

Proposed Amendment to ¶2556 2.

2. New Methodist Denominations—The United Methodist Church hereby creates a pathway for the development of New Methodist Denominations as set forth below. The United Methodist Church shall continue as the denomination for all central conferences, annual conferences, and local churches that do not choose to separate and form or join a New Methodist Denomination.

a) Conditional Qualification—The United Methodist Council of Bishops shall conditionally recognize as a New Methodist Denomination, with which local churches, annual conferences or central conferences may opt (by vote or default) to align. Any proposed New Methodist Denomination may be Conditionally Qualified by meeting all of the following criteria:

(1) The leadership group forming the new denomination must register their intent to form a New Methodist Denomination by submitting a Petition of Intent with the Secretary of the Council of Bishops by May 15, 2021.

(2) The Petition of Intent must propose a distinct legal existence, reflecting its polity.

(3) The Petition of Intent must propose to follow doctrinal standards consistent with the Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church, the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the General Rules of the Methodist Church, as set out in ¶ 104 of the Book of Discipline.

(4) The Petition of Intent must propose a definite and distinct ecclesiastical governance structure.

Unless within 30 days of receipt of the petition by the Executive Secretary, the Council of Bishops determines and states, in writing, based solely upon the face of the Petition of Intent, that the petition is deficient by its failure to meet one or more of the forgoing requirements then the petition shall be deemed approved. No leadership group shall be barred from filing an amended or additional timely Petition of Intent based upon the fact that an earlier petition was denied as deficient; petitions may be amended to cure deficiencies identified by the Council of Bishops with such amendment relating back to the original filing date of the petition. An Amended Petition of Intent shall be acted upon by the Council of Bishops within 30 days of submission and shall be subject to the same requirements as the original petition. Any Petition of Intent or Amended Petition of Intent timely submitted and not acted upon by the Council of Bishops by June 15, 2021 shall be deemed approved. An entity meeting the qualification requirements receives “Conditional Qualification”.

b) Access and authority to vote—Any Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination shall be allowed to share information about the proposed New Methodist Denomination with central conferences, annual conferences, Local Churches and individual members of such bodies. Such information may shared directly without the requirement that such information be approved by the United Methodist Church or any constituent body of the United Methodist Church. Upon request by a Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination, United Methodist bishops, clergy, and other leaders shall forward pertinent information to central conference members, annual conference members, clergy, and local church leaders, and they shall not hinder representatives of the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denominations from meeting with interested parties. Meetings that take place on the property of a local church shall abide by the provisions of the Book of Discipline regarding use of local church property, including but not limited to ¶ 2533 and the consent of the appointed clergy. The conditional qualification in ¶ 2556.2a provides recognition that allows a central conference,

annual conference or Local Church the right to vote on the question of joining the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination.

c) Qualification—The qualification provided in ¶ 2556.2c is necessary in order to form separation and ecumenical agreements. As soon as possible a Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination shall submit the following information:

(1) The Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination shall submit to the General Council on Finance and Administration information sufficient for it to verify that the New Methodist Denomination has a distinct legal existence sufficient to allow it to enter into Separation and Ecumenical Agreements and that the proposed signers of such agreements have the authority to bind the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination. Following such submission, General Council on Finance and Administration shall have sixty (60) days to review the submitted information and determine that the requirements of this sub-paragraph have not been met. Unless General Council on Finance and Administration determines, in a writing that includes its supporting reasoning, that the information provided to it is inadequate to meet the criteria of this sub-paragraph, this criteria shall be deemed satisfied. A Conditional Qualified New Methodist Denomination shall have the right to cure any deficiencies identified by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

(2) The Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination must submit information to Executive Secretary of the the Council of Bishops demonstrating that it will

(a) follow doctrinal standards consistent with the Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church, the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the General Rules of the Methodist Church, as set out in ¶ 104 of the Book of Discipline;

(b) have a definite and distinct ecclesiastical governance structure; and

(c) have a minimum of 100 United Methodist local churches, regardless of jurisdiction or geography, inside or outside the United States, that have voted under this paragraph to join the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination. For purposes of determining whether criteria (c) has been met, the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination may include new local churches formed by members who have left United Methodist local churches.

(3) Upon review of the information required for Conditional Qualification in ¶ 2556.2a, along with the documentation required under ¶2556 2c, the United Methodist Council of Bishops shall, if all requirements have been met, certify compliance with the requirements and recognize the Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination as a New Methodist Denomination, for all purposes under ¶ 2556. It is expressly recognized that as to requirements of ¶2556 2c1) and 2556 2c2)(b) a Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination shall have the right to adopt of its own standards and such standards are not subject to modification or rejection by the Council of Bishops based upon any subjective criteria. Such certification shall be made within 30 days of a Conditionally Qualified New Methodist Denomination submitting the information required under ¶2556 2c. unless the Council of Bishops determines and states, in writing, based solely upon the face of the documentation submitted to the Executive Secretary under this paragraph, that the documentation is deficient by its failure to meet one or more of the requirements of ¶2556 c. It is the express determination of the General Conference that such New Methodist Denomination meeting the requirements of ¶2556 2. share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in ¶2556.2, whether the New Methodist Denomination or its constituent entities, or both, is able to assume pension liabilities under a separate pension plan administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (also called Wespeth), shall be determined under ¶ 2556.8c. If these entities are not able to assume pension liabilities under the terms of ¶ 2556.8c, the annual conferences and local churches in the United States aligning with the New Methodist Denomination are subject to the terms of ¶ 2556.8c(4).