



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
CONSEIL JUDICIAIRE DE L'ÉGLISE METHODISTE UNIE
RECHTSHOF DER EVANGELISCH-METHODISTISCHEN KIRCHE
CONSELHO JUDICIAL DA IGREJA METODISTA UNIDA
CONSEJO DE LA JUDICATURA DE LA IGLESIA METODISTA UNIDA



Report by Bishop on Decision of Law

This form is to be used for (please check one):

Reporting of decisions of law made by bishops in response to questions of law submitted to them in writing during the regular business of a conference session (§ 56.3 Const. and ¶ 2609.6 *The Book of Discipline 2016*).

Reporting of episcopal decisions on questions of law when such decisions are appealed by one-fifth of the members of the conference (§ 56.2 Const. and ¶ 2609.7 *The Book of Discipline 2016*).

Name of Bishop: John L. Hopkins

Address: 77 W. Washington St. City: Chicago

State/Province: IL ZIP/Postal Code 60602 Country: Cook

Phone: 312-334-0702 Fax: _____ E-mail: bishophopkins@umcncic.org

Annual Conference: Northern Illinois Date of session: June 8-10, 2022 (month/day/year)

Question(s) of Law: _____

This request for a ruling of law was not properly submitted

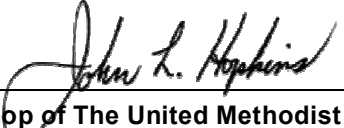
because it was not submitted in writing.

(See attached.)

Authorities Cited (indicate paragraph or decision number where applicable):

Constitution: _____ Book of Discipline: Paragraph 51

Judicial Council Decision(s): 799, 1279

Signature: 
Bishop of The United Methodist Church

Date: July 6, 2022
(month/day/year)

The following must be attached:

- Decision of Law, including facts, rationale and ruling
 - Text of the written request for decision – WAS NOT SUBMITTED
 - Minutes of annual conference proceedings
 - List of names and addresses of interested parties
 - Other relevant materials (e.g. conference rules, resolutions, policies, reports)
- ▶ Thirteen (13) hard copies must be submitted via USPS or other delivery service to:
**UMC Judicial Council, c/o LaNella Smith, Assistant to the J.C. Secretary,
1215 Shady Lane, Durham, NC 27712**
- ▶ Electronic copies in both Word and PDF (with security features disabled) must be submitted to: secretary@umcjudicialcouncil.org.

From Plenary Session 1, June 8, 2022 One hour and 11 minutes into the session which started at 3:30 PM.

“Bishop Hopkins then recognized the Rev. Jim Bell who put forth a question of law inquiring as to the power of the Annual Conference Committee to require the submission of proof of Covid-19 vaccinations for Annual Conference attendance and excluding people who did not have this proof, citing The Book of Discipline paragraph 608. Bishop Hopkins thanked Rev. Bell for his question and indicated was more properly a question of parliamentary procedure indicating the Annual Conference Committee had decided that the best thing for this Conference to do was to have some provisions by which everybody could be represented, adding that this is why we had both masked and unmasked sections and asked people to have vaccination cards. Bishop Hopkins indicated that the concern would be recorded.”

The above text represents a section of the official minutes of the Northern Illinois Conference Annual Conference held on the date and at the time above.

Randy A. Hayes, NIC Annual Conference Secretary

The above typed name shall suffice as the official signature of the AC Secretary

Extracted from the typed minutes on 6/30/2022 by Randy Hayes

List of names and addresses of interested parties:

Rev. James M. Bell
5N829 Harvest Court
St. Charles, IL 60175
srpastor@fumcbelvidere.com
815-544-3479

by Bishop John L. Hopkins
The Northern Illinois Conference

Ruling

“This request for a ruling of law was improperly submitted because it was not submitted in writing.”

Statement of Facts

On June 8, 2022, just before the close of the opening plenary session of the Northern Illinois, The Reverend Jim Bell was recognized at microphone 3 and was concerned that registration policies to prevent the spread of Covid, might have prohibited participation for some people in the conference.

Rev. Bell:

*“Jim Bell, ordained Elder, full connection, Belvedere First. I wonder if I could prevail on you, Bishop, in the spirit of the inclusiveness and the charity towards participants that we’ve been hearing about this afternoon, **prevail on you for a ruling regarding a question of law.** It concerns me that the processes of registering for and participating in these proceedings have excluded some duly elected, assigned, appointed, commissioned, and ordained person and **I wonder if you would rule on whether the Northern Illinois Conference, its committees, and staff, have the authority to exclude those duly elected, assigned, appointed, and ordained persons from these proceedings.**”*

Bishop Hopkins:

“That is really a parliamentary ruling. This Conference has rules for the Annual Conference Program Committee sets up the Conference and they are the ones that decided that the best thing for this Conference to do was to have some provisions by which everybody could be represented. That is why we have a mask and unmasked sections and asked people to have vaccination cards.”

Jim Bell:

“The work has been extensive, and I am grateful for it. I think inadvertently we have excluded some people in ways that violate the discipline. But I am just....”

Bishop Hopkins:

“I hear what you are saying. You’re saying that there are some people who are not able to be here because they had to have vaccination. Is that what you are saying?”

Jim Bell:

“... or to present a card or to transfer a file into a JPEG format or for whatever reasons, inadvertently I am sure, but my concern is that, as I read the discipline in Paragraph 608, we are not allowed to violate the provisions of the discipline that these people, in those five categories I named, have the right to participate but also, at least for me, the duty, according to my order, to participate. And so I was just hoping for that ruling and didn’t want to comment in ways”

Bishop Hopkins:

“Okay, we will record that and thanks.”

During the duration of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference session, noting was submitted in writing to Bishop Hopkins or the Conference Secretary, Randy Hayes.

Rationale

BOD Paragraph 51 grants the presiding bishop the authority to decide all questions of law in the regular business of a session of an annual conference. Judicial Council Decision 799 provides guidelines for bishop’s rulings on questions of law. Judicial Council Decision 1279 clarifies that questions of law submitted only orally during the business session are not sufficient to confer jurisdiction.