

Chapter 2

DISTRICT CONFERENCE

A. Function

1075. A district conference is the chief governing body of a district, exercising such powers as are delegated to it in the Constitution and by the General Conference as set forth in *The Discipline* of The Wesleyan Church.

B. Membership

1. Plan of Representation

1080. The district conference, as required by the Constitution (317), shall be composed of an equal number of ministers and lay members as voting members, and other nonvoting members as listed herewith.

a. Voting Members

1083. Ministers. The ministerial voting members of the district conference are those who meet the following requirements:

(1) Ordained ministers under appointment (1240:I:A:1-8), retired (1240:I:B; 3370), on reserve (1240:I:C; 3360) or on educational leave (1240:I:D; 3350:1).

(2) Licensed ministers who are ordained ministers-elect (317).

(3) Commissioned or licensed ministers who are pastors or full-time associate or assistant pastors of churches in that district (317; 1240:II:A; 1240:III:A; 3059; 3030).

(4) Ministerial members of the district board of administration who are not voting members by some other right (317).

(5) Ordained ministers (including licensed ministers who are ordained ministers elect) who have applied for transfer to another district but whose processes of transfer out of the district are yet incomplete.

1086. Laity. The lay members of the district conference with voting rights are those elected as delegates by the churches or circuits of that district (315:7; 317; 1100-1109) and the lay members of the district board of administration (317). The total number of lay members with voting rights

shall be equal to the total number of ministerial voting members as set forth in 1100:1. Each established church or circuit is entitled to a minimum of one lay delegate as its constitutional right (315:7; cf. 503), and, according to its number of covenant members, to additional lay delegates allotted by the district board of administration (1100:1-5). A developing church which is judged to be qualified may be allotted one lay delegate (510:5; 1100:2; 1103).

b. Nonvoting Members

1090. The nonvoting members of the district conference, with a voice but without a vote, are (cf. 317):

- (1) Ordained ministers without appointment (1240:I:E; 3380).
- (2) Ordained ministers in process of transfer from another denomination (3104; 3390).
- (3) Commissioned or licensed ministers who are not voting members of the district conference as listed in 1083:2-4, including those in process of transfer from another denomination (3104).
- (4) Ministerial students (3015:3b; 3350:2).
- (5) Commissioned and licensed special workers (1240:V:A,B,C; 3460-3470).
- (6) Commissioned lay missionaries (1240:V:D).
- (7) Supply pastors (1240:V:E; 3260:4).
- (8) District presidents of Wesleyan Men (7165:2) and Wesleyan Youth (7575:2k), and district director of Wesleyan Women (7370:2), district coordinator of Wesleyan Kids for Missions (7370:7) and district directors of Christian Youth Clubs International (1489) and Young Adults International (1494).
- (9) Ordained ministers, commissioned ministers and licensed ministers whose process of transfer into the district from other districts are pending completion.

2. Forfeiture of Representation

1095. A local church or circuit which is under discipline as provided for in the Judiciary shall forfeit all rights to representation by a lay delegate in the district conference (315:7; 317; 5300-5320).

3. The Election of Lay Delegates

1100. Allotment. The district board of administration shall assign to each church or circuit the specific number of lay delegates which it shall elect as its representatives to the district conference, in keeping with the provision in 1086 for the total number of lay delegates and subject to the following regulations:

(1) The district board of administration shall first determine the total number of lay delegates required for the next session of the district conference (1086) which shall equal the number of ministerial voting members eligible at the time such determination is made (cf. 1083:1-5).

(2) One lay delegate shall first be allotted to each pastoral charge (315:7; 528:3; 317; 503), including any developing churches deemed qualified (510:5; 1086).

(3) One shall be subtracted from the number needed to balance the ministerial vote for each lay member of the district board of administration.

(4) The number of lay delegates yet required for the next district conference shall be allotted to the pastoral charges according to a ratio of representation. In fixing the ratio of representation, only the covenant members as listed on the statistical report of the preceding district conference, shall be considered. The district board of administration shall establish the ratio of representation and apply it in such a manner as to assign the exact number of delegates to be elected by each pastoral charge.

(5) The district shall promptly notify each pastor of the exact number of lay delegates allotted to that particular pastoral charge.

1103. Election. The lay delegates to the district conference shall be elected at any duly called session of the local church conference or circuit conference, by ballot, and by a majority vote of those covenant members present and voting (823; 965). In the case of a developing church, election shall be by the local advisory council, subject to approval by the district superintendent (510:3,5). A person accepting election as a delegate has an obligation to attend faithfully the entire district conference session, unless hindered by unforeseen and justifiable circumstances. The local church secretary shall promptly forward a certified list of the elected lay delegates to the district secretary.

1106. Alternate Delegates. A sufficient number of alternate lay delegates having the same qualifications (1109) shall be elected in the same manner and at the same session as the delegates (1103), and shall fill any vacancies in the order of their election. Whenever an alternate delegate is

required to serve, the pastor or local church secretary shall certify this appointment to the district secretary.

1109. Qualifications. A lay delegate must be a covenant member and in good standing of the pastoral charge represented, both at the time of election and at the time of the district conference. An ordained, commissioned or licensed minister may not be elected or serve as a lay delegate.

C. Sessions

1112. Annual Session. The district conference shall meet annually at a place chosen by the district board of administration and at a time as decided upon by the Board of General Superintendents in cooperation with the district board of administration (1233:5; 1920:20). The district secretary shall notify in writing all ministerial voting members, pastoral charges and nonvoting members of the time and the place not less than sixty days before the scheduled opening. Whenever an emergency shall require a change in the plans adopted, the district board of administration may declare that such an emergency exists and authorize the necessary changes.

1115. Reconvened Session. The district conference may be reconvened at any time during the year by a two-thirds majority vote of the district board of administration and the approval of the Board of General Superintendents (1920:20). A reconvened session shall also be ordered by the district board of administration when requested to do so by the General Board, its Executive Board, or the Board of General Superintendents. The district board of administration shall designate the place and, in cooperation with the General Superintendents, fix the date, which shall be not less than thirty days after the call shall be issued. The district shall notify in writing all ministerial voting members, pastoral charges and nonvoting members of the time, place and purpose of the reconvened session. The district conference shall have the same rights and powers in a reconvened session as in the annual session.

D. Organization and Procedure

1. Officers

1120. The Chair. A General Superintendent, or a representative appointed by a General Superintendent, shall preside over the district conference, assisted by the district superintendent in the manner provided for in the Constitution (350:3). When neither the General Superintendent nor

the appointed representative is present, the district superintendent shall preside or take the responsibility for the same. If none of the foregoing is present, the district conference shall elect from among its ordained ministers a chair pro tem.

1123. The Secretary. The district secretary shall be the secretary of the district conference ex officio. The district secretary shall accurately record the proceedings and preserve them in permanent form as prescribed by *The Discipline* (cf. 1178), and perform any other duties as shall be required by the district conference.

2. Procedure

1126. Rights. The rights of the district conference are declared in the Constitution (323:1-10; 325; 327; 350:3; 360:3c, e; 375:2, 4, 6; 385).

1129. Quorum. A majority of all the ministerial voting members and lay delegates of the district conference (1083-1086) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

1132. Delegates. Once a delegate has been seated at the annual district conference, an alternate delegate cannot thereafter be seated in place of the previously seated delegate.

1135. Voting (317). The ministerial and lay members of the district conference shall deliberate and transact business as one body. However, on the final vote on any question, one-fourth of the members may call for a divided vote. The house shall then be divided, and the ministerial and lay members shall vote separately, with a majority vote of each branch required to pass the question on which the division has been called.

1138. Rules of Order. District conference business shall be conducted according to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, except when otherwise ordered by *The Discipline* (cf. 1156).

1141. Suspension of Rules. The district conference may by two-thirds vote suspend any rules of order for a certain item of business, provided such a suspension does not contravene *The Discipline* or other General Conference legislation.

1144. Appeals on Questions of Order. The chair shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the district conference body. If any matter is ruled out of order by the chair on the basis that it is unconstitutional or in violation of *The Discipline*, the decision of the chair may be appealed by any member of the district conference. If the appeal is seconded, the chair shall clearly state the question and the reasons for the decision, and the one moving

the appeal shall state the reasons for the appeal. The vote shall then be taken without debate. A two-thirds vote of the district conference, present and voting, shall be required to overrule the decision of the chair. If the chair is overruled, the action of the district conference shall be suspended until a ruling shall be given by the Board of General Superintendents as provided for in 1920:24.

1147. Legislation. Rules and resolutions adopted by a district conference shall continue in force until amended or rescinded, unless such actions are by nature temporary or unless an action of the district conference is declared unconstitutional or contrary to *The Discipline* as set forth in 1920:24 and 5445:2 (cf. 323:6).

3. Resolutions

1150. Resolutions. Resolutions may be submitted to the district conference by a local church conference, a circuit conference, the district board of administration, the annual district convention of Wesleyan Men, Wesleyan Women, Wesleyan Youth or Young Adults International, a district board or committee concerning the work assigned to it, or any three voting members of the district conference with their signatures.

1153. Memorials. All resolutions intended for eventual recommendation by the district conference to the General Conference, including changes in *The Discipline* and any other proposals, shall be designated as “memorials” (1557-1560). Anyone authorized to submit a resolution may also submit a memorial to be passed upon by the district conference.

1156. Procedure. All resolutions shall be submitted as directed by the district conference and within a time limit as set by the district conference. The appropriate district conference committee (cf. 1168:1) shall be responsible to review each resolution or memorial as to its origin (1150), clarity, relationship to *The Discipline* and other existing legislation of the General Conference or district conference, and shall report them out to the district conference together with their recommendations. A properly submitted resolution cannot be withheld from the conference body by a committee unless withdrawn by its authors or declared out of order by the chair of the district conference as contravening *The Discipline* (1935:9). The committee chair shall present any resolutions in question to the district conference chair for a ruling before presenting them on the conference floor. The district conference may by a two-thirds vote suspend the requirement that a resolution must first be reviewed by a committee (cf. 1168:1) and immediately proceed to consider and vote upon said resolution.

4. Committees

1159. The district conference shall have such committees as are required by *The Discipline*, and may create and define the duties of such other committees as are deemed necessary.

a. District Conference Action Committee

1165. A district conference may establish a district conference action committee (1180:9) that shall perform the functions of a resolutions committee. It shall consist of the district superintendent, the district treasurer and from three to nine other members elected by the conference with due consideration for lay representation (cf. 1175:2). The district conference may delegate the election of the committee members to the district board of administration. The district superintendent shall be the chair or shall appoint another to serve instead, and the committee shall elect a secretary and other officers as deemed necessary.

1168. The duties of the district conference action committee are:

(1) To receive all resolutions and memorials for the district conference, to review them, and to report them to the district conference with the committee's recommendation except as provided for in 1233:8 (1150-1156).

(2) To conduct and report on any research or investigation regarding the merits of proposed district legislation as requested by the district conference or district board of administration, or as deemed necessary by the committee.

(3) To assign members of the committee to study, prepare and plan any phase of the committee's work and report back to the committee.

(4) To review the standing rules of the district in order to make recommendations to the district conference concerning the alignment of such rules with General Conference legislation, and concerning any other necessary amendments (1180:5).

(5) To provide, if possible, all delegates to the district conference with copies of resolutions or memorials, properly classified, at least ten days before the opening of the district conference.

b. District Conference Nominating Committee

1172. Each district may have a district conference nominating committee consisting of the district superintendent as chair, and two or more ministers and

an equal number of lay members elected by the district conference (1180:10). The elected members of the nominating committee shall not succeed themselves and may not be reelected until after a lapse of one year. The committee shall organize itself. It shall serve for one year and shall meet as called by the chair.

1175. The duties of this committee shall be determined by the district conference and may include such as the following:

(1) To present nominations for the district secretary, district treasurer (see 1335), members-at-large on the district board of administration, and each elected delegate to the General Conference.

(2) To present nominations for each of the following in accord with the requirements and regulations for each as set forth in *The Discipline*, and in keeping with the provisions of *The Discipline* for various options in combining responsibilities or referring the power of nomination or election to other bodies: the district conference action committee (1165), the district building committee (1345), the district statistical committee (1350), the district director for Church periodicals (1355), the district director of evangelism and church growth (1426), the district director of world missions (1429), the district Sunday school director (1483), the district director of leadership training (1486), the district director of Children's Ministries (1489).

(3) To present any other nominations as shall be requested by the district conference.

5. The District Conference Journal

1178. The district conference journal shall contain the complete and accurate record of the proceedings of the district conference, prepared by the district secretary who shall have the duty:

(1) To have it certified by an editing committee or by the district superintendent.

(2) To arrange the journal as far as possible according to the table of contents and general format prepared by the General Secretary and approved by the General Board.

(3) To see that it contains a complete directory for the district as set forth in 1332:8.

(4) To annually deliver to the General Secretary copies of the district journal in such quantities as needed for the offices in the World Headquarters.

E. Duties and Powers

1180. The duties and powers of the district conference as set forth in the Constitution (cf. 1126) and as authorized by the General Conference are:

Relating to the Constitution

(1) To propose an amendment to the Constitution, by a two-thirds vote, to be submitted to the General Conference as a memorial (385; 1560; 1590:1) or to propose an amendment to the Constitution to be submitted first to the other district conferences (385; 1590:2).

(2) To vote on the ratification of an amendment to the Constitution adopted by the General Conference (385; 1590:1); and to vote on a proposed amendment to the Constitution originating in another district conference (385; 1590:2).

Relating to the General Conference

(3) To adopt memorials to the General Conference for proposed changes in *The Discipline* or for other legislation (1153; 1557-1560; 1565).

(4) To elect delegates to the General Conference as set forth in 1503-1526 (cf. 1175:1).

(5) To review all standing rules of the district and bring them into harmony with the Constitution, other provisions of *The Discipline* as currently revised and amended and with other General Conference legislation (323:6; 1168:4).

(6) To request a special session of the General Conference in concurrence with two-thirds of the district conferences (330:2; 1532).

Relating to the District Conference

(7) To receive the appointed general representative to preside over the district conference whenever a General Superintendent is not present (350:3; 1920:21).

(8) To receive a report concerning the interests and progress of the denomination from the General Superintendent presiding over the district conference, or if a General Superintendent is not present, from the general representative (1920:20).

(9) To authorize, if desired, a district conference action committee,

designate its number of members and provide for the election of the members as set forth in 1165.

(10) To authorize, if desired, a district conference nominating committee, designate its number of members, elect such members and determine its duties as set forth in 1172-1175.

(11) Space reserved.

Relating to District Administration

(12) To take charge of all ordained, commissioned or licensed ministers, ministerial students, commissioned and licensed special workers, missions, developing churches, pastoral charges, auxiliary organizations (cf. 1233:24; 7365:2) and other district work within its bounds, except when the district is under discipline (360:3c, e), and except for those members of the district who are elected as general officials (1800), missionaries appointed under the General Department of World Missions (2272) and others who are amenable only to the General Board for their official duties (323:1; 360:2; 5150; 5203).

(13) To receive a report concerning their official duties from the following: the district superintendent (1310:26), the assistant district superintendent(s) (if any, 1323:6), the district treasurer (1337:8), the leaders of all district departments and auxiliaries, and any others as desired by the district conference.

(14) To consider the numerical and financial progress of the district by receiving a complete statistical and financial report as compiled and submitted by the district statistical committee (1352:1-3).

(15) To take such actions and adopt such rules as it shall judge necessary to promote the interests and prosperity of The Wesleyan Church within the bounds of the district, and to amend or rescind the same, provided that it shall not add to or take from any provision of the Constitution or other provisions of *The Discipline*, and provided that any three members may appeal an action of the district conference as set forth in 323:6 (cf. 1920:24).

(16) To adopt financial plans which will provide for the support of the district work, and for the payment of the district obligation for the United Stewardship Fund (2015:1), assigning to each church its share of these obligations (2015:2; cf. 1233:10).

(17) Space reserved.

(18) To determine the dates for the district fiscal year, which shall be binding on all churches, boards, committees and organizations within the district for the keeping of records and reports.

(19) To authorize employment, if desired, of one or more assistant district superintendents (if any, cf. 1320) as full-time district official(s), and further to define any duties in addition to those required by *The Discipline* (1323-1327).

(20) To create, if so desired, a camp meeting board and define its duties or to delegate this to the district board of administration.

(21) To authorize the incorporation of the district as provided for in 4100-4150. After such incorporation, the district board of administration shall carry out the will of the district conference concerning the holding of district and local church property (cf. 4680), and shall have power, on its own resolution, to acquire, purchase, manage, sell, exchange, mortgage, deed in trust, pledge, rent, lease and convey any property, real, personal, or mixed, as may be necessary or convenient for the purpose of the corporation.

(22) To elect, in states where local laws prohibit such incorporation, or where the law requires the property to be held by trustees, a district board of trustees from among the members of the district board of administration, which shall carry out the will of the district conference concerning the holding of district and local church property (cf. 4680), and which shall carry out its duties as set forth in 1365 (cf. 4500-4630; 4800-4880).

(23) To delegate any of its duties not restricted to the district conference by the Constitution.

Relating to Churches, Ministers, and Lay Workers

(24) To authorize the establishing of a mission (537), a developing church (510), a church (518), a circuit (525), the reclassification of a church as a developing church (518:5; cf. 1233:29), to declare a church as discontinued or abandoned (4730) and to hear a report from the district superintendent of the organization of new churches (520:6; 1310:14); to grant in concurrence with the General Board prior approval to a local church conference for post-secondary education in terms of an institute, junior college or college-level programs (655:18; 1655:35).

(25) To determine the boundaries of each pastoral charge within the district (323:5; 1233:9c; 4750).

(26) To receive and pass upon the recommendations of the district board of administration concerning the pastoral agreements, appointments and district conference relations, as follows (1233:9):

(a) To approve the pastoral agreements entered into between the pastoral charges and the ministers, or to alter such an agreement, or to veto the action of the pastoral charge and appoint another pastor, provided that any such alteration or veto shall be for reasons as set forth in the Constitution, and shall be voted on as a separate action by the district conference (323:1-2; 697).

(b) To appoint a pastor to those pastoral charges not yet supplied at the time of the district conference or whenever requested to do so by a local church (708) or to delegate such appointment to the district board of administration, and to employ a qualified person as a supply pastor when deemed necessary (3260).

(c) To appoint each minister to the proper category of service or other appointment (3250-3391), appointing each ordained minister not included on the appointed list (1240:I:A) to the proper district conference relation as retired, on reserve, on educational leave, without appointment (1240:I:B-E) or in process of transfer (3104); appointing each commissioned or licensed minister to the proper category of service (1240:II:A-B; 1240:III:A-B; 3255-3391) or in the process of transfer (3104); to license as ministerial students those persons so qualified (1240:IV; 3015:1); and to appoint as commissioned or licensed special workers, designating their particular ministry (3450-3480), those who have been granted the proper commissions and licenses (1240:V:A-C) or to list them as in process of transfer (1240:V:B); and to appoint commissioned lay missionaries.

(27) Space reserved.

(28) To elect to ordination or for commissioning as a minister, a candidate the district conference deems qualified (3070), after receiving a report from the district board of ministerial development (1390:5) which shall be acted upon as a separate item of business.

(29) To grant a license, commission, recognition or restoration, in keeping with the requirements of *The Discipline*, after receiving the report and recommendations from the district board of ministerial development (1390:5), as follows:

(a) A recognition as ordained minister in process of transfer to an ordained minister being received from another denomination (3104), and a recognition as an ordained minister of The Wesleyan Church in full standing when all requirements have been met (3104:4-5).

(b) A district ministerial license, the granting of which shall become effective when the person receives appointment as set forth in 3033:7 and 3040:3 (cf. 1180:26c; 1233:9).

(c) A recognition of a commissioned or licensed minister being received from another denomination as in process of transfer (3104) and a recognition of such commissioned or licensed ministers in full standing when all requirements are met (3104).

(d) A license as a ministerial student for those who are qualified (3015:1; 3350).

(e) A license or commission as special worker, designating the particular ministry (3450-3480), or a recognition of a commissioned special worker or the equivalent thereof in process of transfer from another denomination, and subsequent recognition as a commissioned special worker in full standing when all requirements have been met (3470).

(f) A commission as lay missionary (3490).

(g) Any other license or commission as shall be authorized by *The Discipline*.

(h) The restoration or reinstatement of ordination, commission or license as set forth in 3120-3124; 3480; 5230-5248 (cf. 1390:4).

(30) To receive and pass on a written annual service report, through the district board of ministerial development as set forth in 1390:7-9, from each ordained, commissioned and licensed minister, ministerial student and commissioned and licensed special worker; to receive an explanation from the district board of ministerial development relative to each person whose report has been found unsatisfactory, and to vote on the continuation of such person for appointment which shall require a two-thirds vote of confidence for approval (1390:9).

Relating to the Election of Officials and Committees

(31) To elect, by ballot and by majority vote, an ordained minister to the office of district superintendent for a term of two years (cf. 1303:2, 4; 1935:10). Reelection thereafter shall be for a term of four years or for an extended call (1303:2, 4).

(32) To authorize, if so desired, election by the district board of administration of one or more ordained minister(s) as assistant district superintendent(s) (1320).

(33) To elect, by ballot and by majority vote, a district secretary (1330; cf. 1175:1), a district treasurer (1335; cf. 1175:1) or, if deemed advisable, a district secretary-treasurer and members-at-large of the district board of

administration (1203-1206). The district conference may authorize the district board of administration to appoint a district treasurer (1335).

(34) To designate, if it so desires, the ordained ministers of the district board of ministerial development as the council of ordination (1405; cf. 1233:37).

(35) To elect the following or to delegate election to the district board of administration:

- (a) One or more ordained ministers and an equal number of lay members to the building committee;
- (b) The district statistical committee;
- (c) District director of church periodicals;
- (d) District director of evangelism and church growth;
- (e) District director of world missions.

(36) Space reserved.

(37) To employ, if desired, or to authorize the district board of administration to employ a district director of Christian education (1460); and to assign the duties of the various district directors of Christian education agencies to the district director of Christian education as desired (1463:3; 1483; 1486; 1489; 1492; 1494; 1496).

(38) To elect (cf. 1175:2), whenever such duties have not been assigned to a district director of Christian education (cf. 1180:37), a district Sunday school director (1483), district director of leadership training, if desired (1486), and a district director of children's ministries (1489). The district conference may authorize the district board of administration to appoint a district Sunday school director (1233:19; 1483).

(39) To elect a district board of review as set forth in paragraph 1370 (cf. 1175:2; 5218).

Relating to Church Law and the Judiciary

(40) To request, by a two-thirds majority vote, a ruling on a point of Wesleyan Church law or an interpretation of *The Discipline* from the Board of General Superintendents (1920:24a); and to appeal, by a two-thirds majority vote, such a ruling to the General Board of Review (1920:24c; 5445:2).

(41) To appeal, by a two-thirds majority vote, a decision of the Board of General Superintendents on the legality of an action by the district conference, a district board or committee or a district official, to the General Board of Review (375:2; 1920:24; 5445:2; cf. 323:6). All appeals must be

filed in the office of the General Secretary within sixty days after the date of the official decision on the matter.

(42) To adopt, by a two-thirds majority vote, a complaint against the General Conference or another district and order its presentation to the General Board of Review for settlement (375:4,6; 5445:4); and to adopt such a complaint, by a majority vote, against the General Board to be presented to the General Board of Review for settlement (5445:4; cf. 323:10).

(43) To appeal, by a two-thirds majority vote, a judgment of the General Board of Review to the General Conference for final settlement (5450; cf. 323:10; 380). All appeals must be filed in the office of the General Secretary within sixty days after the date of the official decision on the matter.

(44) To exercise judicial powers according to the provisions of the Judiciary (5200-5251; 5300-5325; 5350-5385).