any capacity allowed for senior clergy (¶ 416).

¶ 512. VACANCY IN THE OFFICE OF BISHOP. A vacancy in the office of bishop may occur due to death, transition to senior status, resignation, suspension, leave of absence, or medical leave. When the service of a bishop is interrupted by any of the above causes, the General Committee on Episcopacy shall approve an updated plan of coverage for the affected episcopal area(s) in consultation with the Assembly of Bishops. With their consent, bishops *emeriti* may be temporarily enlisted into active service by the General Committee on Episcopacy.

¶ 513. STATUS OF BISHOPS EMERITI.

1. Bishops may choose senior status (¶ 416) upon approval of a majority of the General Committee on Episcopacy. Elders who formerly served as bishops but are not actively serving as bishops may use the title of “bishop emeritus,” but they will not retain their episcopal responsibilities or membership on the Assembly of Bishops unless they have been assigned by the General Committee on Episcopacy to serve in an interim capacity due to a need.

2. Bishops *emeriti* may assist active bishops at their request but shall not be remunerated for their work except for expenses.

3. A bishop emeritus shall be a clergy member of the annual conference of their choice and may serve in any capacity allowed for senior clergy (¶ 416).

¶ 514. LEAVES.

1. Leave of Absence — A bishop may be granted a leave of absence for a justifiable reason for not more than six months by the General Committee on Episcopacy. During the period for which the leave is granted, the bishop shall be released from all episcopal responsibilities, and an interim plan of episcopal coverage shall be approved and published by the General Committee on Episcopacy in consultation with the Assembly of Bishops.

2. Medical Leave—Bishops who by reason of impaired health are temporarily unable to perform full work may be granted a leave of absence for not more than six months by the General Committee on

Episcopacy. During the period for which the leave is granted, the bishop shall be released from all episcopal responsibilities, and an interim plan of episcopal coverage shall be approved and published by the General Committee on Episcopacy in consultation with the Assembly of Bishops. If, after the six-month period, the bishop is still unable to perform full work due to impaired health, the leave may be extended by the committee in one month increments for an additional six months, or the bishop may apply for disability.

¶ 515. COMPLAINTS AGAINST BISHOPS.

1. Episcopal leadership in the Global Methodist Church shares with all other ordained persons in the sacred trust of their ordination. Whenever a bishop violates this trust or is unable to fulfill appropriate responsibilities, continuation in the episcopal office shall be subject to review. This review shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of sacred trust, in hope that God's work of justice, reconciliation, and healing may be realized.

2. Any complaint concerning the effectiveness, competence, or one or more offenses listed in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* shall be submitted to the chair of the General Committee on Episcopacy. A complaint is a written statement claiming misconduct, unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties, or one or more of the listed offenses.

3. Complaints not involving abuse may be referred to the Assembly of Bishops for a plan of resolution. Such a plan of resolution must be approved by the General Committee on Episcopacy. Otherwise, the complaint shall be administered according to the provisions of Part Eight: Judicial Administration. Any involuntary status change of a bishop must be recommended by a three-fourths vote of the investigative committee and approved by the General Committee Episcopacy by a two-thirds vote (*Judicial Practice and Procedure Rules of the Global Methodist Church*, 3), with the exception that a penalty following trial shall not require such a recommendation and approval, and shall be implemented immediately subject to any appeal.