

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECISION NO. 1497

[Docket No. 0524-3]

IN RE: Petition for Declaratory Decision from the General Conference 2024 Regarding the Meaning, Application, and Effect of ¶ 511.1 of *The 2016 Book of Discipline* Concerning Youth Representation on the Commission on the General Conference.

Digest

If there is no youth representation among the members of the Commission on the General Conference, the General Conference is required to identify, nominate, and elect at least one youth who meets the qualifications set forth in ¶ 511.

Statement of Facts

On April 29, 2024, during the morning plenary session, a delegate from the Upper New York Annual Conference rose to make the following motion:

I rise to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council as to the effect and meaning of ¶ 511.1. My question is in two parts: 1) In light of the fact that ¶ 511.1b states that the membership of the Commission on the General Conference shall come from the elected delegates of the General Conference but ¶ 511.1a states that there shall be one youth serving on the Commission on the General Conference, how can these two sections be reconciled when no youth is elected as a delegate to the General Conference? And 2) In light of ¶ 511.1a, is it legal to elect a Commission on the General Conference membership that contains no youth representation?

The motion was passed by 560 YES to 166 NO.

Jurisdiction

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

Analysis and Rationale

The pertinent provision in *The Discipline* states regarding the composition of the Commission on the General Conference [hereinafter Commission]:

¶ 511. *Commission on the General Conference*—There shall be a Commission on the General Conference, hereinafter called the commission.

1. *Membership*—a) The voting members of the commission **shall be elected quadrennially by the General Conference** and shall consist of twenty-five members as follows: one person from each US jurisdiction, one person from each of the seven central conferences, one young adult, **one youth**, the chairperson of the host committee, and ten additional members. The additional members shall be allocated to reflect the proportionate membership based upon combined clergy and lay membership of the church.

b) Members shall be **nominated from the elected delegates to the General Conference** by the Council of Bishops prior to General Conference and **elected by the General Conference** for a term of eight years. **Additional persons who meet the qualifications may be nominated from the floor of General Conference.** The commission shall reflect a balance of clergymen and clergywomen, laywomen and laymen, and the diverse character of The United Methodist Church. Approximately half of the commission shall be elected by the General Conference each quadrennium.

[emphases added]

The Discipline requires youth representation on the Commission under ¶ 511.1a. The General Conference is required to find, nominate, and elect at least one youth to the Commission.

Decision

If there is no youth representation among the members of the Commission on the General Conference, the General Conference is required to identify, nominate, and elect at least one youth who meets the qualifications set forth in ¶ 511.

April 29, 2024