



## DISCERNMENT GUIDE FOR DELEGATIONS TO GENERAL CONFERENCE 2026

As the 2026 General Conference of the Global Methodist Church in Johannesburg approaches, annual conference delegations are invited to provide three important inputs to the election/assignment process for bishops. As stated in the [2026 Episcopal Election Process Overview](#), the method of electing bishops has been significantly updated from previous practice. The new processes are designed with the needs of our global church in mind. While not every conference and nation represented in the GMC will have a native-born bishop, each annual conference will have significant voice into the selection of the bishop that will serve them. The new processes enhance vetting and give each annual conference significant voice into which episcopal area they will be placed.

The three Inputs requested from delegations by March 15, 2026:

1. The selection of representatives to the area committee on episcopacy.
2. Input into the episcopal area they will help to comprise.
3. Nominations to the office of bishop.

The following is a guide to these decisions:

### I. NOMINATIONS TO AN AREA COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY

Each bishop elected in 2026 will be supported and evaluated by an area committee on episcopacy comprised of one lay and one clergy person from each annual conference they serve. Area committees on episcopacy are mentioned in the *2024 Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church* without being fully defined. Here is an outline of proposed duties in draft legislation to GC2026:

- a. To foster productive and positive relationship between the assigned bishop and the annual conferences they serve.

- b. To participate annually in the evaluation of the bishop as directed by the Global Episcopacy Committee.
- c. To prayerfully consult with the bishop in their work.
- d. If a vacancy in the office of bishop occurs, the applicable area committee on episcopacy shall be consulted by the Global Episcopacy Committee on a plan of episcopal coverage.

Crucially, the area episcopacy committees also play a crucial role in the election process itself. Each delegation is asked to elect one lay and one clergy member to their future area committee on episcopacy. Those so elected will be invited to a **plenary gathering** that will approve a map of episcopal areas drafted by the Global Episcopacy Committee using information provided by each delegation. The chair of the Global Episcopacy Committee will chair this plenary gathering. Members of the GEC and active bishops will participate with voice but not vote. As now, episcopal areas need not be geographically contiguous and may be international in composition. A similar gathering to set the episcopal areas will be held prior to each regular General Conference.

Once the episcopal areas are approved by the plenary gathering, each area episcopacy committee will convene. A member of the GEC will be provided to lead each group in the election of its own officers. The committee will organize to select which episcopal nominees (including active bishops seeking re-election) it wishes to interview as the potential future bishop assigned to their area. The area episcopacy committees will have access to confidential information provided by the Global Episcopacy Committee. These may include performance reviews and information on complaints.

Ultimately, each area committee on episcopacy will produce a ranked list of five nominees that will be provided to the delegates to 2026 General Conference. If more than one episcopal area ranks the same top nominee, the GEC is empowered to issue a statement of guidance to General Conference.

Bishops will be elected at General Conference *to specific episcopal areas*. Delegates will be prevented from voting for the same candidate for more than one episcopal area on the same ballot.\* Those elected will be consecrated at General Conference and begin their six-year term sixty days following adjournment. The area episcopacy committees will participate in the regular evaluations of bishops using processes determined by the Global Episcopacy Committee.

## II. INPUT INTO THE COMPOSITION OF EPISCOPAL AREAS

The 2026 election process provides input from annual conferences into the composition of the episcopal areas. Each annual conference delegation is asked to rank the top ten annual conferences with whom they would be fruitfully grouped in a shared episcopal area (defined as a grouping of

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\* By General Conference 2024 action, the six interim bishops that wish to be re-elected will be subject to a preliminary qualification ballot. Up to three may advance to the regular balloting process. These must receive at least 75% support on the qualifying ballot. If more than three reach the 75% threshold, the top three will advance.

approximately 6-8 annual conferences). Organizing episcopal areas in this way helps ensure that our episcopacy is relevant to the various cultures and locations served by the Global Methodist Church. It protects against hegemony in General Conference episcopal election processes.

What factors might guide these rankings?

- Are there other conferences that share a language or culture with which the bishop should be familiar?
- Is geographic or cultural proximity important?
- Is there a shared desire for a certain episcopal leader or leadership style among a group of conferences?
- Might a shared episcopal area strengthen an existing mission partnership... or complicate it?

Some delegations may not much care which episcopal area they help constitute. It is appropriate for these delegations to decline to participate in these rankings. For others, this process will be quite important. Various delegations are free to communicate among themselves as they complete this ranking process.

The composition of the episcopal areas will be revisited before each General Conference. If an annual conference desires to help constitute a different area, they can pursue that through the same ranking process in six years.

Legislation is being submitted to General Conference 2026 that will empower the Global Episcopacy Committee to respond to episcopal vacancies and assign bishops to emerging areas during the sexennial between General Conferences.

### **III. NOMINATIONS TO THE OFFICE OF BISHOP**

General Conference 2026 will elect one full-time bishop for each episcopal area.<sup>†</sup> The exact number of episcopal areas will be set by the Global Episcopacy Committee (GEC) in early 2026 using the guideline provided in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of one bishop per six to eight annual conferences (Par. 608.3). This decision will be based on the number of annual conferences at the close of 2025. Active bishops seeking continued episcopal service are automatically considered nominees should they choose to pursue re-election.

Each delegation may nominate up to one clergy elder from their conference to the office of bishop. They may also nominate up to one clergy elder from outside their conference. If a delegation nominates more than the requested number, all their nominations may be voided. Individual nominations and self-nominations are not encouraged. Delegations are not required to nominate. It simplifies our process to reduce the overall number of nominees.

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<sup>†</sup> Interim and part-time bishops were temporary measures designed to build a bridge to General Conference 2026. The practice of not assigning a bishop to their own home conference was a policy of the Global Episcopacy Committee that will be superseded by the new election process.

When considering nominees, a delegation should consider the roles and responsibilities of bishops in ¶¶ 602 and 603. Bishops appoint the conference superintendents in consultation with conference leadership. They preside over the sessions of the annual conferences. They participate in the Assembly of Bishops and teach and preach throughout the entire church. They are often called upon to mediate solutions to problems and represent the GMC in emerging areas. As elders called to order the general church, bishops require spiritual gifts that include teaching, wisdom, discernment, and leadership. The virtue of humility is particularly important for a Global Methodist bishop. We seek to correct the airs of royalty, autocracy, elevation, and magnificence that have characterized previous iterations of the episcopacy. "...but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be servant of all." (Mark 10:44-45)

Nominations may be submitted by the head or secretary of each delegation. Nominees will be invited to complete a profile that will be translated and published on the General Conference website. Area committees on episcopacy, once [formed](#) in mid-2026, will interview and rank any nominees they wish. Nominees who appear on a Top Five ranking by an area committee on episcopacy may be invited to sit for a video interview to be published on the General Conference website.

Use this address for all submissions:

[GlobalEpiscopacyComm@GlobalMethodist.org](mailto:GlobalEpiscopacyComm@GlobalMethodist.org)