

# Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters General Book of Discipline – new Parts VI and VII, draft 2020

## INTRODUCTION

### **Draft of a *General Book of Discipline*, new Part VI, chapters 1-7.**

During the quadrennium 2017-2020, the Standing Committee has continued its work on a new Part VI *General Organization and Administration*. The Standing Committee is grateful for the feed-back received from annual conferences in the consultation process following the 2016 General Conference. It has perfected the work begun on chapters 1 (The Local Church), 2 (The Ministry of the Ordained), 3 (The Superintendency), 4 (The Conferences), and 6 (Church Property). These chapters are most directly related to organizing the ongoing ministry in central conferences. Furthermore, the Standing Committee has extended its work to chapters 5 (Administrative Order) and 7 (Judicial Administration). The scope of the work, particularly on chapter 5, did not allow making finalized proposals.

In perfecting this work, the Standing Committee itself has struggled with the latent fear in the church that deleting specificities in disciplinary paragraphs would lead to an abuse of contextual freedom. Only a good practice of conferencing among United Methodists from very diverse cultures can lead us to more consensus building on a future *General Book of Discipline* for a world-wide church.

For the new Part VI *General Organization and Administration*, the aim has been to establish a shorter, more clearly structured, more easily understandable and translatable *General Discipline*. Therefore, material may have been rearranged, reordered and revised. Numerous repetitions were deleted. In aiming at essentials for a worldwide church, some sections are still more detailed (e.g., in the chapter on the Ministry of the Ordained) while others are more concentrated on the necessary essentials (e.g. in the chapter on the Local Church where the need for contextual diversity is stronger). In addition to the draft presented in the ADCA, the Standing Committee has developed additional supportive documents which are available only online and only in English:

The first set of seven supportive documents are online versions of the new Part VI *General Organization and Administration* in three columns, chapters 1-7, with tracking changes. The first column reprints the finalized draft published in the ADCA. The second column includes all the details on the changes made in comparison to BOD2016 and follows the standards for petition submission. The third column adds rationale on some of the paragraphs. United Methodists who study these details and may be upset why some text of the BOD2016 has been deleted are kindly requested to check where essentials of the deleted elements are found elsewhere in the same chapter before mentioning it as a loss of essentials, in their feed-back to us. Usually, the opening paragraphs of a chapter and/or section express the theological grounding and generalities, whereas the paragraphs following afterwards develop more specifics, but without repeating generalities.

The second set of supportive documents are online versions of the new Part VII *Additional Organization and Administration* for chapters 1-4 and 6-7, with tracking changes. The new Part VII contains all remaining material of the present BOD2016 “old Part VI” which is not included in the text of the new Part VI. The first column reprints the finalized draft. The second column includes all the details on the changes made in comparison to BOD2016 and follows the

standards for petition submission. The third column adds rationale on some of the paragraphs. The new Part VII follows the structuring of the new Part VI (see below on principles for re-numbering). Remaining within its mandate, the Standing Committee did not otherwise revise the text. It only added introductory sentences for easy referencing between the two new parts, Part VI and Part VII. The numerical system of referencing for the new Part VII has been developed in consultation with the Book Editor, the Secretary of General Conference, the Publisher of The United Methodist Church and the Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision who will have the final authority for editing the *Book of Discipline*. The system of referencing is explained below.

If the draft of a new, concise Part VI, as presented in the ADCA, contains what is essential and applicable worldwide, it will not need such a high pace of revisions every four years (including translation of the revisions into multiple languages used in annual conferences all over the world), nor will it need to have organizational details added to it every four years for fixing local or regional problems. All of the latter can be done in the *General Conference Regulations* (see explanation of principles below) or in Part VII *Additional Organization and Administration*. The new Part VI wants to capture what is at the heart of our identity as a worldwide ecclesial community. It is presented with the hope of enhancing the mission of the church in a long-term, sustainable way, and empowering the diverse regions in the world to be better equipped for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, all to the glory of God.

### **Important principles for the drafts of a new Part VI and a new Part VII:**

- The text is based on the existing *Part I. Constitution* and does not propose structural changes for the UMC in the US, nor is it accompanied by any constitutional amendments. This means that the UMC in the US will have both Parts VI and VII as its valid *Discipline*, whereas central conferences outside the US may take action to adapt Part VII to their specific context.
- The text does not touch *Part V. Social Principles*, where the General Board of Church and Society is mandated to present new Global Social Principles to the 2020 General Conference.
- The text is based on the BOD2016 and the mandate given in BOD2016, ¶101. It does not touch the standards for clergy related to human sexuality and unauthorized conduct, and leaves any decisions on these matters in the authority of the 2020 General Conference.
- The text establishes a clear relationship between the two new parts, the new Part VI and the new Part VII. At the end of each paragraph or sub-paragraph in the new Part VI, there is a reference to the related paragraph(s) in a new Part VII *Additional Organization and Administration*.

A reference “>VII: –<” at the end of a paragraph in the new Part VI indicates that there is no related paragraph(s) in the new Part VII (or in other words: no material from the present BOD2016 was moved to the new Part VII).

A reference containing numbers, e.g. “>VII: 205.001<” in the new Part VI indicates that there is a related paragraph in the new Part VII. Such reference in the new Part VI always repeats the same numbers before the point, e.g. for the new Part VI, ¶ 205, the referencing starts in Part VII with “>VII: 205.001<”, with a second paragraph as “>VII: 205.002< etc.. Thus, the first three or four digits before the point remain the same between the new Part VI and the new Part VII. After the point the first digit in the new Part VII is always a “0”. Therefore, referencing to a sub-paragraph in the new Part VI (e.g. “205.1”) remains clearly distinguishable from referencing to a sub-paragraph in the new Part VII (e.g. “205.001.1”).

These references in the new Part VI will be an integral part of the text for a *General Book of Discipline*.

- Sections and paragraphs are renumbered. All references within paragraphs are adjusted (for Parts I-V according to BOD2016; for new Parts VI and VII according to the new draft). In the new Part VI, section titles are only used for several paragraphs together under the same heading. Other sub-titles are deleted.
- Judicial Council decisions are adjusted to the respective new Parts VI and VII.
- Each paragraph has a title in the new Part VI. Within each paragraph, sub-paragraphs are all re-numbered, with a strict alteration of numbers and letters, for clarity and consistency (for both new Parts VI and VII).
- Furthermore, the draft of the new Part VI adds for each paragraph a reference to BOD2016. This reference is only given now and will no more be needed after an adoption of the draft by a future General Conference. The new GBOD number is followed by “=” with the BOD 2016 number for said paragraph and/or its sub-paragraphs, e.g. GBOD ¶ 206=214. The sign “=” is only an indication of reference. It does not mean an exact quote, and may include revisions, deletions or additions in order to reflect its worldwide application, consistency and a better flow of the text. The full details of all such changes can be traced in the online edition of the new Part VI with three columns, mentioned before.
- Some sections of the new Part VI contain special paragraphs, named *General Conference Regulations (GC-R)*. The GC-R paragraphs regroup elements in the present *Book of Discipline* that are needed specifically for the work of the General Conference and other general, worldwide units or functions. As such, they are not adaptable by central conferences. They need to remain in the new Part VI *General Organization and Administration*. Their content may be compared to By-Laws. They often contain very detailed provisions that may easily need to change every four years. GC-R paragraphs do not directly deal with implementing and living the mission in central or annual conferences, as all the rest of the new Part VI. Therefore, these special paragraphs are called *General Conference Regulations* (“GC-R”). They immediately follow the main paragraph to which they belong in the new Part VI, keeping the same paragraph number, e.g. after GOBD ¶ 407 follows GBOD GC-R ¶ 407, followed by GBOD ¶ 408 etc..  
Even if the “GC-R” paragraphs can only be changed by General Conference and are not adaptable by central conferences, they do not need to be translated in all the languages used in central and annual conferences all over the world as is the case for all the other regular paragraphs in the new Part VI.

### **Consultation in all annual conferences on the draft of the new Part VI, chapters 1-7**

A non-disciplinary petition to the 2020 General Conference will ask for a consultation in all annual conferences worldwide after the 2020 General Conference, with feed-back from the annual conferences until end November 2021. This information will enable the Standing Committee to receive the needed feed-back for finalizing and presenting the new Parts VI and VII for action by the 2024 General Conference.

Questions for the feed-back will be:

1. What elements of the new Part VI do not reflect essentials for a worldwide connection of The UMC and/or are not applicable in your own context and mission?
2. What essentially connectional elements are missing in the new Part VI?
3. What inconsistencies or inaccuracies are found in the new Part VI and are thus in need of correction?

May God's Holy Spirit guide us all on our journey as a connectional people.

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