

Legislative Committees

All 12 legislative committees of the General Conference meet in the convention center of the city where it takes place. The meetings are open to everyone, including media representatives, though space may be limited. Names of people serving on each legislative committee appear in the Handbook for Delegates volume of the Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate.

The committees review, sort and refine legislative proposals. No action is final until approved by the General Conference in plenary session. Progress reports from each committee will appear in the next day's issue of the Daily Christian Advocate.

The committees were reduced from 13 to 12 for 2016 General Conference. The General Conference Commission voted to combine the work previously done by the Higher Education and Ministry Committee, which deals with petitions concerning seminaries, ordination and clergy, and the Superintendency Committee, which deals with petitions concerning district superintendents and bishops.

There are 12 committees and their assigned topics are:

- 1. Church and Society 1:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Board of Church and Society and the Social Principles, with the exception of paragraphs in The Book of Discipline dealing with "The Nurturing Community" and "The Social Community."
- 2. Church and Society 2:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to "The Nurturing Community" and "The Social Community" sections of the Social Principles.
- 3. Conferences:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the composition and activities of the General, jurisdictional, annual, provisional, missionary and district conferences.
- 4. Discipleship:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of Discipleship Ministries go to this committee.
- 5. Faith and Order:** receives all petitions relating to "Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task," "The Ministry of All Christians" and the meaning of ordination and conference membership.
- 6. Financial Administration:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and the United Methodist Publishing House. The budget and recommendations prepared by GCFA are submitted to this committee for study and review. When GCFA



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presents its report to the General Conference for action, the committee presents its recommendations and may propose amendments.

- 7. General Administration:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the Connectional Table. The Connectional Table report is submitted to this committee for study and review. After the Connectional Table presents its report to the General Conference for action, the committee presents its recommendations and may propose amendments.
- 8. Global Ministries:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Board of Global Ministries.
- 9. Independent Commissions:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to commissions and ecumenical concerns. The commissions include Archives and History, Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, Communications, Religion and Race, the Status and Role of Women, and United Methodist Men. Ecumenical concerns relate to the denomination's membership in or relationship with the World Methodist Council, the World Council of Churches, other councils and consultations of churches, and the American Bible Society.
- 10. Judicial Administration:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to judiciary concerns and investigations, trials and appeals are handled by this committee.
- 11. Local Church Ministry:** receives all petitions and resolutions relating to the organization of the local church and its membership, programs, boards, councils, commissions and committees. The committee also considers petitions relating to local church property.
- 12. Higher Education and Superintendency:** receives all petitions and resolutions pertaining to higher education and ministry, which deals with petitions concerning seminaries, ordination and clergy, and superintendency, which handles petitions concerning district superintendents and bishops.

Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters

This committee handles legislative proposals affecting central conferences. Recommendations by a legislative committee emerging the first week of the conference are just that — recommendations. No action is final until it has the approval of the entire General Conference. Delegates take most final actions during the second week. Final action by the General Conference is required of any statement that speaks for the denomination.

If a plenary session approves legislation that involves funding, that action is referred to GCFA and the Connectional Table (or their committees or expenditure review groups) for advice and review. The groups bring the legislation back to the assembly with specific recommendations about sources and amounts. When GCFA and the Connectional Table present their report, the Financial Administration Legislative Committee may propose amendments to those recommendations and presents its own recommendations. Only after the conference acts on this funding proposal does the legislation take effect.

If two-thirds of General Conference delegates approve a proposed change in the church's constitution, that action must be ratified by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of annual conference members voting at their yearly gatherings. A proposal to alter one of the Articles of Religion or the Confession of Faith requires a three-fourths majority of annual conference members. No changes may occur until the Council of Bishops announces ratification.

Most legislation becomes effective Jan. 1st of the immediate year after the General Conference year, unless the legislation specifies another date.

Tracking Legislation

Following the progress of legislation through the General Conference process can be a challenge. Most issues come before delegates in the form of petitions sent by individuals, groups, annual conferences and governing bodies of general agencies. These appear in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate, on the General Conference 2016 Mobile App as well as on this site.

Each petition from an individual, local church, annual conference, general agency or other group receives a number and is assigned to a legislative committee. Each delegate serves on a committee and spends most of the first four days of General Conference in committee meetings.

Each legislative committee deals with petitions related to a series of paragraphs from the Book of Discipline. Petitions related to the Book of Resolutions are sorted by subject.

A legislative committee can recommend adoption, rejection or referral of a petition to a plenary session. That recommendation is called a "calendar item." The item is assigned a number and printed in the Daily Christian Advocate, which will also be available in electronic publication format for tablet devices.

If a proposal has no financial implications, seeks no change in the constitution and receives fewer than 10 negative votes in the legislative committee, it goes on a "consent calendar." A vote of 20 delegates is needed to remove it from the consent calendar. If it is not removed, it is voted on with other noncontroversial items, which conserves precious floor time in the plenary session.

To summarize the legislative process:

- Annual conferences, local churches, general agencies and other organizations and individuals submit petitions.
- The petitions secretary (the Rev. Gary W. Graves) assigns a petition number to each. The number indicates the legislative committee, chronological order and source. Each petition is assigned to a legislative committee.
- Petitions are printed in the Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate.
- A reference committee reviews assignments by the petitions secretary. The committee combines petitions and makes new assignments to legislative committees as necessary.
- Legislative committees review petitions and make recommendations to the plenary session.

- Reports are sent to the Daily Christian Advocate. A copy is returned to committee officers for approval and sent to the General Conference secretary for a calendar number prior to printing in the Daily Christian Advocate.
- Delegates in plenary session act upon the calendar item.
- Adopted legislation is printed in the Book of Discipline or the Book of Resolutions. The Daily Christian Advocate becomes the official journal of General Conference.