

Chapter 3

LOCAL CHURCH CONFERENCE

A. Composition and Function

625. The covenant members of a local church, duly called and assembled together to do business, constitute the local church conference. It is the highest governing body of a local Wesleyan church, and exercises those powers granted to the local church by the Constitution (315), and other powers specifically granted to the local church conference by the General Conference as set forth in *The Discipline* (cf. 302; 555; 560:4). In churches which choose to implement the community membership category, community members will attend the local church conference and participate in keeping with the limits set forth in 560:3-4.

B. Sessions

630. Regular Sessions.

(1) **Annual Sessions.** The local church conference shall meet annually, near the close of the fiscal year, as established by the district conference (1180:18), at a time approved by the district superintendent in consultation with the pastor and announced from the pulpit, and in the weekly bulletin when such is available, at least two weeks in advance (cf. 625). Reports shall be made; the officers, local board of administration and trustees shall be elected (cf. 823; 965; 1103); and such other business shall be transacted as necessary (cf. 650).

(2) **Quarterly Sessions.** The local church conference may choose to meet quarterly at such times as the district superintendent and pastor shall arrange, unless the district superintendent shall in writing delegate to the pastor full authority for setting such dates. Such quarterly sessions shall be announced from the pulpit, and in the weekly bulletin when such is available, at least two weeks in advance of the appointed time. At each session, reports shall be given and other business transacted as necessary (cf. 650).

633. Special Session.

(1) **General Business.** The local church conference may be called into special session by the pastor, or in times of emergency by the district superintendent, for the transaction of any business other than the election of officers, with announcement from the pulpit in two regular services, the first

of which shall be given not less than one week before the appointed time. Notice shall also be given one week in advance in the church bulletin, when such is available. The requirements for special sessions dealing with legal or property matters are set forth in 4040 and 4700.

(2) **Reception of Members.** In those churches in which the local church conference must vote on the reception of covenant members (297:5), the pastor may call a special session for such a vote, with announcement from the pulpit in one regular service in advance of the appointed time.

(3) **Pastoral Vote.** The vice-chair of the local board of administration (635; 773), when authorized to do so by the local board of administration, and having notified the district superintendent, may call a special session of the local church conference to conduct a pastoral vote, with announcement from the pulpit, and in the weekly bulletin when such is available, at least two weeks in advance of the appointed time, except that during negotiations for calling a new pastor the announcement need be made only from the pulpit and in only one regular service in advance of the appointed time.

C. Organization and Procedure

1. Officers

635. Chair. The district superintendent, or a representative appointed by the district superintendent, shall preside over the local church conference whenever present. In their absence, the pastor shall preside, except over sessions dealing with the securing or retaining of a pastor. The vice-chair of the local board of administration (773) shall preside over sessions dealing with the securing or retaining of a pastor, if the district superintendent, or a representative appointed by the district superintendent, is not present. The vice-chair may also preside, at the request of the pastor, over other sessions of the local church conference. In emergencies, when the pastor is absent or incapacitated, the vice-chair may preside over other sessions with the permission of the district superintendent.

638. Secretary. The local church secretary, elected annually by the local church conference, shall serve as secretary of the local church conference by virtue of this office (830:1).

2. Procedure

640. Quorum. Those covenant members who assemble for a meeting of the local church conference when such has been duly called shall constitute a quorum.

643. Voting. A majority vote of those present and voting in the local church conference shall be sufficient in all items of business unless otherwise required by *The Discipline* or by local laws when dealing with legal matters.

645. Rules of Order. The business of the local church conference shall be conducted according to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, except when formally suspended or otherwise ordered by *The Discipline*.

650. Order of Business. The local church conference, in all regular sessions, whether annually or quarterly, shall give special attention to the spiritual, numerical and financial progress of the church, including the following items:

(1) Reading of minutes of last session, unless authority to approve the minutes has been delegated by the local church conference to the local board of administration.

(2) Receiving the reports of the pastor(s), Sunday school superintendent, president of Wesleyan Men, director of Wesleyan Women, coordinator of Wesleyan Kids for Missions, director of Christian Youth Clubs International, president of Wesleyan Youth, chair of Young Adults International and any others the local church conference shall order.

(3) Receiving the reports of the various treasurers (cf. 863).

(4) Receiving and acting upon the reports of boards and committees.

(5) Receiving the reports of the lay ministers.

(6) Granting or renewing of local licenses for lay ministers.

(7) Recommending suitable members to the district conference for district licenses as ministerial students and special workers (315:3-4).

(8) Electing of officers, trustees and delegates.

(9) Miscellaneous business.

D. Duties and Powers

655. The local church conference has duties and powers:

(1) To approve by vote the reception of covenant members and to expel or discontinue covenant members unless it delegates full authority concerning membership to the local board of administration (297:5; 315:1). Such authority may be withdrawn from the local board of administration at any annual session of the local church conference.

(2) To call a pastor or renew the call (315:2; 692; 705; 718; 720; 735), or to vote on the termination of a renewed call as set forth in 722:2.

(3) To authorize a nominating committee, which shall be chaired by the pastor, to which the local board of administration shall elect two covenant

members from its membership, and to which the local church conference may, at its option, elect up to four additional covenant members who are not members of the local board of administration (820-823).

(4) To elect the church officers, which shall consist of the lay leader (if any; cf. 833), the local church secretary, the local church treasurer (if any, cf. 842), the Sunday school superintendent (if any, cf. 889), the trustees (designating annually at least one trustee to serve as a member of the local board of administration), members-at-large of the local board of administration (cf. 752), and lay delegates to the district conference (315:5, 7).

(5) To receive reports from the pastor(s), church officers, lay ministers and other persons, boards and committees as desired, and as listed in 650:2-5.

(6) To remove, when such is in the best interests of the church, by a majority vote of those present and voting, any church officer, trustee, or delegate mentioned in 655:4 (cf. 782:25).

(7) To license lay ministers (315:3), and to renew or revoke such license (cf. 782:19; 3410; 3420; 3440:2). This power may be delegated to the local board of administration.

(8) To recommend suitable members to the district conference for district licenses as ministerial students, licensed ministers, or special workers (315:3). This power may be delegated to the local board of administration.

(9) To adopt petitions or resolutions to the district conference, including memorials proposed for recommendation to the General Conference (1150-1156).

(10) To adopt financial policies, which policies shall be administered by the local board of administration (cf. 782:29).

(11) To authorize the enlargement or decrease of the employed staff (cf. 782:16).

(12) To adopt an annual budget (cf. 782:30), and to authorize all expenditures not provided for in the annual budget; or to delegate to the local board of administration (782:30) full authority over the annual budget.

(13) To authorize the purchase or sale of property, the erection or major remodeling of buildings (1345:2), and all mortgages or other indebtedness which encumbers the property, subject to the prior approval of the district board of administration, according to the procedure set forth in 4700-4720.

(14) To petition the district board of administration for the incorporation of the local church when it is deemed necessary as set forth in 4000, and to authorize the local board of administration to incorporate the church when such incorporation has been approved by the district board of administration (1233:32).

(15) To authorize, subject to the approval of the district board of administration, the establishment and operation of a mission (cf. 537; 782:5; 1233:29), a branch Sunday school, or a developing church, in order to share the benefits of the gospel with others.

(16) To delegate such responsibilities as it shall choose to the local board of administration.

(17) To have recourse to a proper court of jurisdiction in any matters of controversy between itself and other local, or district, or general units or agencies of the denomination (315:8; 5221:4-5; 5305).

(18) To authorize the establishment of a day care and/or a day school of preschool, elementary and secondary levels only, when such is desired, subject to approval by the district board of administration; and to delegate governance of the day care and/or day school to the local board of administration (cf. 782:35; 1233:34; 2305). A local church conference shall not formalize post-secondary education in terms of an institute or of junior college or college-level programs, without prior approval of the district conference and the General Board. (Cf. 1180:24; 1655:35.)

(19) To authorize significant changes in mission, facilities, or finances of an established day care and/or day school, subject to approval by the district board of administration (cf. 1233:34).