

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECISION NO. 1505

[Docket 0524-12]

IN RE: Petition for Declaratory Decision from the 2024 General Conference to clarify Judicial Council Decision 1501 regarding how ¶407 relates to ¶512.3, and whether a bishop elected in 2022 can be transferred to another jurisdiction in less time than contemplated by Judicial Council Decision 1501.

DIGEST

Paragraph 49.3 of the 2016 Book of Discipline (hereinafter, *The Discipline*) is a constitutional provision that restricts the transfer of an assigned bishop unless the bishop shall have served one quadrennium in the jurisdiction that elected them as bishop. Paragraph 407 relates to the original assignment of a bishop following a specially called jurisdictional conference that conducts an election for that purpose, and does not govern subsequent transfers of bishops following that assignment. Judicial Council Decision 1501 stands.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The General Conference during plenary session, on May 3, 2024, adopted a motion to request a declaratory decision clarifying Judicial Council Decision 1501 regarding how ¶407 of *The Discipline* relates to ¶512.3, and a whether a bishop elected in 2022 can be transferred to another jurisdiction at this time.

Jurisdiction

The Judicial Council has jurisdiction pursuant to ¶ 2610 of the *2016 Book of Discipline* [hereinafter *The Discipline*].

Analysis and Rationale

Paragraph 512.3 of *The Discipline* is understood in relation to ¶49.3, and not ¶407. Paragraph 407 clearly relates to the authorization of jurisdictional conference to assign a bishop to an episcopal area following the death, retirement, resignation, judicial procedure, leave of absence, or medical leave that results in the termination of presidential supervision of that same episcopal area. Transfers of bishops are a later circumstance to which ¶407 is not applicable, but ¶¶ 721.2 and 49.3 are controlling in the circumstances of transfers of bishops.

Decision

Paragraph 49.3 of *The Discipline* is a constitutional provision that restricts the transfer of an assigned bishop unless the bishop shall have served one quadrennium in the jurisdiction that elected them as bishop. Paragraph 407 relates to the original assignment of a bishop following a specially called jurisdictional conference that conducts an election for that purpose, and does not govern subsequent transfers of bishops following that assignment. Judicial Council Decision 1501 stands.

May 3, 2024