

Part V

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Chapter One THE LOCAL CHURCH

Section I. The Church and Pastoral Charge

¶ 201. Definition of a Local Church—The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

¶ 202. The Function of the Local Church—The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

¶ 203. Relation to the Wider Church—The local church is a connectional society of persons who have been baptized, have professed their faith in Christ, and have assumed the vows of membership in The United Methodist Church. They gather in fellowship to hear the Word of God, receive the sacraments, praise

and worship the triune God, and carry forward the work that Christ has committed to his church. Such a society of believers, being within The United Methodist Church and subject to its Discipline, is also an inherent part of the church universal, which is composed of all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and which in the Apostles' Creed we declare to be the holy catholic church.

¶ 204. Care of Members—Each local church shall have a definite evangelistic, nurture, and witness responsibility for its members and the surrounding area and a missional outreach responsibility to the local and global community. It shall be responsible for ministering to all its members, wherever they live, and for persons who choose it as their church.

¶ 205. Definition of a Pastoral Charge—1. A pastoral charge shall consist of one or more churches that are organized under and subject to the Discipline of The United Methodist Church, with a charge conference, and to which an ordained or licensed minister is or may be duly appointed or appointable as pastor in charge or co-pastor. Where co-pastors are appointed, the bishop may designate for administrative purposes one as pastor in charge.¹

2. A pastoral charge of two or more churches may be designated a circuit or a cooperative parish.

3. A pastoral charge may be designated by the bishop and cabinet as a “teaching parish” when either a local church with a pastor or a cooperative parish with a director is available to serve as a counseling elder for a provisional, local, or student pastor appointed or assigned to the teaching parish. A teaching parish shall have a demonstrable commitment to a cooperative or team ministry style and the training of pastors.

4. When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by an ordained or licensed minister, the bishop, upon recommendation of the cabinet, may assign a qualified and trained layperson, lay minister or lay missionary to do the work of ministry in that charge. The layperson is accountable to the district superintendent or another ordained or licensed minister appointed to oversee the charge, who will make provision for sacramental ministry and provide guidance and mentoring to the layperson assigned. The layperson assigned is also accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned.

Section II. Cooperative Parish

¶ 206. 1. Local churches, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may enhance their witness to one another and to the world by showing forth the love of Jesus Christ through forms of mutual cooperation.

2. Annual conferences shall implement a process of cooperative parish development through which cooperative parish ministries are initiated and developed

¹ See Judicial Council Decisions 113, 319.

in both urban and town-and-country situations. Where cooperative parish ministries already exist in an annual conference, the conference shall direct the appropriate conference boards and agencies to develop strategies designed to make use of cooperative ministries as means of creating greater effectiveness in the nurture, outreach, and witness ministries of urban, suburban, and town-and-country situations; and the annual conference shall prepare and adopt a formal written policy concerning cooperative parish ministries, including a plan for financial support. Parish development is an intentional plan of enabling congregations, church-

related agencies, and pastors in a defined geographic area to develop a relationship of trust and mutuality that results in coordinated church programs and ministry, supported by appropriate organizational structures and policy. A superintendent or director of parish development may be appointed to work with the cabinet(s) in the implementation of these ministries in a conference or an area. In addition, district superintendents shall submit recommendations annually regarding those churches in their districts that would benefit from being included in a cooperative ministry.

3. Cooperative ministries may be expressed in one or more of the forms contained in the following categories.

a) Beginning and Exploratory Forms: 1. Cluster Groups—a group of churches located in the same geographic area with a loosely knit organization that allows the participating congregations and pastoral charges to engage in cooperative programs in varying degrees. A district may be divided into cluster groups for administrative purposes. 2. Probe Staff—composed of the pastors and other staff assigned to a geographic area to explore possibilities for cooperation and developing strategies for improving ministry. 3. Group Ministry—a loosely organized group of two or more pastoral charges in which pastors are appointed or assigned to charges. The pastors and/or lay council representing all churches may designate a coordinator.

b) Structured Forms: 1. Multiple Charge Parishes—intentionally organized group of two or more pastoral charges in which each church continues to relate to its charge conference on the organizational level and also participates in a parish-wide council. The pastors are appointed or assigned to the charges and also to the parish, and a director or coordinator is appointed or assigned by the bishop.² 2. Larger Parish—a number of congregations working together using a parish-wide council and other committees and work groups, as the parish may determine which provides representation on boards and committees from all churches; guided by a constitution or covenant and served by a staff appointed or assigned by the bishop and involving a director. 3. Blended Ministry—the merging of

the organizations and memberships of churches spread throughout a defined geographical area into one congregation that intentionally develops two or more worship/program centers, and for which there is one charge conference and one set of committees and other groups, guided by a covenant and served by a staff and a director appointed or assigned to the parish by the bishop.

c) Specialized Forms: 1. Enlarged Charge—two or more congregations, usually on the same charge and of relatively equal size that work as a unit with the leadership of one or more pastors. There may be a charge council and appropriate committees. 2. Extended or Shared Ministry—a larger membership church sharing ministry with a smaller membership church, usually served by the pastor(s) of the larger church. 3. Cooperative Ecumenical Parish—two or more local churches of different Christian traditions including a United Methodist congregation, working together. Either of the above forms may be utilized. 4. Shared Facilities—two or more congregations, one of which shall be United Methodist, sharing a building, office equipment, etc., such as congregations which use different languages or which are of different racial/ethnic/cultural groups. The congregations may enter into a covenant that ensures representation and preserves the autonomy of each congregation on such bodies as church councils, boards of trustees and other committees and work groups. The congregations may negotiate a financial agreement about the use of the facility in order to provide appropriate financial support.

4. Each general board and agency shall arrange for its directors and staff to be trained in cooperative ministry concepts better to provide support resources for annual conferences and local churches.

5. Bishops, district superintendents, conference staff, and other leaders shall become familiar through training with the benefits of cooperative ministries. They shall provide leadership and training opportunities for pastors and local church leaders as to the value of cooperative ministries in moving toward excellence in nurture, outreach, and witness ministries. They are to explore and develop meaningful ministries to persons in congregations, communities, and the global community.

6. Cabinets shall give priority in the appointment process to appointing directors and clergy staff of cooperative ministries, especially cooperative parish ministries, who have been trained in cooperative ministry concepts and who have demonstrated effective ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness. The cabinet shall develop and implement strategies designed to enable and equip pastors presently appointed to cooperative parish ministries to provide effective ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness.

7. Annual conferences and cabinets are urged to assist in the development and strengthening of cooperative ministries by pursuing funding assistance from general Church, annual conference, and other sources for each cooperative ministry, including cooperative parish ministries.

Section III. Ecumenical Shared Ministries

¶ 207. Local churches, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may respond to opportunities for ecumenical resource sharing in their communities by creating ecumenical shared ministries, working with local congregations of other Christian churches to enhance ministry, make wise stewardship of limited resources, and live out the ecumenical spirit in creative ways responsive to the needs of God's peoples as well as to opportunities for expanded mission and ministry.

¶ 208. Definition—Ecumenical shared ministries are ecumenical congregations formed by a local United Methodist church and one or more local congregations of other Christian traditions. Forms of ecumenical shared ministries include: (a) a federated church, in which one congregation is related to two or more denominations, with persons choosing to hold membership in one or the other of the denominations; (b) a union church, in which a congregation with one unified membership roll is related to two denominations; (c) a merged church, in which two or more congregations of different denominations form one congregation that relates to only one of the constituent denominations; (d) a yoked parish, in which congregations of different denominations share a pastor.

¶ 209. Covenanting—Congregations entering into an ecumenical shared ministry shall develop a clear covenant of mission, set of bylaws, or articles of agreement that address financial and property matters, church membership, denominational askings and apportionments, committee structure and election procedures, terms and provisions of the pastorate, reporting procedures, relationship with the parent denominations, and matters related to amending or dissolving the agreement. Ministries shall notify the District Superintendent of any amending of the covenant agreement and shall consult with the District Superintendent prior to dissolving the covenant agreement. In the formation of an ecumenical shared ministry, ¶¶ 243 and 247.1-2 shall be followed in its organization. In an interdenominational local church merger, ¶¶ 2546 and 2547 shall be followed. In the case of federated and union churches, ¶ 2547 shall be followed.

¶ 210. Connectional Responsibilities—Cabinets, conference staff and other leaders shall be expected to work with ecumenical shared ministries at their inception as well as in maintaining avenues of vital relationship and connection to

The United Methodist Church, while recognizing that such avenues must also be maintained with the denominational partners in ministry.

¶ 211. Cabinet Priority—Cabinets shall be urged to give priority in the appointment process to the providing of ecumenical shared ministries with pastoral leaders who have demonstrated commitment to ecumenism and who exhibit a clear appreciation for a variety of denominational expressions and polities.

Section IV. Churches in Transitional Communities

¶ 212. Since many of the communities in which the local church is located are experiencing transition, special attention must be given to forms of ministry required in such communities. The local church is required to respond to the changes that are occurring in its surrounding community and to organize its mission and ministry accordingly.

1. When the communities where the church is located experience transition especially identified as economic and/or ethnic, the local church shall engage in deliberate analysis of the neighborhood change and alter its program to meet the needs and cultural patterns of the new residents. The local church shall make every effort to remain in the neighborhood and develop effective ministries to those who are newcomers, whether of a cultural, economic, or ethnic group different from the original or present members.

2. In communities in transition, the local church shall be regarded as a principal base of mission from which structures of society shall be confronted, evangelization shall occur, and a principal witness to the changing community shall be realized.

3. It is recommended that decisions concerning ministry in transitional communities be made after thorough consultation has taken place between structures and agencies in the connection.

4. It is recommended that the commitment of resources in terms of money and personnel to ministries in transitional communities be of sufficient longevity to allow for experimentation, evaluation, and mid-course corrections to ensure an adequate effort in ministry in those situations. Evaluations shall involve those on the local level as well as those at the funding level.

5. The ministry of the local church in transitional areas may be enhanced by review and possible development of some form of cooperative ministry.

¶ 213. A Process for Assessment of Local Church Potential—Since every congregation is located in a community in some type of transition, every local church is encouraged to study their congregation's potential. Upon the request of the congregation the district superintendent shall appoint a study task force to assist in an extensive study of the past, present, and potential ministry of that local

church. Alternatively, the district superintendent may appoint such a task force when the future viability of the congregation is in question or whenever he/she deems it necessary for other reasons. The task force shall be composed of an equal number of lay and clergypersons and shall include persons from that congregation.

1. This study shall include, but not be limited to: a) unique missional opportunities and needs of the community; b) present ministries of the congregation; c) number of leaders and style of leadership; d) growth potential of the surrounding community; e) fiscal and facilities needs; f) distance from other United Methodist churches; g) number and size of churches of other denominations in the community; h) other items that may impact the church's ability to fulfill the mission of the Church as stated in Chapter One, Section I.

2. The findings shall be published and presented to the congregation with recommendations as to how best to fulfill the local church's call to ministry and to optimize the stewardship of the ministry resources available. The recommendations shall explore options for serving the community with nurture, outreach, and witness ministries as an organized church (§§ 201-204) or cooperative parish ministries (§ 206) or ecumenical shared ministries (§ 207); or give special attention to redevelopment, relocation, or discontinuance. Those invited to the presentation shall include: the members of the congregation, the pastor(s), the district superintendent, and members of the district board of church location and building (§ 2518).

3. a) The members of the local church shall consider the recommendations and develop goals and a ministry action plan in response to the recommendations. The district superintendent shall report the results of the study and the congregation's response to the cabinet, with recommendations for the allocation of conference staff, resourcing, financial support, or other resources needed to undergird the congregation's efforts to reach its recommended potential. Such annual conference support shall be committed no longer than three years. b) In urban churches where the reported average worship attendance for the previous two conference years is below 25 or is unknown, the District Superintendent may convene a special session of the conference to take action concerning the ministry recommendations. In addition to the local church charge conference membership, the members of the District Board of Church Location and Building will be present with voice only.

Section V. Church Membership

¶ 214. Eligibility—The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed. In the church, Jesus

Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection (§ 4). In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.

¶ 215. Definition of Membership—The membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith.

1. The baptized membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in the local congregation or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to the local United Methodist church subsequent to baptism in some other congregation.

2. The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.

3. For statistical purposes, church membership is equated to the number of people listed on the roll of professing members.

4. All baptized or professing members of any local United Methodist church are members of the worldwide United Methodist connection and members of the church universal.

The Meaning of Membership

¶ 216. 1. Christ constitutes the church as his body by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). The church draws new people into itself as it seeks to remain faithful to its commission to proclaim and exemplify the gospel. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation and incorporation into the body of Christ. After baptism, the church provides the nurture that makes possible a comprehensive and lifelong process of growing in grace. Becoming a professing member requires the answer of faith of the baptized person made visible in a service of profession of Christian faith and confirmation using the vows of the Baptismal Covenant.

a) Baptized infants and children are to be instructed and nurtured in the meaning of the faith, the rights and responsibilities of their baptism, and spiritual and moral formation using materials approved by The United Methodist Church. Using the services of the Baptismal Covenant, youth will profess their faith, commit themselves to a life of discipleship, and be confirmed. Confirmation is both a

human act of commitment and the gracious action of the Holy Spirit strengthening and empowering discipleship.

b) Youth and adults who have not been baptized and who are seeking to be saved from their sins and profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are proper candidates for baptism in The United Methodist Church. It shall be the duty of the congregation, led by the pastor, to instruct them in the meaning of baptism, in the meaning of the Christian faith, and in the history, organization, and teachings of The United Methodist Church, using materials approved by The United Methodist Church for that purpose. After the completion of the period of nurture and instruction, the sponsor(s) and pastor shall bring the candidates before the congregation and administer the services of Baptismal Covenant, in which people are baptized, confirmed, and received into the Church.

2. a) Formation in the Baptismal Covenant and in the call to ministry in daily life is a lifelong process and is carried on through all the activities that have educational value. The pastor gives specific leadership that prepares youth for their profession of faith and commitment to discipleship and for the Holy Spirit's action confirming them in their faith and empowering their discipleship. This preparation focuses attention upon the meaning of discipleship and the need for members to be in mission in all of life's relationships.

b) There are many occasions as people mature in the faith when the Holy Spirit's confirming action may be celebrated, such as in the reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant or other services related to life passages. Unlike baptism, which is a once-made covenant and can only be reaffirmed and not repeated, confirmation is a dynamic action of the Holy Spirit that can be repeated.

3. Preparation for the experience of profession of faith and confirmation shall be provided for all people, including adults. Youth who are completing the sixth grade shall normally be the youngest people recruited for such preparation. When younger people, of their own volition, seek enrollment in preparation for profession of faith and confirmation, such preparation shall be at the discretion of the pastor.

¶ 217. When persons unite as professing members with a local United Methodist church, they profess their faith in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, they make known their desire to live their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. They covenant together with God and with the members of the local church to keep the vows which are a part of the order of confirmation and reception into the Church:

1. To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;

2. To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
3. To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;
4. To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;
5. To be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;
6. To faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness;
7. To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

¶ 218. Growth in Faithful Discipleship—Faithful membership in the local church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves.

¶ 219. Mutual Responsibility—Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

¶ 220. The Call to Ministry of All the Baptized—All members of Christ's universal church are called to share in the ministry which is committed to the whole church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, each member of The United Methodist Church is to be a servant of Christ on mission in the local and worldwide community. This servanthood is performed in family life, daily work, recreation and social activities, responsible citizenship, the stewardship of property and accumulated resources, the issues of corporate life, and all attitudes toward other persons. Participation in disciplined groups is an expected part of personal mission involvement. Each member is called upon to be a witness for Christ in the world, a light and leaven in society, and a reconciler in a culture of conflict. Each member is to identify with the agony and suffering of the world and to radiate and exemplify the Christ of hope. The standards of attitude and conduct set forth in the Social Principles (Part IV) shall be considered as an essential resource for guiding each member of the Church in being a servant of Christ on mission.

¶ 221. Accountability—1. All members are to be held accountable for faithfulness to their covenant of baptism.

2. If a baptized member neglects faithfulness and discipline in terms of the Baptismal Covenant, every means of encouraging that member to return and of nurturing him or her to assume the vows of professing membership should be made.

3. If a professing member should be accused of violating the covenant and failing to keep the vows as stated in ¶ 217, then it shall be the responsibility of the local church, working through its pastor and its agencies, to minister to that member in compliance with the provisions of ¶ 228 in an effort to enable the member to faithfully perform the vows and covenant of membership.

4. In the event that those efforts fail, then the professing member and the local church may agree to voluntary mediation in which the parties are assisted by a trained, neutral third-party mediator, mediation team, and/or their district superintendent in reaching a settlement or agreement satisfactory to all parties.

5. In the further event that those efforts fail to effect reconciliation and reaffirmation of the vows and covenant of ¶ 217 by the professing member, then the professing members of the church may pursue the procedures set forth in ¶¶ 2702.3, 2706.5, and 2714.

Admission into the Church

¶ 222. Non-Local Church Settings—Duly appointed clergy of The United Methodist Church, while serving as chaplain of any organization, institution, or military unit, as an extension minister, or as a campus minister, or while otherwise present where a local church is not available, may receive a person into the membership of The United Methodist Church under the conditions of ¶ 216 or ¶ 217. Where possible, before the sacrament of baptism or vows of profession of faith are administered, such appointed minister shall consult with the pastor of the local church (should one be nearby) on the choice of the person concerned; and upon agreement by the pastor, a statement verifying that such sacrament was administered or that such vows were made shall be issued. The pastor thereof on receiving such statement shall duly enroll that person as a baptized or professing member.

* ¶ 223. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference*

¶ 224. Outside of Congregational Settings—Any candidate for church membership who for good reason is unable to appear before the congregation may, at the discretion of the pastor, be received elsewhere in accordance with the Ritual of The United Methodist Church. In any such case lay members should be present to represent the congregation. Names of such persons shall be placed on the

church roll, and announcement of their reception shall be made to the congregation.

¶ 225. Transfer from Other Denominations—A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with The United Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member. Such a person may be received as a baptized member by a proper certificate of transfer from that person's former church or some certification of Christian baptism and as a professing member upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in our ritual (see ¶¶ 214-217). In baptism water is administered in the name of the Triune God by an authorized person. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. It is recommended that instruction in the faith, work, and polity of the Church be provided for all such persons. Persons received from churches that do not issue certificates of transfer or letters of recommendation shall be listed as "Received From Other Denominations."

* ¶ 226. Care of Children and Youth—1. Because the redeeming love of God revealed in Jesus Christ extends to all persons, and because Jesus explicitly included the children in his kingdom, the pastor of each charge shall earnestly exhort all Christian parents or guardians to present their children to the Lord in baptism at an early age. Before baptism is administered, the pastor shall diligently instruct the parents or guardians regarding the meaning of this sacrament and the vows that they assume. It is expected of parents or guardians who present their children for baptism that they shall use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God and in the fellowship of the Church and to encourage them to participate in preparation for their profession of faith and confirmation at the appropriate time. At least one parent or guardian shall be a member of a Christian church; or sponsor(s) or godparent(s) who are members shall renew their own baptismal vows. They shall be admonished of this obligation and be earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein. At the time of baptism they shall be informed that the Church, with its Christian education program, will aid them in the Christian nurture of their children.

2. a) The pastor of the church shall, at the time of administering the sacrament of baptism, furnish the parent(s), guardian(s), sponsor(s), or godparent(s) of the child who is baptized with a certificate of baptism, which shall also clearly state that the child is now a baptized member in The United Methodist Church.

b) The pastor shall be responsible for seeing that the membership secretary adds the full name of the baptized child to the membership record.

c) When the baptized child lives in a community not served by the pastor who administers the sacrament of baptism, the pastor shall ensure this is not a

private event (that the body of Christ beyond the immediate family is present in accordance with ¶ 224 of the Book of Discipline), and is responsible for contacting in advance (where possible) and reporting the baptism to a pastor and/or district superintendent who serves in the area where the baptized child lives. The pastor administering the sacrament shall then be responsible for reporting in writing to that pastor or district superintendent the child's name to be entered on the record of a church in that location.

d) A pastor of a church who receives notification of a baptism administered elsewhere shall be responsible for entering the required information on that church's record and for notifying the pastor who administered the baptism that the child has been received by transfer. When the pastor of the church in which the child is baptized receives written confirmation that the child's name has been entered on the membership record of another church, a notation may be made on the record of the church where the sacrament was administered that the child has been transferred to another church.

e) The pastor shall, at the time of administering the sacrament of baptism and at other appropriate times, admonish members of the congregation of their responsibility for the Christian nurture of the child.

3. The pastor or membership secretary shall regularly review the membership record to identify those who have not become professing members, for purposes of nurturing them toward profession of faith. The number of people so identified shall be reported annually, or at such other times as may be requested, to the charge conference or the annual conference. The congregation has ongoing responsibility to nurture baptized children, youth, and adults in the life of discipleship.

* 4. It shall be the duty of the pastor, the parent(s), guardian(s), sponsor(s), or godparent(s), the officers and teachers of the church school, the local church scouting coordinator, and all members of the congregation to provide training for the children of the Church throughout their childhood that will lead to a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to an understanding of the Christian faith and the meaning of baptism. Building on the preparation that youth have received throughout their childhood, the pastor shall, at least annually, organize them into classes to the end that they may profess their faith and be confirmed (¶ 216). This instruction shall be based on materials produced by The United Methodist Church or on other resources that present the mission, history, doctrine, and beliefs of The United Methodist Church for this purpose. When youth so prepared shall give evidence of their own Christian faith, and understanding of the meaning and practice of membership, they may be received as professing members.

5. Youth who are members of the Church have all rights and responsibilities of membership within the baptismal covenant. (See ¶ 256.3.) It is strongly recommended that each local church offer for all senior high youth continuing instruction in the meaning of the Christian life and discipleship. It is further recommended that this course, taught by or under the guidance of the pastor, or other staff or layperson, emphasize the doctrines of The United Methodist Church and the nature and mission of the Church, leading to continued growth in the knowledge, grace, and service of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God and Country program may be available to all youth, with the God and Church portion providing study of The United Methodist Church, and the God and Life program challenging the youth to integrate their faith into their daily life (¶ 256.4) It shall be the responsibility of the pastor to participate in the growth process through interaction and ministry with youth.

Affiliate and Associate Membership

¶ 227. A professing member of The United Methodist Church, of an affiliated autonomous Methodist or united church, or of a Methodist church that has a concordat agreement with The United Methodist Church, who resides for an extended period in a city or community at a distance from the member's home church, may on request be enrolled as an affiliate member of a United Methodist church located in the vicinity of the temporary residence. The home pastor shall be notified of the affiliate membership. Such membership shall entitle the person to the fellowship of that church, to its pastoral care and oversight, and to participation in its activities, including the holding of office; except such as would allow one to vote in a United Methodist body other than the local church. However, that person shall be counted and reported as a professing member of the home church only. A member of another denomination may become an associate member under the same conditions, but may not become a voting member of the church council.³ This relationship may be terminated at the discretion of the United Methodist church in which the affiliate or associate membership is held whenever the affiliate or associate member shall move from the vicinity of the United Methodist church in which the affiliate or associate membership is held.

Care of Members

¶ 228. 1. The local church shall endeavor to enlist each member in activities for spiritual growth and in participation in the services and ministries of the Church and its organizations. It shall be the duty of the pastor and of the members of the church council by regular visitation, care, and spiritual oversight to provide necessary activities and opportunities for spiritual growth through in-

dividual and family worship and individual and group study to connect faith and daily living, and continually to aid the members to keep their vows to uphold the Church by attendance, prayers, gifts, and service. The Church has a moral and spiritual obligation to nurture its nonparticipating and indifferent members and to lead them into an active church relationship.

2. Care of Members—a) The pastor in cooperation with the church council may arrange the membership in groups—with a leader for each group—designed to involve the membership of the Church in its ministry to the community. These groups shall be of such size, usually not larger than eight or ten families, as to be convenient and effective for service. Such groups may be especially helpful in evangelistic outreach by contacting newcomers and unreached persons, by visitation, by mobilizing neighbors to meet social issues in the community, by responding to personal and family crises, by holding prayer meetings in the homes, by distributing Christian literature, and by other means. Nonresident members should constitute a special group to be served by correspondence. The groups shall be formed and the leaders appointed by the church council upon recommendation of the pastor.

b) While primary responsibility and initiative rests with each professing member to faithfully perform the vows of the baptismal covenant that have been solemnly assumed, if the member should be neglectful of that responsibility, these procedures shall be followed:

(1) If a professing member residing in the community is negligent of the vows or is regularly absent from the worship of the church without valid reason, the pastor and the membership secretary shall report that member's name to the church council, which shall do all in its power to reenlist the member in the active fellowship of the church. It shall visit the member and make clear that, while the member's name is on the roll of a particular local church, one is a member of The United Methodist Church as a whole, and that, since the member is not attending the church where enrolled, the member is requested to do one of four things: (a) reaffirm the baptismal vows and return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant in the church where the member's name is recorded, (b) request transfer to another United Methodist church where the member will return to living in the community of the baptismal covenant (see ¶ 239), (c) arrange transfer to a particular church of another denomination (see ¶ 240), or (d) request withdrawal. If the member does not comply with any of the available alternatives over a period of two years, the member's name may be removed. (See § [4].)

(2) If a professing member whose address is known is residing outside the community and is not participating in the worship or activity of the church,

the directives to encourage a transfer of the member shall be followed each year until that member joins another church or requests in writing that the name be removed from the roll of professing members; provided, however, that if after two years the council has not been able to relate that member to the church at the new place of residence, the name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of § (4) below.

(3) If the address of a professing member is no longer known to the pastor, the membership secretary and the evangelism ministry group chairperson shall make every effort to locate the member. If the member can be located, the directives of either § (1) or § (2) above shall be followed, but if after two years of such efforts the address is still unknown, the member's name may be removed from the roll of members by the procedure of § (4) below.

(4) If the directives of §§ (1), (2), or (3) above have been followed for the specified number of years without success, the member's name may be removed as a professing member by vote of the charge conference on recommendation of the pastor and the evangelism ministry chairperson, each name being considered individually, provided that the member's name shall have been entered in the minutes of the annual charge conference for two consecutive years. On the membership record there shall be entered after the name: "Removed by Charge Conference Action"; and if the action is on the basis of § (3), there shall be added: "Reason: Address Unknown." The record shall be retained⁴ in order that upon reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant the person may be restored as a member. Should a transfer of membership be requested, the pastor may, after consultation with the person, issue the certificate of transfer.

(5) A written complaint or grievance may be filed against a professing member by serving the complaint or grievance on the professing member, the pastor of the professing member and the district superintendent of the professing member.

(6) The pastor and district superintendent of the accused professing member shall attempt a just resolution process similar to the supervisory response in ¶ 361.1(b) with the professing member's district superintendent or designee leading the process.

(7) If the procedures of ¶ 361.1(b) do not result in resolution of the matter and if the conduct alleged in the complaint or grievance, if true, would be a chargeable offense found in ¶ 2702.3, then the procedures of ¶ 2701 and following paragraphs are to be followed unless the accused professing member agrees to use the procedure described in ¶ 228.2b (8) below.

(8) If the procedures of ¶ 361.1(b) do not result in resolution of the matter and if the conduct alleged in the complaint or grievance, if true, would not be a chargeable offense found in ¶ 2702.3, then a group of four persons: the pastor of

⁴ See Judicial Council Decision 207.

the accused professing member, the lay leader of the accused professing member's church, the district lay leader, and the district superintendent, *ex officio*, without vote but with voice, where the accused professing member's church is located, shall hear information from the accused professing member and the complainant or grievant and shall determine an unappealable resolution of the matter.

(9) When a professing member is charged with an offense and wishes to forego trial, the charge conference may permit the member to withdraw (§ 2719.3). In this case, the notation "Withdrawn under charges" shall be entered alongside the member's name on the record, along with the date.

(10) Recognizing that the Church has a continuing moral and spiritual obligation to nurture all persons, it is recommended that a list of names thus removed shall be maintained. It shall then become the responsibility of the church council to provide for the review of this list at least once a year. (See also § 234.) After the review has been made, it is recommended that the pastor and/or the commission on evangelism contact those whose names appear on this list, either in person or by other means, in the most effective and practical manner. The names and addresses of those who have moved outside the local church's area should be sent to local churches in their new communities that those churches may visit and minister to them.

c) The pastor, along with other adult workers with youth and young adults in the local church and beyond (§ 634.4c[4]), shall disseminate information about United Methodist related Campus Ministry to college/university students or potential college/university students who are baptized members, professing members, or other constituents of the congregation. They shall also nurture, counsel, and guide young people as they explore United Methodist and non-United Methodist colleges and universities and non-college vocation options in light of their faith.

¶ 229. Transfer from Discontinued Local Churches—If a local church is discontinued, the district superintendent shall select another United Methodist church and transfer its members thereto, or to such other churches as the members may select. (See § 2548.2.)

Membership Records and Reports

¶ 230. Membership Records—1. Each local church shall accurately maintain a membership record for each baptized or professing member including:

- a) the person's name, date of birth, address, place of birth, date of baptism, officiating pastor, and sponsors;
- b) date of confirmation/profession of faith, officiating pastor, and sponsors;

- c) if transferred from another church, date of reception, sending church, and receiving pastor;
- d) if transferred to another church, date of transfer, receiving church, and address of receiving church;
- e) date of removal or withdrawal and reason;
- f) date of restoration of professing membership and officiating pastor;
- g) date of death, date and place of funeral/memorial, place of burial, and officiating pastor.

2. Annually, names of professing members to be removed by charge conference action shall be reported to the charge conference (§ 228.2.b.4).

3. Constituency Roll, containing the names and addresses of such persons as are not members of the church concerned, including unbaptized children, youth and adults whose names are not on the membership record, and other nonmembers for whom the local church has pastoral responsibility.

4. Affiliate Membership Roll (§ 227).

5. Associate Membership Roll (§ 227).

6. In the case of a union or federated church with another denomination, the governing body of such a church may report an equal share of the total membership to each judicatory, and such membership shall be published in the minutes of each church, with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union or federated church, and with an indication of the total actual membership.

¶ 231. Annual Membership Report and Audit—The pastor shall report to the charge conference annually the names of persons received into the membership of the church or churches of the pastoral charge and the names of persons removed since the last charge conference, indicating how each was received or removed. The church council shall appoint a committee to audit the membership record, submitting the report annually to the charge conference.

¶ 232. Annual Report of Full and Preparatory Members Attending Colleges and Universities—The pastor shall report annually the names and contact information for professing and baptized members attending colleges and universities to the District Superintendent, the Chair-person of the Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry by one month before the start of the school term and to the Charge Conference. The Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry has the responsibility to share the information with the appropriate UM related campus ministries.

* ¶ 233. Permanent Records—The basic membership records in each local church shall consist of: a permanent church register and a card index, a loose-leaf book, or a membership record on an electronic information system (see ¶ 245).

All baptism, membership, marriage, and funeral records are the property of the local church and cannot be sold. If the church is discontinued, these records are placed in the care of the Conference Commission on Archives and History.

* 1. The permanent church register shall be kept on either paper-based or electronic media. If it is on a paper medium, it shall be a volume of durable material. If on a paper medium, the names shall be recorded chronologically as each person is received into the fellowship of that church and without reference to alphabetical order. The names shall be numbered in regular numerical order, and the number of each shall appear on the corresponding card, page, or record in the card index, loose-leaf book, or electronic information system membership record. If it is on an electronic medium, it will not be necessary to maintain a chronological number. The number that is assigned automatically by the computer system is sufficient for this purpose. However, the electronic medium shall meet the following criteria:

a) It shall contain all of the information required by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

b) Conversion of the information from paper records to an electronic medium shall be followed by a complete audit to ensure the accuracy of the converted records.

c) Off-site storage and electronic backup shall be maintained.

2. The card index, loose-leaf book, or electronic system membership record shall be kept on a form approved by the General Council on Finance and Administration or, in the case of electronically maintained records, shall contain the same information as required in the approved form with the exception of the sequential number. This record of membership shall be filed in alphabetical order and shall show the number appearing opposite each name on the permanent register. The pastor shall report annually to the annual conference the total professing membership of the local church as shown on the membership records.

3. When an electronic information system is used for record keeping, print-out copies of the membership records and backup electronic media shall be retained in a secure off-site place (see ¶ 245).

¶ 234. Membership Secretary—The charge conference shall name a membership secretary who, under the direction of the pastor, shall keep accurate records of the membership (see ¶ 230) and shall report at least annually to the church council.

Changes in Church Membership or Local Church Membership

¶ 235. Members whose names are removed from professing member status for cause (see ¶ 2714), or who have been transferred, have died, or have with-

drawn shall be so noted on the membership record. It shall be the duty of the pastor of the charge or of the membership secretary to keep an accurate record of such changes and reasons and to report them to the charge conference annually.

¶ 236. *Members Who Move*—If a member of a United Methodist church shall move to another community so far removed from the home church that the member cannot participate regularly in its worship and activity, this member shall be encouraged to transfer membership to a United Methodist church in the community of the newly established residence. As soon as the pastor is reliably informed of this change of residence, actual or contemplated, it shall be the pastor's duty and obligation to assist the member to become established in the fellowship of a church in the community of the future home and to send to a United Methodist pastor in such community, or to the district superintendent, a letter of notification, giving the latest known address of the person or persons concerned and requesting local pastoral oversight.

¶ 237. *Lay Missionaries in Non-United Methodist Churches*—Laypersons in service outside the United States under the General Board of Global Ministries and assigned to churches other than United Methodist may accept all the rights and privileges, including associate membership, offered them by a local church in their place of residence without impairing their relationship to their home local church.

¶ 238. *Members Residing at a Distance*—When a pastor discovers a member of The United Methodist Church residing in the community whose membership is in a church so far removed from the place of residence that the member cannot participate regularly in its worship and activity, it shall be the duty and obligation of the pastor to give pastoral oversight to such person and to encourage transfer of membership to a United Methodist church in the community where the member resides.

¶ 239. *Transfer to Other United Methodist Churches*—When a pastor receives a request for a transfer of membership from the pastor of another United Methodist church or a district superintendent, that pastor shall send the proper certificate directly to the pastor of the United Methodist church to which the member is transferring, or if there is no pastor, to the district superintendent. On receipt of such a certificate of transfer, the pastor or district superintendent shall enroll the name of the person so transferring after public reception in a regular service of worship, or if circumstances demand, public announcement in such a service. The pastor of the church issuing the certificate shall then be notified, whereupon said pastor shall remove the member from the roll.

Certificates of transfer shall be accompanied by two official forms. A "Notice of Transfer of Membership" is to be sent to the member by the pastor who trans-

fers the membership. An “Acknowledgment of Transfer of Membership” is to be sent to the former pastor by the pastor who receives the transferred member.

In case the transfer is not made effective, the pastor shall return the certificate to the pastor of the sending church.

¶ 240. *Transfer to Other Denominations*—A pastor, upon receiving a request from a member to transfer to a church of another denomination, or upon receiving such request from a pastor or duly authorized official of another denomination, shall (with the approval of the member) issue a certificate of transfer and, upon receiving confirmation of the member’s reception into another congregation, shall properly record the transfer of such person on the membership record of the local church. For the transfer of a member of The United Methodist Church to a church of another denomination, an official “Transfer of Membership to Another Denomination” form shall be used.

¶ 241. *Withdrawal Without Notice*—If a pastor is informed that a member has without notice united with a church of another denomination, the pastor shall make diligent inquiry and, if the report is confirmed, shall enter “Withdrawn” after the person’s name on the membership roll and shall report the same to the next charge conference.

¶ 242. *Restoration of Professing Membership*—1. A person whose name has been removed from professing membership by withdrawal, or action by charge conference, or trial court (¶ 2714), may ask to be restored to membership in the local church.

2. A person whose membership was recorded as having been withdrawn after becoming a member of another denomination may, when that denomination will not transfer membership, be restored to professing membership by reaffirmation of the baptismal vows.

3. A person who has withdrawn at his or her own written request may return to the church and, upon reaffirmation of the baptismal vows, become a professing member.

4. A person whose name was removed by charge conference action may return to the church and, at his or her request, be restored to professing membership in the local church through reaffirmation of the baptismal vows.

5. A person who withdrew under charges or was removed by trial court (¶ 2714) may ask to return to the church. Upon evidence of a renewed life, approval of the charge conference, and reaffirmation of the baptismal vows, the person may be restored to professing membership.

Section VI. Organization and Administration

¶ 243. Primary Tasks—The local church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community—reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond; encouraging people in their relationship with God and inviting them to commitment to God’s love in Jesus Christ; providing opportunities for them to seek strengthening and growth in spiritual formation; and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.

In carrying out its primary task, it shall be organized so that adequate provision is made for these basic responsibilities: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the district and annual conference; (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.

¶ 244. Organization—The basic organizational plan for the local church shall include provision for the following units: a charge conference, a church council, a committee on pastor-parish relations, a board of trustees, a committee on finance, a committee on nominations and leadership development, and such other elected leaders, commissions, councils, committees, and task forces as the charge conference may determine. Every local church shall develop a plan for organizing its administrative and programmatic responsibilities. Each local congregation shall provide a comprehensive program of nurture, outreach, and witness, along with leadership training, and the planning and administration of the congregation’s organizational and temporal life, in accordance with the mission of The United Methodist Church (see ¶¶ 120-124).

1. The church council and all other administrative and programmatic structures of the local church shall be amenable to the charge conference (see ¶ 246). The church council shall function as the executive agency of the charge conference.

2. Alternative plans may be developed in accordance with the provisions of ¶ 247.2. Such alternatives include: nurture, outreach, and witness ministries; administrative council; or administrative board/council on ministries.

3. Members of the church council or alternative structure shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the church, are loyal to the ethical standards of The United Methodist Church set forth in the Social

Principles, and are competent to administer its affairs. It shall include youth and young adult members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All persons with vote shall be members of the local church, except where central conference legislation provides otherwise. The pastor shall be the administrative officer and, as such, shall be an ex officio member of all conferences, boards, councils, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless otherwise restricted by the Discipline.⁵

¶ 245. Information Technology—Each local church, as it creates or maintains computerized information and data, is strongly encouraged to confer with its annual conference for recommendations and guidelines as it relates to information technology.

The Charge Conference

Members of the charge conference shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the Church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the Church, are loyal to the ethical standards of The United Methodist Church set forth in the Social Principles, and are competent to administer its affairs. It shall include youth members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All shall be professing members of the local church, except where central conference legislation provides otherwise.

The pastor shall be the administrative officer, and as such shall be an ex officio member of all conferences, boards, councils, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless restricted by the Discipline.

¶ 246. General Provisions—1. Within the pastoral charge the basic unit in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church is the charge conference. The charge conference shall therefore be organized from the church or churches in every pastoral charge as set forth in the Constitution (¶ 43). It shall meet annually for the purposes set forth in ¶ 247. It may meet at other times as indicated in § 7 below.

2. The membership of the charge conference shall be all members of the church council or other appropriate body, together with retired ordained ministers and retired diaconal ministers who elect to hold their membership in said charge conference and any others as may be designated in the Discipline. If more than one church is on the pastoral charge, all members of each church council shall be members of the charge conference.

3. The charge conference may make provision for recognition of the faithful service of members of the church council by electing them honorary members. An honorary member shall be entitled to all the privileges of a member, except the right to vote.

⁵ See Judicial Council Decisions 469, 500.

4. The district superintendent shall fix the time of meetings of the charge conference. The charge conference shall determine the place of meeting.

5. The district superintendent shall preside at the meetings of the charge conference or may designate an elder to preside.

6. The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

7. Special sessions may be called by the district superintendent after consultation with the pastor of the charge, or by the pastor with the written consent of the district superintendent. The purpose of such special session shall be stated in the call, and only such business shall be transacted as is in harmony with the purposes stated in the call. Any such special session may be convened as a church conference in accordance with ¶ 248.

8. Notice of time and place of a regular or special session of the charge conference shall be given at least ten days in advance by two or more of the following (except as local laws may otherwise provide): from the pulpit of the church, in its weekly bulletin, in a local church publication, or by mail.

9. A charge conference shall be conducted in the language of the majority, with adequate provision being made for translation.

10. A joint charge conference for two or more pastoral charges may be held at the same time and place, as the district superintendent may determine.

* ¶ 247. Powers and Duties—1. The charge conference shall be the connecting link between the local church and the general Church and shall have general oversight of the church council(s).

2. The charge conference, the district superintendent, and the pastor shall organize and administer the pastoral charge and churches according to the policies and plans herein set forth. When the membership size, program scope, mission resources, or other circumstances so require, the charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the district superintendent, modify the organizational plans, provided that the provisions of ¶ 243 are observed.

3. The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church (¶¶ 120-124), receive reports, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church.

4. The charge conference recording secretary shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and shall be the custodian of all records and reports, and with the presiding officer, shall sign the minutes. A copy of the minutes shall be provided for the district superintendent, and a permanent copy shall be retained for church files. When there is only one local church on a charge, the secretary of the church

council shall be the secretary of the charge conference. When there is more than one church on a charge, one of the secretaries of the church councils shall be elected by the charge conference to serve as its secretary.

5. a) It is strongly recommended that the charge conference elect a church historian in order to preserve the history of each local church. The responsibilities of the historian are to keep the historical records up to date; serve as chairperson of the committee on records and history, if any; cooperate with the annual conference commission on archives and history; provide an annual report on the care of church records and historical materials to the charge conference; and also provide, with the pastor and the committee on records and history, if any, for the preservation of all local church records and historical materials no longer in current use. Records and historical materials include all documents, minutes, journals, diaries, reports, letters, pamphlets, papers, manuscripts, maps, photographs, books, audiovisuals, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, or any other documentary material, regardless of form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to any provisions of the Discipline in connection with the transaction of church business by any local church of The United Methodist Church or any of its constituent predecessors. The church historian may be a member of the church council. This person may also hold another elected position on the council.

b) There may be a local church committee on records and history, chaired by the church historian, to assist in fulfilling these responsibilities.

6. Each charge is encouraged to be inclusive in the make-up of the council so that all segments of the congregation are represented.

7. The charge conference may establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all of the elected or appointed officers of the local church, except where otherwise mandated. It is recommended that no officer serve more than three consecutive years in the same office.

* 8. The charge conference shall examine and recommend to the board of ordained ministry, faithfully adhering to the provisions of ¶ 311.2b, candidates for the ordained ministry who have been professing members in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least two years; whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and call to the ministry clearly establish them as candidates; and who have met the educational requirements. It is out of the faith and witness of the congregation that men and women respond to God's call to ordained ministry. Every local church should intentionally nurture candidates for ordained ministry and provide spiritual and some financial support for their education and formation as servant leaders for the ministry of the whole people of God.

9. The charge conference shall examine and recommend, faithfully adhering to the provisions of ¶ 312, renewal of candidacy of candidates for the ordained ministry.

10. The charge conference shall examine and recommend to the responsible Church agency any candidates for Church-related vocations.

11. The charge conference shall inquire annually into the gifts, labors, and usefulness of the lay speakers and certified lay ministers related to the charge and recommend to the district and/or conference committee on lay speaking those persons who have met the standards set forth for a local church lay speaker and/or for certified lay speaker and certified lay minister (¶¶ 266-269).

12. The charge conference shall receive reports annually on all local church organized Volunteer In Mission (UMVIM) teams, and the total number of local church participants in any UMVIM team, and shall forward the combined report to the annual conference and the general church through the regular annual local church statistical report.

13. The charge conference shall in consultation with the district superintendent set the compensation of the pastor and other staff appointed by the bishop.⁶

* 14. As soon as practicable after the session of annual conference, each district superintendent or designated agent shall notify each local church in the district what amounts have been apportioned to it for general church and annual conference funds. In preparation for and at the charge conference, it shall be the responsibility of the district superintendent, the pastor, and the lay member(s) of the annual conference and/or the church lay leader(s) to interpret to each charge conference the importance of these apportioned funds, explaining the causes supported by each of them and their place in the total program of the Church. The World Service Fund is basic in the financial program of The United Methodist Church. World Service on apportionment represents the minimum needs for the mission and ministry of the Church. Conference benevolences represent the minimum needs for mission and ministry in the annual conference. Payment in full of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church (¶ 812).

15. The charge conference shall receive and act on the annual report from the pastor concerning the membership. (See ¶ 231.)

16. In those instances where there are two or more churches on a pastoral charge, the charge conference may provide for a charge or parish council, a chargewide or parish treasurer, and such other officers, commissions, committees, and task groups as necessary to carry on the work of the charge.

17. In those instances where there are two or more churches on a pastoral charge, the charge conference may elect a chargewide or parish committee on

⁶ See Judicial Council Decisions 213, 252, 461.

nominations and leadership development, a chargewide or parish committee on pastor-parish relations, a chargewide or parish committee on finance, and a chargewide or parish board of trustees in such instances where property is held in common by two or more churches of the charge. All churches of the charge shall be represented on such chargewide or parish committees or boards. Chargewide or parish organization shall be consistent with disciplinary provisions for the local church.

18. In instances of multiple church charges, the charge conference shall provide for an equitable distribution of parsonage maintenance and upkeep expense or adequate housing allowance (if annual conference policy permits) among the several churches.

19. The charge conference shall promote awareness of and concurrence with Policies Relative to Socially Responsible Investments (§ 716), the Social Principles (§§ 160-166), and The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church.

20. If any charge conference initiates, joins, monitors, or terminates a boycott, the guidelines in The Book of Resolutions, 2008, should be followed. The General Conference is the only body that can initiate, empower, or join a boycott in the name of The United Methodist Church.

21. When authorized by the district superintendent and the district board of church location and building, the charge conference may provide for the sponsoring of satellite congregations.

22. The charge conference shall have such other duties and responsibilities as the general, jurisdictional, or annual conference may duly commit to it.

§ 248. The Church Conference—To encourage broader participation by members of the church, the charge conference may be convened as the church conference, extending the vote to all professing members of the local church present at such meetings. The church conference shall be authorized by the district superintendent. It may be called at the discretion of the district superintendent or following a written request to the district superintendent by one of the following: the pastor, the church council, or 10 percent of the professing membership of the local church. In any case a copy of the request shall be given to the pastor. Additional regulations governing the call and conduct of the charge conference as set forth in §§ 246-247 shall apply also to the church conference. A joint church conference for two or more churches may be held at the same time and place as the district superintendent may determine. A church conference shall be conducted in the language of the majority with adequate provision being made for translation. (For church local conference see § 2526.)

§ 249. Election of Leaders—The charge conference, or church conference authorized by the district superintendent, shall elect upon recommendation by the

committee on nominations and leadership development of each local church on the pastoral charge, or by nomination from the floor and by vote of each such local church, at least the following leaders for the four basic responsibilities (§ 244):

1. Chairperson of the church council.
2. The committee on nominations and leadership development.
3. The committee on pastor-parish relations and its chairperson.
4. A chairperson and additional members of the committee on finance; the financial secretary and the church treasurer(s) if not paid employees of the local church; and the trustees as provided in §§ 2525-2527, unless otherwise required by state law.
5. The lay member(s) of the annual conference and lay leader(s).
6. A recording secretary (see § 247.4).
7. Special attention shall be given to the inclusion of women, men, youth, young adults, persons over sixty-five years of age, persons with disabilities, and racial and ethnic persons.
8. All local church offices and all chairs of organizations within the local church may be shared between two persons, with the following exceptions: trustee, officers of the board of trustees, treasurer, lay member of annual conference, member and chairperson of the committee on staff- or pastor-parish relations. When two persons jointly hold a position that entails membership on the church council, both may be members of it.

§ 250. Removal of Officers and Filling of Vacancies—If a leader or officer who has been elected by the charge conference is unable or unwilling to perform the duties reasonably expected of such a leader or officer, the district superintendent may call a special session of the charge conference in accordance with § 246.7. The purpose of such special session shall be stated as “Consideration for the removal of person(s) from office and the election of person(s) to fill vacancy(ies).” The committee on nominations and leadership development (§§ 258.1, 247.17) shall meet as soon as possible after the special session of the charge conference has been announced and shall propose person(s) who may be elected if vacancy(ies) occur at the charge conference. If the charge conference votes to remove a person or persons from office, the vacancy(ies) shall be filled in the manner prescribed for elections in accordance with § 249. When a local church trustee is under consideration for removal and the pastoral charge consists of two or more churches, a church local conference shall be called instead of a charge conference, in accordance with § 2525.

§ 251. Duties of Leaders and Members—1. Out of the professing membership of each local church (§ 127), there shall be elected by the charge conference

a lay leader who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church and shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;
- b) meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;
- c) membership in the charge conference and the church council, the committee on finance, the committee on nominations and leadership development, and the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations, where, along with the pastor, the lay leader shall serve as an interpreter of the actions and programs of the annual conference and the general Church (to be better equipped to comply with this responsibility, it is recommended that a lay leader also serve as a lay member of annual conference);
- d) continuing involvement in study and training opportunities to develop a growing understanding of the Church's reason for existence and the types of ministry that will most effectively fulfill the Church's mission;
- e) assisting in advising the church council of opportunities available and the needs expressed for a more effective ministry of the church through its laity in the community;
- f) informing the laity of training opportunities provided by the annual conference. Where possible, the lay leader shall attend training opportunities in order to strengthen his or her work. The lay leader is urged to become a certified lay speaker.

In instances where more than one church is on a charge, the charge conference shall elect additional lay leaders so that there will be one lay leader in each church. Associate lay leaders may be elected to work with the lay leader in any local church.

2. The lay member(s) of the annual conference and alternates shall be elected annually or quadrennially as the annual conference directs. If the charge's lay representative to the annual conference shall cease to be a member of the charge or shall for any reason fail to serve, an alternate member in the order of election shall serve in place.

Both the lay members and the alternates shall have been professing members in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least two years and shall have been active participants for at least four years next preceding their election (see ¶ 32), except in a newly organized church, which shall have the privilege of representation at the annual conference session.⁷ No local pastor shall be eligible

7 See Judicial Council Decision 495.

as a lay member or alternate.⁸ United Methodist churches that become part of an ecumenical shared ministry shall not be deprived of their right of representation by a lay member in the annual conference. The lay member(s) of the annual conference, along with the pastor, shall serve as an interpreter of the actions of the annual conference session. These persons shall report to the local church council on actions of the annual conference as soon as possible, but not later than three months after the close of the conference.

3. The church council chairperson shall be elected by the charge conference annually and shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) leading the council in fulfilling its responsibilities (see ¶ 249);
- b) preparing and communicating the agenda of the council meetings in consultation with the pastor(s), lay leader, and other appropriate persons;
- c) reviewing and assigning responsibility for the implementation of actions taken by the council;
- d) communicating with members of the council and others as appropriate to permit informed action at council meetings;
- e) coordinating the various activities of the council;
- f) providing the initiative and leadership for the council as it does the planning, establishing of objectives and goals, and evaluating;
- g) participating in leadership training programs as offered by the annual conference and/or district.

The church council chairperson shall be entitled to attend meetings of all boards and committees of the church unless specifically limited by the Book of Discipline. The chairperson is encouraged to attend annual conference.

The Church Council

¶ 252. 1. Purpose—The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The church council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the charge conference (¶ 244).

2. Mission and Ministry—Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:

- a) The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.

8 See Judicial Council Decisions 170, 305, 328, 342, 469.

b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race, and the status and role of women.

c) The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; Lay Speaking Ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.

d) The leadership development and resourcing ministries shall give attention to the ongoing preparation and development of lay and clergy leaders for the ministry of the church (§ 258.1).

e) The nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities shall include consideration of (i) the election of a prayer coordinator to promote prayer and mobilize the local church to pray, (ii) establishing a prayer room or designated place for prayer and prayer resources, and (iii) encouraging intentional prayer for the pastoral leadership of the local church.

3. Meetings—a) The council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings.

b) In order for the council to give adequate consideration to the missional purpose of the local church, it is recommended that the first agenda item at each meeting be related to its ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness. The administrative and supportive responsibilities of the church will then be given attention. It is recommended that the council use a consensus/discernment model of decision-making.

4. Other Responsibilities—It will also be the responsibility of the church council to:

a) review the membership of the local church;

b) fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the annual charge conference;

c) establish the budget on recommendation of the committee on finance and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;

d) recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations);

e) review the recommendation of the committee on pastor-parish relations regarding provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s), and report the same to the charge conference for approval. Housing provisions shall comply with the

annual conference housing policy and parsonage standards. Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration.

5. Membership—The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. Members of the church council shall be involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation as defined in § 252.2. The membership of the council may consist of as few as eleven persons or as many as the charge conference deems appropriate. The council shall include persons who represent the program ministries of the church as outlined in § 243. The membership shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) the chairperson of the church council;
- b) the lay leader;
- c) the chairperson and/or a representative of the pastor-parish relations committee;
- d) the chairperson and/or a representative of the committee on finance;
- e) the chairperson and/or a representative of the board of trustees;
- f) the church treasurer;
- g) a lay member to annual conference;
- h) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Men;
- i) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Women;
- j) a young adult representative
- k) a representative of the United Methodist Youth;
- l) the pastor(s).

6. Quorum—The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Specialized Ministries

§ 253. Age-Level, Family, and Specialized-Ministries Coordinators (see also § 252)—The charge conference may elect annually a coordinator of children's ministries, a coordinator of youth ministries, a coordinator of adult ministries, and a coordinator of family ministries. Where young adult and specific age-level ministries would be enhanced, coordinators of young-adult and/or older-adult ministries may be elected. Where there are civic youth-serving agencies or scouting ministry units present there may be elected a scouting coordinator. Where needs for specialized areas of ministry arise (for example, single adults or persons with addictions, mental illness or disabilities), coordinators of these areas of ministry may be elected.

§ 254. Other Ministry Group Coordinators—In order to fulfill the mission of the local church, the charge conference may elect annually a coordinator or ministry group chairperson for any or all of these areas: Christian unity and

interreligious concerns, church and society, community volunteers, education, evangelism, higher education and campus ministry, missions, prayer advocacy, religion and race, status and role of women, earth advocacy, stewardship, worship, advocacy for persons with special needs, and church media resources.

Where desirable, the charge conference may combine coordinators' or ministry group chairpersons' assignments. Each coordinator or ministry group chairperson, if elected, shall work with the church council (or other appropriate body), pastor(s), and other church leaders to address the needs and opportunities of the particular area, utilizing all appropriate resources and relationships of the district, annual conference, and/or general church.

¶ 255. Church-School Superintendent and Small-Group Coordinator—The charge conference may elect: (1) a superintendent of the church school or Sunday school, and/or a coordinator of small-group ministries, who shall be responsible for helping to organize and supervise the total program for nurturing faith, building Christian community, and equipping people of all ages for ministry in daily life through small groups in the church; (2) a health-and-welfare ministries coordinator, who shall assist the local church and its people in being involved in direct service to persons in need; and (3) a communications coordinator, who shall assist the local church and its members with communication tasks by making available ideas, resources, and skills.

* ¶ 256. Program Ministries—The ministries of the local church are offered so that people encounter God's redeeming love for the world and respond by participating in God's action in the world. To achieve this ministry, people need to be involved in a variety of small-group settings. Some will be formed by the church council. Others will emerge with the approval of this body. Another type is historical, expressing itself in organizational structures that are related to counterparts in annual conferences and the general Church. These are referred to as program ministries and are related to the church council.

1. The Church School and Small-Group Ministries—In each local church there shall be a variety of small-group ministries, including the church school, for supporting the formation of Christian disciples focused on the transformation of the world. These small groups may concentrate on teaching and learning, fellowship, support, community ministries, and accountability. Members of small groups will build their knowledge of the Bible, the Christian faith, The United Methodist Church, and the societal context in which the church finds itself. In addition, small groups, including the church school, shall provide people with opportunities for practicing skills for faithful discipleship, including but not limited to worship, faith sharing, the creation of new faith communities, spiritual discernment, Bible study, theological reflection, prayer, community building,

service with the poor and marginalized, and advocacy for peace and justice. Local churches or charges are encouraged to develop a policy to provide for the safety of the infants, children, and youth entrusted to their care.

a) **The Church School**—In each local church there shall be a church school for the purpose of accomplishing the church's educational ministry.

The church school is challenged to create communities in which people of all ages experience God's active presence in their lives; foster healthy, nonviolent relationships within the congregation and community; testify to the reconciling love of God through Christ; and live out their faith in the world as witnesses to the coming reign of God.

b) **Accountable Discipleship**—Historically class leaders provided lay pastoral leadership, and classes and class meetings were the basic structural means of Christian spiritual formation in the early Methodist societies.

Class leaders may be commissioned and classes may be organized within the local congregation for the purpose of forming persons as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ through mutual accountability and support for witnessing to him in the world and for following his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (See ¶ 103, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies" [page 72], and ¶ 1118.)

c) **Mission and Ministry Groups**—Christian discipleship is patterned after the servanthood of Jesus, who cared for the sick, fed the hungry, and befriended the outcast. People may participate in small groups in order to serve the needs of the poor and marginalized, advocate for social justice, and demonstrate their faith in all their relationships and whatever setting they find themselves in.

d) **Support Groups**—Where needed, the local church may organize small groups to support particular needs of congregation and community members, including but not limited to care and prayer groups, divorce recovery, grief recovery, parenting groups, and support for people who are suffering from chronic illness, including persons with mental illnesses and their families.

* 2. **Local church children and youth work**—a) The children and youth work of a local church shall be organized in accordance with the constitution of the United Methodist Youth Organization approved by the annual conference. The work shall be lead by the local youth board accountable to the church council. The chairperson of the youth board shall be elected by the charge conference, unless the constitution of the United Methodist Youth Organization stipulates something else. If so, the charge conference shall confirm the election of the chairperson. The chairperson of the youth board shall be a member in the local church and a full member of the church council. (see ¶ 225.2)

b) Purpose—The youth board primarily exists to coordinate the work among children and youth with other local church ministries. Sensitive to the abilities and needs of each age-group among children and youth the youth board shall secure that goals set forth for all ministries are reached as far as possible also in children and youth work.

Youth who are members of the Church have all rights and responsibilities of church membership.

* 3. Each local church may have a local church scouting coordinator (or the central conferences equivalent) who shall relate to the church council, the superintendent of the church school, the coordinator of children's ministries, the coordinator of youth ministries, and all the various youth-serving agency structures. The local church scouting coordinator (or the central conferences equivalent) may relate to the district scouting coordinator and annual conference scouting coordinator who are resource and training advisors. All churches shall be encouraged to have a signed partnership agreement with all the units of these agencies which are part of their ministry.

* 4. *Not Relevant in Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.*

5. United Methodist Women—In every local church there shall be an organized unit of United Methodist Women. The following is the authorized constitution:

Article 1. Name—The name of this organization shall be United Methodist Women.

Article 2. Relationships—The unit of United Methodist Women in the local church is directly related to the district and conference organizations of United Methodist Women and to the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

Article 3. Purpose—The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the Church.

Article 4. Membership—Membership shall be open to any woman who indicates her desire to belong and to participate in the global mission of the Church through United Methodist Women. The pastor(s) shall be an ex officio member of the local unit and of its executive committee.

Article 5. Officers and Committees—The local unit shall elect a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and a committee on nominations. Additional officers and committees shall be elected or appointed as needed, in accor-

dance with the plans of the Women's Division as set forth in the bylaws for the local unit of United Methodist Women.

Article 6. Funds—a) The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall secure funds for the fulfillment of its purpose.

b) All funds from whatever source secured by the unit of United Methodist Women belong to the organization and shall be disbursed only in accordance with its constitution and by its order.

c) The total budget secured and administered by the organized unit in the local church shall include: (1) pledges and other money for the programs and responsibilities of the Women's Division to be directed through regular channels of finance of United Methodist Women; and (2) funds to be used in mission locally, which shall include amounts for administration and membership development.

d) The organized unit in the local church shall make an annual pledge to the total budget of the district or conference organization of United Methodist Women.

e) All undesignated funds channeled to the Women's Division shall be appropriated by the division.

Article 7. Meetings—The organized unit in the local church shall hold such meetings for implementing the purpose and transacting its business as the unit itself shall decide.

Article 8. Relationship in the Local Church—The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall encourage all women to participate in the total life and work of the Church and shall support them in assuming positions of responsibility and leadership.

Article 9. Amendments—Proposed amendments to this constitution may be sent to the recording secretary of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries before the last annual meeting of the division in the quadrennium.

Note: For a description of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries and its subsidiary organizations, see ¶¶ 1318-1326.

6. United Methodist Men—Each church or charge shall have an organized unit of United Methodist Men chartered and annually renewed through the General Commission on United Methodist Men. Other organized men's ministry groups in a local United Methodist Church shall annually report to the charge conference and be resourced through the General Commission on United Methodist Men. All local church men's organizations shall provide a dedicated ministry for building men spiritually and involving men in the total ministry of the Church (¶ 2302).

a) Local church resource material for supporting effective men's ministries shall be provided by the district, conference, and jurisdictional organizations of United Methodist Men and the General Commission on United Methodist Men (§ 2302).

b) United Methodist Men exists to declare the centrality of Christ in every man's life. Men's ministry leads to the spiritual growth of men and effective discipleship. This purpose is served as men are called to model the servant leadership of Jesus Christ.

c) Individual and group strategies form the foundation of United Methodist Men ministry.

(1) Enhance Evangelism, Mission, and Spiritual Life (EMS), as men become servant leaders.

(2) Advocate programs that train men within local churches to promote specific ministries including prayer, missions, stewardship, and civic/youth serving ministries.

(3) Forge pastoral partnerships by men committed to the effective support and service of clergy and local congregations.

(4) Enhance organizational strength through effective leadership, resources, membership growth, and financial accountability.

(5) Assist men in their ever-changing relationships, roles, and responsibilities in the family setting, workplace, and society.

(6) Understand the organization, doctrines, and beliefs of The United Methodist Church.

(7) Fulfill the membership vows through the commitment to prayer, presence, gifts, and service in congregational life.

(8) Fulfill the Great Commission with and through The United Methodist Church as one part of the Body of Christ.

d) Men seeking membership in a local unit of United Methodist Men will be asked to subscribe to the major strategies listed in § c above and to these personal objectives:

(1) To engage daily in Bible study and prayer.

(2) To bear witness to Christ's way in daily work and in all personal contacts through words and actions.

(3) To engage in Christian service.

e) United Methodist Men may be organized in one or more components within a local church as needed. Multiple local churches may also form a single unit of United Methodist Men according to their needs.

f) Membership shall be open to any man who indicates his desire to belong and to participate in the ministry of the church through United Methodist Men.

g) The appointed clergy of the local church or charge shall be ex officio member(s) of the unit and its executive committee

h) The organized unit of United Methodist Men shall secure funds for the fulfillment of its purpose. All funds from whatever source secured by the United Methodist Men's unit belong to the organization and shall be disbursed only in accordance with its constitution and/or by-laws and by its order.

(1) United Methodist Men's unit may have their own bank accounts.

(2) The UM Men's unit shall have an annual financial audit.

¶ 257. Other Age-Level Councils—Where the size of the church and the extent of the program indicate the need, the work of the church council (or other appropriate body) may be facilitated by one or more age-level councils and/or a family council, or such other means as fit the needs of the congregation. The membership of these councils shall be elected by the church council (or other appropriate body).

Administrative Committees

* ¶ 258. 1. There shall be elected annually, by the charge conference in each local church, a committee on nominations and leadership development that is composed of professing members of the local church. The charge of this committee is to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership for the local congregation. Members of the committee shall engage in and be attentive to developing and enhancing their own Christian spiritual life in light of the mission of the Church (Part V, Chapter One, Section 1).

In conducting its work, the committee shall engage in biblical and theological reflections on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of the local church. It shall provide a means of identifying the spiritual gifts and abilities of the membership. The committee shall work with the church council, or alternative administrative bodies, to determine the diverse ministry tasks of the congregation and the skills needed for leadership.

a) The committee on nominations and leadership development shall serve throughout the year to guide the church council, or alternative structure, on matters regarding the leadership (other than employed staff) of the congregation so as to focus on mission and ministry as the context for service; guide the development and training of spiritual leaders; recruit, nurture, and support spiritual leaders; and assist the church council, or alternative structure, in assessing the changing leadership needs.

b) The committee shall recommend to the charge conference, at its annual session, the names of people to serve as officers and leaders of designated ministries of the church council, or alternative administrative body required for the

work of the church and as the law of the church requires or as the charge conference deems necessary to its work.

c) This committee is to be composed of not more than nine persons, in addition to the pastor and the lay leader. At least one young adult elected by the charge conference shall serve as a member of the committee. One or more members elected by the charge conference may be youth. The pastor shall be the chairperson. A layperson elected by the committee on nominations and leadership development shall serve as the vice chairperson of the committee.

d) In order to secure experience and stability, the membership shall be divided into three classes, one of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term. To begin the process of rotation where such has not been in place, in the first year, one class shall be elected for one year, one class for two years, and one class for three years. Each year's new class, and vacancies at the time of charge conference, shall be elected from nominees, from the floor of the charge conference and/or through the recommendation of the committee on nominations and leadership development. Retiring members of the committee shall not succeed themselves. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. When vacancies occur during the year, nominees shall be elected by the church council, or alternative church structure, with the permission of the district superintendent.

e) In the identification and selection process, care shall be given that the leadership of ministries reflects inclusivity and diversity.

2. There shall be elected annually by the charge conference in each local church a committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations who are professing members of the local church or charge or associate members (§ 227), except in cases where central conference legislation or local law provides otherwise. People serving on this committee must be engaged in and attentive to their Christian spiritual development so as to give proper leadership in the responsibilities with which the committee is entrusted.

In conducting its work, the committee shall identify and clarify its values for ministry. It shall engage in biblical and theological reflections on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of the local church.

The committee shall reflect biblically and theologically on the role and work of the pastor(s) and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities. The committee shall assist the pastor(s) and staff in assessing their gifts and setting priorities for leadership and service. It is the responsibility of the committee to communicate with the committee on nominations and leadership development and/or the church council when there is a need for other leaders or for employed

staff to perform in areas where utilization of the gifts of the pastor(s) and staff proves an inappropriate stewardship of time.

a) The committee shall be composed of not fewer than five nor more than nine persons representative of the total charge. One of the members shall be a young adult and one member may be a youth. In addition, the lay leader and a lay member of the annual conference shall be members. No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee.

b) In order to secure experience and stability, the membership shall be divided into three classes, one of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The lay member of the annual conference and the lay leader are exempt from the three-year term. To begin the process of rotation where such a process has not been in place, on the first year one class shall be elected for one year, one class for two years, and one class for three years. Members of the committee shall be able to succeed themselves for one three-year term. When vacancies occur during the year, nominees shall be elected at the church council (or alternative church structure).

c) In those charges where there is more than one church, the committee shall include at least one representative and the lay leader from each local church.

d) The committees on pastor-parish relations of charges that are in cooperative parish ministries shall meet together to consider the professional leadership needs of the cooperative parish ministry as a whole.

e) The committee shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the bishop, the district superintendent, the pastor, any other person accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. The committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor and/or the district superintendent. The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself.

The committee may meet with the district superintendent without the pastor or appointed staff under consideration being present. However, the pastor or appointed staff under consideration shall be notified prior to such meeting with the district superintendent and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter.

The committee shall meet in closed session, and information shared in the committee shall be confidential.

f) In the event that only one congregation on a charge containing more than one church has concerns it wishes to share, its member(s) in the committee may meet separately with the pastor or any other person accountable to the committee

or the district superintendent, but only with the knowledge of the pastor and/or district superintendent.

g) The duties of the committee shall include the following:

(1) To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor(s) and staff and their family(s).

(2) To promote unity in the church(es).

(3) To confer with and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on the matters pertaining to the effectiveness of ministry; relationships with the congregation; conditions that may impede the effectiveness of ministry; and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry.

(4) To confer with, consult, and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on matters pertaining to priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time and priorities for the demands and effectiveness of the mission and ministry of the congregation.

(5) To provide evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastor(s) and staff in an ongoing effective ministry and for identifying continuing educational needs and plans.

(6) To communicate and interpret to the congregation the nature and function of ministry in The United Methodist Church regarding open itinerancy, the preparation for ordained ministry, and the Ministerial Education Fund.

(7) To develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for associate pastors and other staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor. The term associate pastor is used as a general term to indicate any pastoral appointment in a local church other than the pastor in charge (see ¶ 339). Committees shall be encouraged to develop specific titles for associate pastors that reflect the job descriptions and expectations.

(8) To consult with the pastor and staff concerning continuing education and spiritual renewal, to arrange with the church council for the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth, and to encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization.

(9) To enlist, interview, evaluate, review, and recommend annually to the charge conference lay preachers and persons for candidacy for ordained ministry (see ¶¶ 247.8 and 310), and to enlist and refer to the General Board of Global Ministries persons for candidacy for missionary service, recognizing that The United Methodist Church affirms the biblical and theological support of persons regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, or disabilities for these ministries. Neither the pastor nor any member of the committee on pastor-parish relations shall be present during the consideration of a candidacy application or renewal for a

member of their immediate family. The committee shall provide to the charge conference a list of students from the charge who are preparing for ordained ministry, diaconal ministry, and/or missionary service, and shall maintain contact with these students, supplying the charge conference with a progress report on each student.

* (10) To interpret preparation for ordained ministry and support for theological education.

(11) To confer with the pastor and/or other appointed members of the staff if it should become evident that the best interests of the charge and pastor(s) will be served by a change of pastor(s). The committee shall cooperate with the pastor(s), the district superintendent, and the bishop in securing clergy leadership. Its relationship to the district superintendent and the bishop shall be advisory only.⁹ (See ¶¶ 430-433.)

* (12) To recommend to the church council, after consultation with the pastor, the professional and other staff positions (whether employee or contract) needed to carry out the work of the church or charge. The committee and the pastor shall recommend to the church council a written statement of policy and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not subject to episcopal appointment as ordained clergy. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss nonappointed personnel. When persons are hired or contracted, consideration shall be given to the training qualifications and certification standards set forth by the general Church agency to which such positions are related. The committee shall further recommend to the church council a provision for adequate health and life insurance, pension and severance pay for all lay employees.

(13) To recommend to the charge conference, when the size of the employed staff of the charge makes it desirable, the establishment of a personnel committee. This committee shall be composed of such members of the committee on pastor-parish relations as it may designate and such additional members as the charge conference may determine.

(14) To educate the church community on the value of diversity of selection in clergy and lay staff and develop a commitment to same.

(15) Members of the committee on pastor-parish relations (or staff-parish relations) shall keep themselves informed of personnel matters in relationship to the Church's policy, professional standards, liability issues, and civil law. They are responsible for communicating and interpreting such matters to staff. Committee members should make themselves available for educational and training oppor-

9 See Judicial Council Decision 701.

tunities provided by the conference, district, and/or other arenas that will enable them to be effective in their work.

(16) To consult on matters pertaining to pulpit supply, proposals for compensation, travel expense, vacation, health and life insurance, pension, housing (which may be a church-owned parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of parsonage if in compliance with the policy of the annual conference), and other practical matters affecting the work and families of the pastor and staff, and to make annual recommendations regarding such matters to the church council, reporting budget items to the committee on finance. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The chairperson of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the chairperson of the board of trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance.

3. There shall be a board of trustees, whose membership and duties are detailed in ¶¶ 2524-2550.

4. There shall be a committee on finance, elected annually by the charge conference upon recommendation by the committee on nominations and leadership development or from the floor, composed of the chairperson; the pastor(s); a lay member of the annual conference; the chairperson of the church council; the chairperson or representative of the committee on pastor-parish relations; a representative of the trustees to be selected by the trustees; the chairperson of the ministry group on stewardship; the lay leader; the financial secretary; the treasurer; the church business administrator; and other members to be added as the charge conference may determine. It is recommended that the chairperson of the committee on finance shall be a member of the church council. The financial secretary, treasurer, and church business administrator, if paid employees, shall be members without vote.

The positions of treasurer and financial secretary should not be combined and held by one person, and the persons holding these two positions should not be immediate family members.

Where there is no stewardship ministry area, stewardship shall be the responsibility of a subgroup of the committee on finance or shall be assigned to a task group that shall report to the church council.

All financial askings to be included in the annual budget of the local church shall be submitted to the committee on finance. The committee on finance shall compile annually a complete budget for the local church and submit it to the church council for review and adoption. The committee on finance shall be charged with responsibility for developing and implementing plans that will raise

sufficient income to meet the budget adopted by the church council. It shall administer the funds received according to instructions from the church council.

The committee shall carry out the church council's directions in guiding the treasurer(s) and financial secretary.

a) The committee shall designate at least two persons not of the immediate family residing in the same household to count the offering. They shall work under the supervision of the financial secretary. A record of all funds received shall be given to the financial secretary and treasurer. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in accordance with the procedures established by the committee on finance. The financial secretary shall keep records of the contributions and payments.

* b) The church treasurer(s) shall disburse all money contributed to causes represented in the local church budget, and such other funds and contributions as the church council may determine. Contributions to benevolence shall not be used for any cause other than that to which they have been given. The church treasurer shall make regular and detailed reports on funds received and expended to the committee on finance and the church council.¹⁰ The treasurer(s) shall be adequately bonded.

c) The committee on finance shall establish written financial policies to document the internal controls of the local church. The written financial policies should be reviewed for adequacy and effectiveness annually by the committee on finance and submitted as a report to the charge conference annually.

d) The committee shall make provision for an annual audit of the financial statements of the local church and all its organizations and accounts. The committee shall make a full and complete report to the annual charge conference. A local church audit is defined as an independent evaluation of the financial reports and records and the internal controls of the local church by a qualified person or persons.

The audit shall be conducted for the purpose of reasonably verifying the reliability of financial reporting, determining whether assets are being safeguarded, and determining compliance with local law, local church policies and procedures, and the Book of Discipline.

The audit may include: 1) a review of the cash and investment reconciliations; 2) interviews with the treasurer, financial secretary, pastor(s), finance committee chair, business manager, those who count offerings, church secretary, etc., with inquiries regarding compliance with existing written financial policies and procedures; 3) a review of journal entries and authorized check signers for each checking and

10 See Judicial Council Decisions 63, 320, 539.

investment account; and 4) other procedures requested by the committee on finance.

The audit shall be performed by an audit committee composed of persons unrelated to the persons listed in (2) above or by an independent certified public accountant (CPA), accounting firm, or equivalent.

e) The committee shall recommend to the church council proper depositories for the church's funds. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in the name of the local church.

f) Contributions designated for specific causes and objects shall be promptly forwarded according to the intent of the donor and shall not be used for any other purpose.¹¹

g) After the budget of the local church has been approved, additional appropriations or changes in the budget must be approved by the church council.

h) The committee shall prepare annually a report to the church council of all designated funds that are separate from the current expense budget.

5. The church council may appoint such other committees as it deems advisable, including: committee on communications, committee on records and history, committee on health and welfare, and committee on memorial gifts.

Section VII. The Method of Organizing a New Church

¶ 259. 1. A new local church or mission congregation shall be established only with the consent of the bishop in charge and the cabinet and with due consideration of the conference entity assigned the responsibility for congregational development. The bishop shall designate the district within whose bounds the church or mission congregation shall be organized. The district superintendent of that district, or his or her designee, shall be the agent in charge of the project and shall recommend to the district board of church location and building (¶ 2518) the method of organization, and whether a specific site shall be selected or an area of organization be designated. The district superintendent shall avail him/herself of existing demographic, lifestyle and ethnographic information in the process of establishing a new congregation and its location, or shall recommend to the board of trustees of a selected local church that they share their facility with the proposed congregation. If there is a city or district missionary organization, or if funds for the project are anticipated from a conference organization, those bodies shall also be asked to approve the method of organization and location for a new congregation.

a) A mission congregation may be designated when any of the following conditions exist: 1) Membership opportunities and resources are limited and not likely to result in a chartered congregation for an extended period of time. 2)

11 See Judicial Council Decision 976.

A strategic demographic, cultural or language opportunity for serving a limited population is present. 3) It is expected that long-term sustaining funding from sources outside the congregation will be necessary to enable the congregation to exist, and the assumption of full connectional support items by the congregation is unlikely. 4) It is probable that the annual conference will need to provide long-term administrative guidance, including attention to the distinctive property needs of the congregation. When any of these conditions exist, the cabinet, in consultation with the congregational development area of the annual conference, may designate an entity a mission congregation. The mission congregation may be organized in the same manner and have the same rights and powers as any local church.

2. The bishop may appoint a pastor to launch a new local church, or with the bishop's approval the district superintendent may authorize a local church or group of local churches to launch a new church by gathering interested people in small groups for Bible study, outreach, community building, and worship at a site in an area approved by the district board of church location and building.

3. A pastor of The United Methodist Church, while serving as the pastor of a new church prior to the convening of a constituting conference (§ 259.7), may receive a person into the membership of The United Methodist Church under the conditions of § 217. When a person is received as either a baptized or a professing member, the pastor shall send the name, address, and related facts to the annual conference secretary for recording on a general membership roll. These names shall be transferred as soon as possible to the roll of the new church, when constituted, or to another church upon the member's request. If the new church is being sponsored by an existing church, membership may be recorded on the roll of that church.

4. Each annual conference or its equivalent may determine the minimum number of members and other criteria required for the organization of a local United Methodist church.

5. When the number of people interested in being charter members of the new church reaches the number necessary as set by the conference to charter a new church, the district superintendent shall call the interested people to meet at an appointed time for the purpose of organizing them into a chartered (organized) local church, or may by written authorization designate an elder in the district to call such a meeting. The district superintendent or the designated elder shall preside and shall appoint a secretary to keep a record of the meeting. Following a time of worship, opportunity shall be given to those in attendance to present themselves for membership.

6. People desiring to become professing members by transfer or on profession of their faith in Christ shall also be given opportunity to present themselves for membership. Any who have not been baptized shall receive the sacrament of baptism, profess their faith and be received as members. Other baptized people are to be received as baptized members.

7. Those who will be members of the constituting church conference shall be those received into the professing membership.

8. The constituting church conference shall then be called to order by the district superintendent or by an elder whom the superintendent designates (see ¶ 246.5). A committee on nominations, elected on nominations from the floor as the conference may determine, shall nominate members of the proposed church council. The chairperson of the committee on nominations shall be the appointed pastor (see

¶ 258.1c). When the members have been chosen, the district superintendent or the designated elder shall declare the church properly constituted.

9. The district superintendent or an elder whom the superintendent designates shall then adjourn the constituting church conference and call to order the charge conference of the pastoral charge. The membership of the charge conference shall be those newly elected, and any others entitled to membership. The charge conference shall then elect such officers of the church as the Discipline requires, including trustees of church property, and shall organize its structure as provided in the Discipline. When such officers have been duly elected and such structure put in place, the church is duly organized, and from this point its work shall proceed as described in the Discipline, provided that when a newly organized church is attached to a circuit, the charge conference shall not be held until such time as representatives from all the churches of the charge can be properly assembled for that purpose.

10. The charge conference may take action, at its discretion, authorizing and directing the newly elected trustees to incorporate the newly organized church in accordance with local laws and the provisions of the Discipline.

Section VIII. Transfer of a Local Church

¶ 260. A local church may be transferred from one annual conference to another in which it is geographically located by a two-thirds vote of the professing members who are present and voting in each of the following: (1) the charge conference, (2) a congregational meeting of the local church, and (3) each of the two annual conferences involved. Upon announcement of the required majorities by the bishop or bishops involved, the transfer shall immediately be effective. The

votes required may originate in the local church or either of the annual conferences involved and shall be effective regardless of the order in which taken. In each case a two-thirds vote of those present and voting shall remain effective unless and until rescinded prior to the completion of the transfer by a vote of a majority of those present and voting.

Section IX. Protection of Rights of Congregations

* ¶ 261. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.*

Section X. Special Sundays

¶ 262. The special Sundays in The United Methodist Church intended to illustrate the nature and calling of the church are celebrated annually. The special Sundays are placed on the calendar to make clear the calling of the church as the people of God, and to give persons the opportunity to contribute offerings to special programs.

Six churchwide special Sundays provide for churchwide offerings to express our commitment: Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, World Communion Sunday, United Methodist Student Day, Peace with Justice Sunday, and Native American Ministries Sunday. Four special Sundays are without offering: Heritage Sunday, Laity Sunday, Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday, and Men's Ministry Sunday. Four churchwide Sundays—Christian Education, Golden Cross, Disability Awareness, and Rural Life—provide opportunities for annual conference offerings.

The special Sundays approved by General Conference shall be the only Sundays of churchwide emphasis. The program calendar of the denomination shall include only the special Sundays approved by General Conference, special Sundays approved by ecumenical agencies to which The United Methodist Church officially relates, and the days and seasons of the Christian Year.

Because the central conferences represent a diversity of history and heritages, they shall not be required to observe all of the special days listed below. The central conferences are authorized to observe other special days appropriate to their unique history and heritages.

* ¶¶ 263- 265. *Not relevant in the Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conference.*

Section XI. Lay Speaking Ministries

* ¶ 266. Lay Speaking—1. A lay speaker (local church or certified) is a professing member of a local church or charge who is ready and desirous to serve the

Church and who is well informed on and committed to the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership, and care-giving ministries. An applicant must be active in the support of the local church or charge.

2. Lay speakers are to serve the local church or charge (or beyond the local church or charge) in any way in which their witness or leadership and service inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship, including the interpretation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and ministries of the church.

3. Through continued study and training a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church or charge.

a) To take initiative in giving leadership, assistance, and support to the program emphases of the church.

b) To lead meetings for prayer, training, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor, district superintendent, or committee on lay speaking.

c) To conduct, or assist in conducting, services of worship, and present sermons and addresses when requested by the pastor, district superintendent, or committee on lay speaking.

d) To relate to appropriate committees and ministry areas in providing leadership for congregational and community life and fostering care-giving ministries.

e) To assist in the distribution of the elements of Holy Communion whenever celebrated upon request by the pastor of the church of which the lay speaker is a member.

* 4. Lay speaker training courses shall be those recommended by the Northern Europe & Eurasia board of higher education and ministry. Such training should enable ministries with all language and cultural groups as appropriate.

5. It is recommended that a service of commitment be held for persons recognized as local church or certified lay speakers.

¶ 267. Local Church Lay Speaker—1. A candidate may be recognized as a local church lay speaker by the district or conference committee on lay speaking after the candidate has:

a) Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the church council or the charge conference of the local church in which membership is held. The district superintendent shall be responsible for reporting the names of applicants to the appropriate committee.

b) Completed the basic course for lay speaking.

2. The local church lay speaker shall serve the local church in which membership is held by witness of the spoken word, vital leadership service, and care-giving ministry (see ¶ 266.3).

3. To maintain status, a report and reapplication with recommendations must be submitted annually and a refresher course approved by the Conference Committee on Lay Speaking Ministries must be completed once in every three years. (see ¶ 247.11).

¶ 268. Certified Lay Speaker—1. A candidate may be recognized as a certified lay speaker by the district or conference committee on Lay Speaking Ministries after the candidate has:

a) Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the church council or the charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.

b) Completed both basic and one advanced training courses for lay speaking.

c) Had his or her qualifications reviewed and approved by the appropriate committee (see ¶ 258.2 f [9]).

2. The certified lay speaker shall continue to serve the local church in the witness of the spoken word, vital leadership service, and care-giving ministry (see ¶ 266.1). In addition, the certified lay speaker may serve in the district and conference and in local churches other than the local church in which membership is held.

3. Recognition as a certified lay speaker shall be renewed annually by the district or conference committee on Lay Speaking Ministries after the certified lay speaker has:

a) Requested in writing the renewal of certification.

b) Submitted an annual report to the charge conference and the committee on Lay Speaking Ministries, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of lay speaking service.

c) Been recommended for renewal by the pastor and the church council or charge conference.

d) Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay speakers.

¶ 269. Transfer of Certification by Certified Lay Speakers—A certified lay speaker who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's committee on Lay Speaking Ministries confirming current certification and the date of completion of the most recent advanced course taken. Further renewal of certification is in accordance with ¶ 267.

¶ 270. Provisions for Lay Missioners—Lay missioners are committed laypersons, mostly volunteers, who are willing to be trained and work in a team with a pastor-mentor to develop faith communities, establish community ministries, develop church school extension programs, and engage in congregational development. All lay missioners must follow the guidelines established by the National Committee on Hispanic Ministries of the National Plan for Hispanic Ministries and may be certified by their annual conference. If annual conferences choose to certify lay missioners, they must do so according to the guidelines. They are accountable to their pastor-mentor as members of the ministry team. The ministry team is accountable to the local congregation or sponsoring body that established the goals for the ministry and assigned the ministry team. The lay missioner is accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned. The concept of lay missioners is theologically based in the ministry of the laity. While lay missioners are engaged in a variety of ministries, their purpose is to complement, not replace, pastors.¹²

* ¶ 271. Certified Lay Minister—In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God's grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized.

1. The certified lay minister shall preach the Word, provide a care ministry to the congregation, assist in program leadership, and be a witness in the community for the growth, missional and connectional thrust of The United Methodist Church as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person.

2. A certified lay speaker or a person with equivalent training as defined by his/her district or conference may be certified as a lay minister by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry after he/she has:

a) Been recommended by the pastor of the local church where he/she holds membership and by vote of the church council or charge conference.

b) Completed courses relevant to his/her assignment including preaching and exegesis, the care of the congregation, and other courses as recommended by the General Board of Discipleship and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with leaders in the annual conference, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

c) Demonstrated appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship and liturgy of The United Methodist Church through service in his/her local church.

d) Been recommended by the district superintendent after completion of appropriate screening.

¹² See Judicial Council Decision 693.

* e) Made application in writing to the board of ordained ministry.

* f) Appeared before the Board of Ordained Ministry for review and approval.

3. The certified lay minister is to apply in writing for recertification biannually to the Board of Ordained Ministry upon:

a) Ministry review by church council or charge conference from the congregation of which he/she is a member.

b) Satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event, and

c) Recommendation of the district superintendent.

4. The certified lay minister under assignment is to appear bi-annually before the District Committee on Ordained Ministry for recertification after:

a) Ministry review by church council or charge conference where assigned,

b) Satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event, and

c) Recommendation of the district superintendent.

5. Transfer of Certification by Certified Lay Ministers

A certified lay minister who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's Committee on Ordained Ministry confirming current certification.

6. The certified lay minister is a layperson and as such is not eligible for support by equitable compensation funds or pension that are provided for clergy members. The local congregation is encouraged to provide appropriate compensation.

