

PART FIVE THE SUPERINTENDENCY

¶ 501. **THE NATURE OF SUPERINTENDENCY.** From apostolic times, certain ordained persons have been set apart and entrusted with the task of defending the Apostolic faith and overseeing and leading the church in its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ and to spread scriptural holiness across the world (¶ 301). 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. 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 part 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 *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of our church allows. It is not a lifelong office.

Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishops in America, exemplified an evangelistic and missionary spirit that we trust will be shared by every bishop in the Global Methodist Church. The episcopal office is to keep us relentlessly 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.

The bishop's primary place of servant leadership shall be to an annual conference or conferences of our church. When convened together, the bishops of the Global Methodist Church comprise a general superintendency that leads our church in spiritual and temporal matters. In addition to residing in the office of bishop, the task of superintending in the Global Methodist Church extends to the presiding elder (~~district superintendent~~), with each possessing distinct and collegial responsibilities.

Section I. The Office and Responsibilities of a Bishop

¶ 502. **ROLE AND QUALIFICATIONS.** Bishops are elected from among those within 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 discipleship of leadership lies in a life characterized by personal integrity, spiritual disciplines, and the anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Bishops shall be persons of genuine faith, upstanding moral character, and possess the gift of encouragement, a vital and renewing spirit, and possess an engaging vision for the church. Candidates for the episcopacy should also have a strong record of effectiveness in leading the church in evangelism, discipleship, and mission, and shall be unwaveringly committed to uphold the doctrines and polity of our church, able and committed to effectively teach and 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. THE ROLE OF BISHOPS. Bishops are elected from among the elders and set apart for a ministry of servant leadership, encouragement, general oversight, and supervision. Bishops are

charged to guard the faith, order, unity, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Global Methodist Church. Bishops focus the people of God outward toward our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the world. Bishops are to have the witness of personal faith and spiritual maturity. Specifically, bishops shall have the authority and responsibility to do the following:

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 Global Methodist Church in its mission of witness and service in the world

2. Exercise a strong teaching office in the life of the church, communicating and defending the cause of Christ and the doctrines of the church. Sermons and studies of the bishop may become resources for use by the clergy and laity of the church.

3. Defend, communicate, uphold, and enforce the order, doctrines, and disciplines of the church as provided for in this *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.

4. Work with annual conference leadership to set vision and build a clear and articulated missional strategy for the conference. This strategy may include action plans and benchmarks aimed at advancing the Kingdom of Christ through initiatives related to establishing new faith communities, growing vital congregations, making mature disciples of Jesus Christ and serving in ministries of justice and mercy.

5. 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 as well as the vision and mission of the Global Methodist Church.

6. Provide general oversight to the spiritual, missional, temporal, and programmatic affairs of the annual conference he or she serves. This oversight may include special inquiry into the work of annual conference committees and agencies to ensure that the provisions of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* and annual conference and general church policies and procedures are followed. Bishops may be allowed to serve more than one annual conference, provided, however, that the provisions of ¶506 are followed.

7. As part of the bishop's missional responsibilities, they shall engage and participate in local churches in their Annual Conference to help strengthen congregations and build relationships with people of local churches.

8. Make and fix the appointments in the annual conference to which he or she is assigned as the Book of Doctrines and Discipline directs.

9. Appoint the presiding elders. To convene together and supervise the presiding elders and conference officers who shall constitute the cabinet of the annual conference.

10. Form the districts after consultation with the presiding elders and after a vote of the annual conference has determined the number of districts.

11. Serve as an ex officio member of the conference's board of ministry with voice but not vote. The endorsement of the bishop shall be required for each candidate before recommendation to the clergy session for approval. In instances where a candidate may be approved by the board but not recommended by the bishop, the bishop shall provide just cause for his or her decision to both the board and the candidate.

12. Preside in the ordination of clergy, provided that a bishop may not ordain individuals without the consent of the appropriate annual conference bodies.

13. Keep and maintain appropriate supervisory and personnel records on the clergy within his or her annual conference, including presiding elders, as well as on conference staff.

14. In consultation and conjunction with the conference board of ministry, suspend clergy (with pay continued by their salary-paying unit) for a maximum of six months pending resolution of administrative or other complaints.

15. Preside at the annual conference and convene the clergy members together at other

times as deemed appropriate.

16. Share with other bishops in the oversight of the whole church through the Assembly of Bishops, including presiding when selected at General Conference sessions.

17. Participate in the consecration of other bishops selected in keeping with our historic practices and discipline.

¶ 504. COMPENSATION AND SALARY UNIT. The following provisions shall govern the compensation of bishops:

1. The responsibility for providing appropriate compensation, health insurance, pension contributions, other benefits, and travel and office expenses for bishops serving within the United States shall lie with the annual conference(s) to which he or she has been assigned. Bishops will be considered as employees of their respective annual conference(s). The Global Episcopacy Committee shall establish compensation amounts, adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living and the average salary of pastors in the episcopal area.

2. The responsibility for providing appropriate compensation, health insurance, pension contributions, other benefits, and travel and office expenses for bishops serving in an episcopal area outside of the United States shall be borne by the general church through partnerships with U.S. annual conferences, though such bishops shall be considered employees of some entity within their episcopal area. The Global Episcopacy Committee shall 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.

3. Each episcopal area within the United States shall partner with one or more episcopal areas elsewhere in the world to provide the necessary funds for the bishop's salary, benefits, and episcopal office within those areas. Such funds will be raised in the U.S. and passed through the general church, designated for that episcopal area. Where partnerships do not provide adequate resources to cover the episcopal office costs, general church connectional funding may be used to fund episcopal costs as needed.

4. Costs for episcopal travel outside the episcopal area on behalf of the general church, (e.g., Assembly of Bishops meetings) shall be paid out of general church funds, not conference or partnership funds.

Section II. Selection and Assignment of Bishops.

¶505. SELECTION OF BISHOPS. Before the 2026 General Conference and each regular session of the General Conference thereafter, each annual conference may nominate up to two elders for consideration in the episcopal selection process. The names and profiles of these nominees shall be submitted to the secretary of the General Conference who shall compile the ballot and election materials. From this ballot General Conference shall elect an episcopal pool consisting of not less than the number of annual conferences. A sixty percent majority shall be needed for election. Consideration shall be given to make each episcopal pool inclusive with respect to gender, race, and the various nationalities represented in the Global Methodist Church.

Persons in the pool continue to serve as elders under appointment in the normal way until they are selected by a conference episcopacy committee to serve as a bishop in that conference (¶506). The bishop shall remain a clergy member of the annual conference from which they were selected, both before and after being selected.

¶506. VACANCIES WITHIN THE EPISCOPACY. 1. When an episcopal vacancy occurs within an annual conference, the conference episcopacy committee shall conduct a search from among those clergy elected to the episcopal pool at the most recent regularly scheduled General Conference. The conference episcopacy committee shall make their selection by a two-thirds vote, contingent upon the consent of the prospective bishop. The selection of the episcopacy committee shall be ratified by the Assembly of Bishops and the Global Episcopacy Committee by a simple majority vote.

2. Annual conferences may share a bishop, provided, however, that the conference episcopacy committees of the annual conferences will work together to approve a joint plan of supervision, ministry, and funding. Such plan must be ratified by the Global Episcopacy Committee. In such case, the relevant conference episcopacy committees shall constitute a joint episcopacy committee for the purpose of selecting a new bishop.

3. An episcopal vacancy shall exist when (1) a bishop reaches their maximum term of office, (2) when a death, resignation, or incapacity occurs, (3) a bishop is removed as elsewhere set forth in the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, or (4) when two-thirds of the Global Episcopacy Committee declares the seat open upon a request by two-thirds of the conference episcopacy committee.

4. There shall be a thorough review of the bishop's effectiveness by the conference episcopacy committee at least every two years, and a report from this review shall be shared with the bishop and the Global Episcopacy Committee.

¶507. LENGTH OF SERVICE. Clergy may not serve in the capacity of bishop for longer than twelve years, except as needed for service as an interim bishop. (Bishops transferring from autonomous Methodist Churches are subject to the provisions of ¶511.) A former bishop in good standing shall bear the title of bishop *emeritus*. A bishop *emeritus* shall be a clergy member of the annual conference of their choice and may serve in active ministry as an elder under appointment or, if they choose senior status, in any capacity allowed for senior clergy (¶ 418). A bishop may serve more than one episcopal area during their twelve-year maximum term with the consent of the Global Episcopacy Committee. This consent returns the name of a bishop to the episcopal pool for possible redeployment. At the next regularly scheduled Global Conference a former bishop with remaining service years may be re-elected to the episcopal pool, but the bishop's total years of episcopal service may not exceed twelve years. For the sake of the church's mission, the Global Episcopacy Committee may by a two-thirds vote grant a two-year extension to the maximum term limit of bishops. The term of service for bishops begins at the effective date of employment by an episcopal area or annual conference.

¶508. INTERIM BISHOPS. When a bishop is needed for an interim period in a conference, the Global Episcopacy Committee may provide a clergy from the episcopal pool or a clergy in good standing who has previously served as bishop. The appointment of an interim bishop requires the consent, by a simple majority, of the conference episcopacy committee and the Assembly of Bishops.

¶509. THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS. The consecration of bishops shall take place in the annual conference to which they are deployed. At least two other bishops should be present and representation from other Christian communions is strongly suggested. The Service of Consecration is repeatable and shall be held whenever a bishop is consecrated for leadership in a particular conference.

¶ 510. 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 Global Episcopacy Committee. During the period for which the leave is granted, an interim bishop shall serve in the annual conference subject to the provisions of ¶508.

2. *Medical Leave*—Bishops who because of impaired health are temporarily unable to perform full work may be granted a leave of absence for a justifiable reason for not more than six months by the Global Episcopacy Committee. During the period for which the leave is granted, an interim bishop shall serve in the annual conference subject to the provisions of ¶508. If, after the six months is over, the bishop is still unable to perform full work due to impaired health, the bishop should apply for disability benefits through the benefit program.

¶511. PERIOD BETWEEN 2024 AND 2026. 1. *Interim Bishops*—Bishops Scott J. Jones and Mark J. Webb and any other bishops received as interim bishops by the Global Episcopacy Committee and Assembly of Bishops shall continue to serve as bishops of the Global Methodist Church through the adjournment of the 2026 General Conference. With their consent, they will automatically be placed in the episcopal pool in 2026 (¶505) and be available to be selected by an annual conference.

2. *Conference Superintendents.* All presidents *pro tempore* of the Global Methodist Church shall be retitled conference superintendent at the adjournment of the 2024 General Conference. Conference superintendents shall have the same authority as a bishop (as provided for in Part Five of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*) except for the authority to ordain (¶503.12). Ordination will be carried out by Bishops Jones, Webb, or any other interim bishops, as well as any bishops *emeriti* that they authorize to join them in carrying out ordinations.

Between 2024 and 2026, conference superintendents shall provide spiritual and temporal leadership to the conferences they serve in accordance with Part Five of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. Between 2024 and 2026, Bishops Jones and Webb shall serve as general superintendents and provide spiritual and temporal leadership to annual conferences that do not have a conference superintendent as well as newly formed or in formation provisional conferences and districts. Conference superintendents will end their service as a conference superintendent once a bishop has been consecrated to serve their annual conference.

3. *Other Interim Bishops.* A bishop of another Methodist or Wesleyan church may join the Global Methodist Church by clergy transfer and be received as an interim bishop. Transfer application shall include an explicit written affirmation of the doctrines, Social Witness, and church government set forth in 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 Global Episcopacy Committee and the Assembly of Bishops.

When a bishop is received between sessions of the General Conference, they shall continue to serve as the bishop of the churches over which they previously exercised oversight, provided those churches also join the Global Methodist Church. If the bishop transfers without bringing any churches with them, they shall enter the pool of those eligible to serve as bishops and are eligible to be selected by an annual conference under the provisions of ¶ 504. With their consent, all transferred interim bishops will be placed in the episcopal pool in 2026 (¶505) and be available to be selected by an annual conference (¶ 511.1).

Section III. Episcopacy Committees.

¶512. THE GLOBAL EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE. There shall be a Global Episcopacy Committee comprised of half clergy and half laity. Each annual conference, through its annual nominations process, will select one clergyperson and one layperson to represent their conference on the Global Episcopacy Committee. Each member of the committee shall serve for six years and may succeed themselves once. Vacancies between General Conference will be filled by the annual conference represented by the vacant position through its nominations process as provided for in the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. The Global Episcopacy Committee shall:

1. Foster a vital, healthy, accountable episcopacy in the Global Methodist Church.
2. Approve (by simple majority) the deployment of clergy from the episcopal pool as bishops in annual conferences by recommendation of the conference episcopacy committee (¶506.1).
3. Approve plans for interim episcopal leadership (¶ 508).
4. Declare an episcopal seat vacant. In the case of bishops not at the end of their term, this shall require a two-thirds majority recommendation of the conference episcopacy committee and a two-thirds vote of the Global Episcopacy Committee (¶ 506.3).
5. Receive evaluations of bishops by conference episcopacy committees (¶ 506.4).
6. Receive and process complaints against bishops as provided for in part Part Eight (Judicial Administration) of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
6. Meet with the Assembly of Bishops as agreed to best serve the mission of the church and the effectiveness of the committee.
7. Approve guidelines for the conference episcopacy committees related to the salary and benefits of bishops, provided that bishops shall have the same pension program as other clergy (¶ 504).
8. The Global Episcopacy Committee shall elect its chair, vice-chair, and secretary. The chair and vice-chair must come from different annual conferences.

¶513. THE CONFERENCE EPISCOPACY COMMITTEE. There shall be an episcopacy committee in each annual conference elected from the annual conference session to include half clergy and half laity. The committee shall:

1. Foster a healthy relationship between the bishop and annual conference.
2. Evaluate the bishop at least every other year and share this evaluation with the bishop and the Global Episcopacy Committee.
3. Meet at least twice annually. The bishop shall be present at all meetings unless permission is granted to meet without the bishop by the chair of the Global Episcopacy Committee. In such cases, a representative from the Global Episcopacy Committee shall be present.
4. When an episcopal vacancy exists in the annual conference, the committee on episcopacy shall conduct a search from among the clergy elected to the episcopal pool by the most recent General Conference. Their selection must be approved by the selected person, the Assembly of Bishops, and the Global Episcopacy Committee. The salary and benefits of the bishop may be negotiated with the candidate in keeping with the guidelines developed by the Global Episcopacy Committee.
5. Plan the consecration of the bishop at the beginning of his or her term.
6. When two or more annual conferences choose to have one bishop provide episcopal leadership for the two or more annual conferences, the committee shall work with the other conference committee(s) on episcopacy to determine a funding structure for the bishop's compensation and a joint plan for supervision and ministry. This plan, once agreed upon by the conference episcopacy committees, must be ratified by the Global Episcopacy Committee (¶ 506.2).

Section IV. Assembly of Bishops.

¶514. 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 a special covenant. Bishops *emeriti* shall not be members of the Assembly. 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 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 in consultation with the Global Episcopacy Committee.
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. Designate trained and qualified persons to preside over church trials as described in The Judicial Practice and Procedure Rules of the Global Methodist Church.
9. Nominate one or more persons to be the Connectional Operations Officer. The Connectional Operations Officer shall be elected by the Connectional Council.
10. Lead the ecumenical work of the Global Methodist Church and shepherd the Church toward greater unity.

Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline Current Paragraphs

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