



GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE COMMUNITY: PLAN OF ORGANIZATION AND COVENANT FOR OUR LIFE TOGETHER

(EFFECTIVE: 27SEP2024)

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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.” (Book of Doctrines and Discipline (BDD), ¶701). 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 General Conference in the place and time recommended by the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission** and set by the Connectional Council, beginning with a time of worship. The Conference will then be called to order by a bishop designated by the Commission, with the following order of business:

- A. Recognition of delegations and delegates. The official roll call will be completed by the registration process.
- B. Establishment of the voting bar of the Conference.
- C. Report of the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission**.

*The Global Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ
and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.*

- D. 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.
- E. Election of the General Conference Secretary upon nomination of the Connectional Council, if that Secretary was appointed by the Council ad interim (§704.2, Plan IV). Otherwise, the election of the Secretary who is to take office at the adjournment of the General Conference may happen at any session.
- F. Adoption of the agenda proposed by the Commission.
- G. Miscellaneous business.

II. PRESIDING OFFICERS

All plenary sessions of the General Conference will be guided by the active bishops and bishops emeritus of the Global Methodist Church, as assigned by the ~~Committee on Agenda~~ **Agenda Committee** (§704.1). 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. GENERAL CONFERENCE COMMISSION

The ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission** will oversee the preparations and recommend the time and place for the conference. The Commission will also recommend to the Connectional Council 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. The Connectional Council may make changes to this Plan of Organization between General Conferences as needed to accommodate changing circumstances. Such changes must then be ratified by the General Conference at its opening session.

IV. THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SECRETARY

The General Conference will elect the ~~Secretary of the General Conference~~ **General Conference Secretary** upon nomination by the Connectional Council. The term of a new Secretary will begin upon the adjournment of the General Conference, with the previous Secretary serving during a transition period to help wrap up the business of the just-concluded General Conference, as determined by the Connectional Council. The Secretary will be accountable to the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission**, working closely with the presiding bishops and the Connectional Council. 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~~ General Conference Commission, 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 General Conference, which will elect that Secretary during its opening session.

V. TIMELINES

- A. ~~The timelines in this Plan of Organization are based on the election of delegates and alternates to the General Conference at least 10 months prior to the date of the General Conference. Whatever data and formula for allocating the number of delegates should take into account the need to elect delegates that far in advance. This will enable legislative work to be done during the time leading up to the General Conference by legislative committees, rather than having legislative committees meet at the site of the General Conference.—~~
- B. ~~The timelines in this Plan of Organization are based on the submission of petitions no later than 270 days prior to the General Conference. It is recommended that petitions start being received 330 days prior to the General Conference.—~~

In light of the change adopted to on-site legislative committee meetings at the General Conference, the timeline is completely different from what was envisioned in Costa Rica. Delegates will be allocated based upon the number of churches and FTE pastors on January 1, 2026. Delegates must be elected and certified by April 1, 2026. Petitions will be received beginning on January 5, 2026. The deadline for submitting petitions is May 1, 2026.

VI. EMERGING AREA REPRESENTATIVES

The Conferences Commission will designate Emerging Areas that are well organized, but not yet ready to be convened as an annual conference. An Emerging Area must have a TCAT or other leadership structure and sufficient churches and clergy to be a viable annual conference. Each Emerging Area may elect one clergy and one lay representative to the General Conference by the deadline for delegates to be certified. Such representatives will have the following privileges:

- A. To attend the plenary sessions of the General Conference as an observer, not seated within the bar of the conference, without voice or vote.
- B. To attend and participate in a legislative committee of their choice, with voice but without vote. Such participation will not be counted against the maximum of delegates permitted for a legislative committee.

- C. To have all travel, food, and lodging expenses paid by the General Conference budget.

VII. 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~~ **General Conference Secretary** 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~~ **General Conference Secretary** 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 and will confirm the petition secretary's ruling on the validity of each petition or resolution..
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, announcements, 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~~ **General Conference Secretary**, who will approve the daily ~~proceedings~~ **minutes**, as well as reconcile all petitions which are passed by the Conference with other provisions within the BDD **after the General Conference**.
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. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership on Administrative Committees is limited to people who served as delegates at the 2024 General Conference (¶812.2g) and are delegates to the 2026 General Conference.
2. In addition to the eight members with voice and vote (Section V.A), the following committees will also have one clergy and one lay member with voice, but without vote, from annual conferences not present at the 2024 General Conference: Credentials, Reference, Journal (in addition to three members), and Nominations.
3. Members of Administrative Committees will be nominated by each delegation at least ~~270~~209 days prior to the conference. ~~and elected by the Connectional Council out of the pool of nominees for the General Conference.~~ The General Conference Commission will nominate a slate for each committee out of the pool of nominees submitted by the delegations (¶812.2g), taking care to ensure representation across the geographical areas of the church. ~~Election to Administrative Committees should be completed~~ Membership of Administrative Committees should be elected by the Connectional Council no later than ~~240~~180 days prior to the General Conference. Membership on an Administrative Committee does not prevent the person from serving on a Legislative Committee.

C. LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

There will be eight legislative committees to process the petitions in the first step of the process. In light of the number and complexity of petitions submitted, the Connectional Council, on recommendation of the Commission, may combine two legislative committees or split one into two. The ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ General Conference Commission should determine the minimum and maximum size of the legislative committees based on the number of delegates set for each General Conference. The ~~petitions secretary~~ Petitions Secretary appointed by the Connectional 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.

Legislative Committees will consist of the following:

1. **Doctrine and Sacraments**
Doctrinal Statements; ~~the~~All 100's paragraphs, and ~~Par.~~¶¶412-421
2. **Social Witness**
Social Witness Statements and Resolutions; all 300's paragraphs

(With the understanding that all such statements require ~~60a~~ 75 percent affirmative vote of the plenary session ~~per BDD ¶208.13-14~~)

3. **Local Church** | ¶¶401-411, 422-448, 450-456
4. **Ministry** | All 500's paragraphs
5. **Superintendency** | All 600's paragraphs
6. **Conferences**
All 700's paragraphs; Annual and Regional Conference Boundaries
7. **Constitution, Connectional Organization, and Finance**
¶449, All 200's, 800's, and 1000's paragraphs
8. **Judicial Administration**
All 900's paragraphs and the Judicial Processes and Procedures

D. MEMBERSHIP ON LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Within each annual conference delegation, each delegate should indicate their first, second, and third preferences for which legislative committee on which to serve. Such preferences should be submitted to the General Conference ~~secretary~~Secretary no later than ~~270~~120 days prior to the General Conference. Membership of each legislative committee will be determined by the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~General Conference Commission, based on the preferences of the delegates, the minimum and maximum number of committee members, and the need for gender, ethnic, racial, and geographical diversity. No legislative committee should have more than 55 percent laity or 55 percent clergy. Committee assignments should be completed no later than ~~240~~90 days prior to the General Conference.

E. PROCEDURES FOR LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

1. **Pre-Conference Meetings** — Legislative committees will meet virtually ~~during the 120 days running from seven months to three months prior to the 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 90 days before the opening session. No later than 210 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.~~ period from 75 to 60 days prior to the General Conference to elect officers and receive parliamentary training. Following their election, officers will receive training in a virtual meeting and may begin to organize and plan the work of their legislative committee.
2. **Committee Officers** — The initial meeting will be presided over by an active or emeritus 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 ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **Commission on the 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 the 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 100-word biographical statement to the General Conference ~~secretary's~~ **Secretary's** office at the same time they submit their committee preferences (~~270~~ **120** days prior to the General Conference). 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 secure translation and 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 virtual meeting of each legislative committee will be established by the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission** 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.~~ The

Commission on the General Conference will provide for delegates and alternates to convene in central locations with reliable internet and necessary technology (including devices) for delegates who lack that. ~~In such cases, legislative committees should meet two or three days at a time to maximize the amount of work done while delegates are gathered remotely.~~ 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.

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 the final action of the committee.~~
8. **Informal Discussion** — If there is no objection, or else by majority vote of the committee or sub-committee, the chair may temporarily set aside *Robert's Rules of Order* to allow for extended discussion on a topic leading to action on a petition. The chair should ensure that all voices may be heard and that no one voice dominates the discussion. When the committee appears ready to act, the chair should reinstitute *Robert's Rules* for the purpose of formally considering action on the petition.
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~~ **General Conference Secretary** for presentation to the plenary body.

11. **Open Committee Meetings** — The virtual meetings of the legislative committees will be recorded and the recordings posted on the General Conference website.
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~~ **General Conference Secretary** ~~within 24 hours of a virtual meeting~~ by 6 PM on the day the actions are taken, in order to be published in the following day's **Daily Journal**. In addition to written minutes, the committee must make available copies of any written materials offered during debate in the committee. The committee's 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 90 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.~~
 - b. All versions will remain in the archives of the denominational website to preserve their historical and legislative historical value.

VIII. 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.

- A. **Nomination Process (1803.2)**. Annual Conferences and/or delegations will be encouraged to submit nominations (with their permission) to the Committee at least 180 days prior to the General Conference. ~~In addition, individuals interested in serving on one of these bodies may directly submit their names to the Committee at least 180 days prior to the General Conference. The Nominations Committee will funnel the names of potential individual nominees to the relevant Annual Conference Nominations Committee for vetting before being considered (if those names were not~~

~~submitted by an annual conference).~~ Each annual conference will submit up to 20 nominees who are GMC clergy or lay members in good standing within that annual conference, with at least half being lay. Each nominee should be designated for one or two of the ~~connectional commissions, councils, or committees.~~ 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.

- B. **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.
- C. **Nominations Committee Process.** The Nominations Committee will publish a slate of nominees for each commission or council at least 120 days prior to the General Conference on the GC website.
- D. **Additional Nominees.** Once the Nominations Committee slate is published, ~~additional persons may be nominated (with their permission) or may nominate themselves at least 90 days prior to the General Conference, including a 100-word biography.~~ delegations may re-nominate additional persons within 21 days to the General Conference Secretary. ~~The Nominations Committee will vet these additional nominees with the appropriate annual conference if needed. The full slate of Nominations Committee nominees and additional nominees will be published in the Pre-Conference Workbook. This nominees list will also include all those nominated during the first round of nominations by their annual conference or delegation.~~ The full slate of Nominations Committee nominees and all other nominees from the lists submitted by annual conferences will be published in the Pre-Conference Workbook. Those nominated by the Nominations Committee will be indicated by an asterisk.
- E. **Additional Members.** As provided by the Book of Doctrines and Discipline, additional members may be added to the councils or commissions in order to ensure both diversity and expertise if needed.
- F. **Councils and Commissions to Be Elected.**
1. Connectional Council (¶807.2)
 2. Evangelism, Missions, and Church Planting Commission (¶808.1)
 3. Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry Commission (¶809.1)
 4. Ministry and Higher Education Commission (¶810.1)
 5. Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits Commission (¶811.1)
 6. General Conference Commission (¶812.1)
 7. Ecumenical Relationships Commission (¶813.1)

8. Conferences Commission (¶14.2)
9. Global Episcopacy Committee (¶605.1)
10. Connectional Council on Appeals (and alternates) (¶920)

IX. DELEGATE EXPENSES

Full travel, lodging, and per diem expenses ~~for delegates who need it will be the responsibility of each annual conference~~ of US delegates are encouraged to be covered by their annual conferences (through connectional funding, special fundraising, or other creative means); ~~provided that the~~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 may be arranged through the travel agency designated by the ~~Commission on the General Conference~~General Conference Commission to allow for the most economical round-trip coach airfare directly to and from the site of the General Conference for those delegates whose expenses are being paid by the general church. 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 three 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 more than one delegate travels 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~~General Conference Commission.

X. 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.

XI. MARSHALS, PAGES, AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

- A. The ~~Commission on the General Conference~~ **General Conference Commission** 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.
- 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 meetings between the hours of 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. 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~~ **alternates** 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~~ **Alternates** will occupy the seat of the delegate for whom the substitution is made. ~~Reserves~~ **Alternates** will not be seated for delegates presenting on the platform. ~~Reserves~~ **Alternates** chosen to be seated will be of the same order (lay or clergy) as the absent delegate.

III. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

- A. **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.
- B. **Consensus.** Wherever possible, the Conference will strive for consensus decisions that embody the unity of the whole Church. Beyond such, as per ¶606705.1, the ~~convening~~ General Conference will operate under Robert’s Rules of Order and such supplemental rules as adopted by the Conference.
- C. **Quorum.** The convening of the 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 (¶705.2)
- D. **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.-
- E. **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~~ General Conference Secretary 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 a two-thirds vote of the Conference, an item is taken up out of order.
- F. **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).
- G. **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.

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.
 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.
 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.
 4. The number limit and length of speeches may be modified by the body by majority vote at any time and for any duration.
- H. **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.
- I. **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.
- J. **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.
- K. **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.
- L. **Voting.** Voting may be done by electronic ballot or show of hands.
1. Delegates must be within the bar of the Conference in order to vote, and proxy voting for others is not allowed.

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.
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~~
 - vi. To hold a session outside the hours specified in this Covenant.

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

1. To adjourn, when unqualified, except for final adjournment
2. To suspend the rules.
3. To lay or remove a motion from the table.
4. To call for the previous question when in order.
5. To reconsider a non-debatable motion.
6. To limit or extend the limits of a debate.
7. To pause for prayerful discernment.

N. **Substitutions and Minority Reports.**

1. 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.

2. 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.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.
 5. 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.
 6. Following notification (~~14.4III.N.5~~), the delegates must submit the actual proposed wording of the minority report (~~see also Par. 14 introduction above~~) accompanied by a rationale of 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.
- O. **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.
- P. **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.

- Q. **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, **or** 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 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 and Covenant*, the General Conference will be governed in its action by the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.