

Western Jurisdiction Episcopal Election Process (Rev. 7-16-16)

The election process outlined below is developed in accordance with the requirements of the United Methodist Book of Discipline (§405) and the proposed changes to the Rules of the Western Jurisdictional Conference.

Prior to Jurisdictional Conference

Conference Profiles

By March 1st of an episcopal election year, instructions for completing conference profiles will be sent to the chairs of conference committees on episcopacy and annual conference secretaries. These profiles provide important contextual information about the mission and ministry of each annual conference. To complete the profiles, committee on episcopacy chairs and annual conference secretaries will need to draw on the expertise of other conference leaders.

Conference Nominations

During their sessions immediately prior to the Jurisdictional Conference, annual conferences may nominate one or more persons as episcopal candidates (BOD, Par. 405). This practice, often referred to as the conference endorsement process, is an important step in creating the pool of candidates that delegates will consider at the Jurisdictional Conference. To become an episcopal candidate, nominees must be ordained elders in good standing within the United Methodist Church.

Candidate Profiles

By June 1st of an episcopal election year, candidate profile forms will be forwarded to the chairs of conference episcopacy committees and annual conference secretaries. All completed candidate profiles must be received by the established deadline to ensure their distribution to delegates prior to the Jurisdictional Conference.

Letters of Support

Candidates are strongly encouraged, but not required, to provide up to three letters of support from either laypeople or clergy, who can attest to the candidate's gifts and graces for episcopal leadership. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that letters are received by the established deadline.

Distribution of Candidate Materials

Materials for conference-nominated candidates are required to be sent out at least two weeks prior to the Jurisdictional Conference (BOD, par. 405). In addition, the names of conference endorsed candidates and their election materials will be posted to the jurisdictional website so that other interested parties may have access to them.

Orientation and Meetings of First Electeds

Prior to the official start of the Jurisdictional Conference, an orientation session will be organized for the first elected lay and clergy members of each delegation. This orientation is intended to provide an overview of the election process, assist in facilitating delegation meetings with candidates, and promote ongoing conversation among the first-electeds. This group is strongly encouraged to continue meeting on its own throughout the Jurisdictional Conference in order to engage in group discernment, promote unity, and manage any conflicts

that may arise.

Orientation of Candidates

Prior to the opening session of the Jurisdictional Conference, the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, with the assistance of the College of Bishops, will organize an orientation for episcopal candidates and other interested parties. This orientation will provide an overview of the election process, answer any questions about the episcopacy, and seek to provide a supportive environment for candidates as they undergo the discernment and election processes.

During the Jurisdictional Conference

Orientation to the Election Process

During the first session of the Jurisdictional Conference, the chair of the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee will provide delegates with an overview of the election process and address any questions and concerns that may arise about that process.

The Qualifying Ballot:

Following the orientation, the plenary will move to the qualifying ballot. The purpose of the qualifying ballot is to provide delegates with the opportunity to nominate candidates who have not already been nominated or endorsed by annual conferences. Because of this conference endorsed candidates are not required to participate in the qualifying ballot process.

To begin the process, the presiding bishop will open the floor for the nomination of additional episcopal candidates. Any ordained elder in good standing within the United Methodist Church may be nominated at this time. Prior to being placed on the qualifying ballot, however, each nominee must confirm her or his willingness to serve in this capacity. The nomination process may be brought to a close by a simple majority of the plenary supporting a motion to this effect.

Once the nomination process is closed, the qualifying ballot will be readied with the names of each of the additional nominees. Only one ballot will be taken and delegates may only vote for as many nominees as there are declared vacancies in the College of Bishops. For example, if there is one declared vacancy, delegates should vote for only one nominee.

Note: Unlike the official election ballot, delegates may choose not to vote for any of the of the nominees placed on the qualifying ballot.

Any nominee receiving at least five percent (5%) of the total votes cast will advance further in the election process (BOD, par. 405). These candidates will also be required to complete candidate profiles as soon as possible. These additional profiles will be distributed prior to the start of the candidate forums (see below).

Candidate Presentations

All candidates, those endorsed by annual conferences and those who pass the qualifying ballot, will be invited to give a speech before the assembled plenary with the purpose of introducing themselves to delegates. The duration of each plenary speech will be five minutes or less.

Candidate Forums

Prior to the first official election ballot, candidate forums will be organized as opportunities for delegates to become better acquainted with each of the episcopal candidates and to hear their

perspectives on important issues of mission and ministry. Roughly equal time will be afforded to each candidate to expound their views and whenever possible delegates will be provided with the opportunity to question candidates directly. Specific details regarding the duration and format of these forums will be worked out by the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee in conjunction with Program and Arrangements.

Candidate Reception

Schedule permitting, an informal gathering will be organized for delegates and candidates to mingle freely. The purpose of this gathering is to provide an opportunity for delegates and candidates to get to become better acquainted in a non-programmed environment.

Delegation Meetings

In advance of each official ballot (not the qualifying), time will be set aside for delegation meetings. As deemed necessary, however, the presiding bishop may ask the plenary to forego a planned delegation meeting in order to expedite the balloting process.

During these sessions, delegations may meet with individual candidates and engage in group discernment about the election process. Delegations are strongly encouraged to extend invitations to as many candidates as possible.

Caucus Meetings

Though caucus meetings are not a formal part of the process, the Jurisdictional Conference has long recognized their importance in ensuring that elections are as inclusive as possible. Caucuses are encouraged to meet during meals and other non-programmed portions of the schedule and to coordinate with delegation heads to avoid potential scheduling conflicts.

The Balloting Process

Candidate names will be listed on the official ballot in alphabetical order. A candidate's name will remain on the ballot until she or he is elected, voluntarily withdraws, or a motion is passed by the plenary to the effect of removing any candidate who falls below a stated percentage of the total vote.

Successive ballots will be taken until each declared episcopal vacancy is filled. On any single ballot, delegates may only vote for as many candidates as there are declared vacancies. For example, if there is one declared vacancy, delegates may only vote for one candidate on a single ballot. If three vacancies are declared, voters must for vote three episcopal candidates, etc. **Two-thirds of the total votes cast are required to elect a new bishop.**

The Extra-Ordinary Process

From time to time, the Jurisdictional Conference has chosen to invite additional candidates into the election process who have neither been nominated by annual conferences nor successfully passed the qualifying ballot. This action was accomplished by first suspending the Rules of Order of the Jurisdictional Conference, which requires a two-thirds vote, and, second, upon successful suspension of the Rules, making a motion to invite a new candidate into the process. This extra-ordinary procedure should be used sparingly as it is clearly outside the established the election process. It nonetheless remains a prerogative of the Jurisdictional Conference to take this action.