

Executive Summary—Assembly of Bishops
August 27-28, 2026
Sandton Convention Center Committee Room 2
Johannesburg, South Africa

Present: John Pena Auta, Kimba Evariste, Jeff Greenway, Leah Hidde-Gregory, Scott Jones, Eduard Khegay, Kenneth Levingston (arrived for Friday), Mike Schafer, Carolyn Moore, and Mike Schafer

Guests: Tom Lambrecht, Jason Burnham, and Luvo Thwethwa (August 28 at 3 PM)

Remember our priority for 2024-2026:

TO CAST THE VISION OF A SPIRIT-FILLED METHODISM though:

1. Clear doctrinal teaching
2. Christ-following leadership development
3. Holy living

Thursday, August 27th

9:00 AM Opening Devotion and Time of Prayer

Bishop Scott Jones led our devotional time based upon the end of Acts 15—the letter penned by the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile Jesus-followers. “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” Scott believes that the church faces issues that were first arising in the Book of Acts—and someone has to decide what then church determines as faithfulness in that time. The Jerusalem Council was the first decision-making body to decide, “What would Jesus do?” This pattern was set by the great ecumenical councils.

How do we know what the Holy Spirit is saying? The Roman Catholics believe great authority to decide matters of faith and practice are at ecumenical councils—that cannot make mistakes. As Protestants, we believe councils can make mistakes. As Methodist, we believe this is the place that the world of God is taught, heard, and decisions are made—so we can say, “It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us...,” but we also believe the General Conference can make mistakes.

How will we know if the Holy Spirit has spoken in our midst? When is the Holy Spirit speaking? How do we test the spirits (1 Joh 4:1)? 1) the Holy Spirit will never contradict the written word of God. 2) the Holy Spirit is going to follow Jesus—and take us deeper in significant ways. 3) We discern the Holy Spirit when we look at fruit of the community. 4) We get an impression on the soul that God is at work in our midst. (Wesley’s sermon on the Witness of the Spirit.)

Leadership in this context is all about clearing out the road so the Holy Spirit can show up and be unfettered in his movement. How can we lead in such a way that we don’t block the Holy Spirit? That is our calling—to facilitate an openness to the person, work and power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that when people leave here next Sunday—they will realize they are part of a Spirit-led, mission-focused movement.

We prayed for one another and the church.

10:25 AM Break

10:45 AM Session One

We discussed the following questions:

- 1) Looking back on both the formation of the vision of episcopacy and how it has shaped up in the last two years, what lessons have we learned about our system?
- 2) What are two or three things this first Assembly has done particularly well—and what made those things work?
- 3) What are two or three things we wish every Global Methodist knew about the office of Bishop? And what difference would that make in the Assembly's ability to do its work well?
- 4) Where should the Assembly be spending its time (and where has the Assembly wasted it in these last two years)?
- 5) How does the Assembly live into the request voiced at the Spring meeting that the Assembly exert more authority? (I think the comment was that they were "waiting for the Assembly to lead")

12:15 p.m. Lunch (spouses included)

2:00 p.m. Session Two

General Conference Schedule, Responsibilities, etc.

Role of Presiding (Scott)

- Review page 36 of the preconference journal for rules for speaking and different types of motions.
- The goal of the presider is to help the rights of the minority are kept so that all sides are heard as the body decides its will.
- Get clarity on who is speaking, where they are from, and whether they are for or against.
- Alternating views are then expressed until a vote is taken.
- A motion can be amended. An amendment can be amended. The presiding officer can suggest to hold the amendment to the amendment until later.
- An amended motion becomes the main motion as amended.
- Robert's Rules and the Rules of Order are intended to help the body make up its mind.

- The challenge of presiding is determining who should be recognized—people will get in the queue
- People will sometimes seek to be recognized when there is no clear motion on the floor. It could be a moment of privilege—or an effort to enter a new agenda item (which is out of order unless the agenda committee agrees, the chair decides, or the body moves to suspend the rules (2/3)).
- Other types of motions: point of order (bishop rules), to appeal the ruling of the chair (body votes), requesting a ruling of law (20%), or request a reference to the Council on Appeals (20%).
- Look for diversity of age, race, country, parts of the room, etc.

3:15 PM Break

3:45 PM Session Three

Ecumenical Luncheon and Relationships with Ecumenical Guests

- The signing of the KMC covenant will occur at noon on September 3.
- The luncheon will follow for all ecumenical and honored guests at 12:30.
- We have no other responsibilities, but to warmly and graciously relate to them.

Continue Conversation regarding General Conference

- We have no responsibilities during the legislative committee days.
- Be careful not to unduly influence the legislative process.
- Use the time of having no responsibilities to get rested for times of great responsibilities.
- Will we make a statement the week after the General Conference to the Church?
 - Carolyn will work on the draft of this statement

We walked through the GC Schedule

- Monday and Tuesday are light days

Items from Mike Schafer—none

Study Guide for the Articles of Faith (Carolyn)

- We discussed the delay of this project and other issues in producing materials related to our teaching office.
- We discussed various solutions.

4:45 PM Prayer and Adjournment

Friday, August 28th

9:00 AM Devotion and Prayer Time

Bishop Mark Webb lead us in our time of devotion based upon Exodus 33—Moses and the tent of meeting. He recalled a time when he and the church he served did a lot of work based out of Rick Warren’s “Purpose-Driven Church.” In many places, the church of Jesus Christ has forgotten its purpose. However, the purpose of God cannot supersede the presence of God.

If we are going to be the church God desires us to be, we need to be presence-driven. Moses understood that apart from the presence of God with his people, they should not go up from the wilderness because there is nothing would distinguish them from the other peoples. We’ve been praying for the Holy Spirit to capture and captivate us, but let’s also ask for and seek God’s presence. The people of God had to actively go out and meet with the Lord—Moses had to go meet in the tent—the priests needed to go into the holy of holies. We need to not only acknowledge the presence of God—we need to run to it.

The presence of God brings at least three things: Deliverance—established identity—and sets agenda. God is always present—but the issue is that all too often we acknowledge it, but don’t actively enter it (vs 7 and 8). The response to God’s presence is worship—not parliamentary procedure (vs 10). May we be a body who cannot get enough of God’s presence. The result of God’s presence—Joshua and Moses tasted a glimpse of living in the presence of God. Moses stayed and basked in the presence of the Lord (vs 11).

Let your Spirit fall here...God’s Spirit will not fall here until we humble ourselves and enter into the presence of God.

We then prayed for each other and the church—that God would make us a people who actively enter the presence of God during the next ten days.

9:45 AM Break

10:00 AM Session Four

Episcopal Elections

- Those standing for elections will not be in the first or second chair during Sunday’s plenaries or during elections.
- The presiding officer will call upon Tom Lambrecht—the Secretary of the General Conference—to explain the process.

Agenda and preparation for time with Conference Superintendents

- We discussed this agenda and made assignments to various bishops.
- Agenda items
 - Opening worship (Kenneth and Scott)
 - Global Nature of the Church/Role of Partnership (Leah)
 - Leadership Partnership Between CS’s and Bishops (Jeff)
 - Strategic Plan Framework (Mike and Jessica)
 - Lilly Endowment Grant Explanation (Scott)

- Hopes/Concerns/Questions for GC Gathering (John)
- Closing Communion – (Mark, Kenneth and Leah)

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New AOB Orientation (October 19-22, 2026 in Dallas)

- Travel (October 19)
- Old and New (October 20-21—end at noon)
- New (October 22-23)
- Scott, Carolyn and Mark will develop the agenda
- Topics to be discussed
 - Culture
 - Practicality
 - Spirituality
 - Q&A

We prayed for Nepal which experienced devastating flooding with hundreds dead and thousands missing) and the North Alabama Annual Conference (our regularly scheduled conference).

12:30 PM Lunch (spouses included)

1:30 PM Break

3:00 PM Session Five

Meeting with Tom Lambrecht, Jason Burnham and Luvo Thwethwa re: the Appeal of a Clergy Credential

Post-GC Assembly Meetings

- We will have our next zoom meeting on Wednesday, September 16, 2026.
- We will invite the newly elected Bishops to join us, but they are not required to do so.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey E. Greenway
Secretary—the Assembly of Bishops