

BOD ¶2702: Chargeable Offenses and the Statute of Limitations

1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor,⁹ clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4)¹⁰ with one or more of the following offenses:

- (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage;¹¹
- (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings,¹² including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;¹³
- (c) crime;
- (d) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church;
- (e) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church;
- (f) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor;¹⁴
- (g) child abuse;¹⁵
- (h) sexual abuse;¹⁶
- (i) sexual misconduct¹⁵ including the use or possession of pornography,
- (j) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment;
- (k) racial or gender discrimination; or
- (l) fiscal malfeasance.

2. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference, or diaconal minister may be brought to trial when the appropriate body recommends involuntary termination.¹⁷

3. A professing member of a local church may be charged with

the following offenses, and, if so, may choose a trial:

- (a) immorality;
- (b) crime;
- (c) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church;
- (d) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church;
- (e) sexual abuse;
- (f) sexual misconduct;¹⁸
- (g) child abuse;
- (h) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment;
- (i) racial or gender discrimination;
- (j) relationships and/or behaviors that undermine the ministry of persons serving within an appointment; or
- (k) fiscal malfeasance.

4. Statute of Limitations—No judicial complaint or charge shall be considered for any alleged occurrence that shall not have been committed within six years immediately preceding the filing of the original complaint, except in the case of sexual or child abuse and in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse, there shall be no limitation (§ 2704.1a).¹⁵

Time spent on leave of absence shall not be considered as part of the six years.

5. Time of Offense—A person shall not be charged with an offense that was not a chargeable offense at the time it is alleged to have been committed. Any charge filed shall be in the language of the Book of Discipline in effect at the time the offense is alleged to have occurred except in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse. Then it shall be in the language of the Book of Discipline in

effect at the time the charge was filed. Any charge must relate to an action listed as a chargeable offense in the Discipline.

9. See Judicial Council Decision 982.

10. The statute of limitations went into effect as law on a prospective basis starting on January 1, 1993. All alleged offenses that occurred prior to this date are

time barred. See Judicial Council Decisions 691, 704, and 723.

11. The language beginning “including but not limited to . . .” first appeared in the 2004 Book of Discipline, effective January 1, 2005.

12. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 984, 985, 1185.

13. The language beginning “including but not limited to . . .” first appeared in the 2004 Book of Discipline, effective January 1, 2005.

14. See Judicial Council Decision 702.

15. This offense was first listed as a separate chargeable offense in the 1996 Book of Discipline effective April 27, 1996. See Judicial Council Decision 691.

16. See Judicial Council Decisions 736, 768

17. See Judicial Council Decision 767.

18. This offense was first listed as a separate chargeable offense in the 2000 Book of Discipline, effective January 1, 2001. See Judicial Council Decision 691.