



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



## Petition for Declaratory Decision

This form is to be used by the Secretary of the body authorized to petition the Judicial Council for a ruling in the nature of a declaratory decision as to the constitutionality, meaning, application, or effect of (please check one):

- The Book of Discipline 2016* or any portion thereof (§ 2610.1)  
 any act or legislation of a General Conference (§ 2610.1)  
 any proposed legislation (§ 2609.2)

Name of body authorized to make a Petition (§ 2610.2): Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference

Date of session: 06/04/2022 (month/day/year) Location: Erie, Pennsylvania

Name of Secretary: John R. Wilson

Address: PO Box 5002 City: Cranberry Township

State/Province: PA ZIP/Postal Code 16066-0002 Country: USA

Phone: 724-776-2300 ext 248 Fax: 724-776-1355 E-mail: conference.secretary@wpaumc.org

To be reviewed (indicate paragraph number, title of legislation and/or act where applicable):

Book of Discipline: ¶¶16.3, 33, 502.3, & 511.5

Legislation: P 611 TO REQUEST A DECLARATORY DECISION

Act of General Conference: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: John R. Wilson Digitally signed by John R. Wilson  
Date: 2022.06.10 15:40:28 -04'00'

**Secretary of the Conference/Body**

Date: 06/04/2022  
(month/day/year)

### The following must be attached:

- Text of the written Petition for Declaratory Decision as originally presented
- Minutes of proceedings
- List of names and addresses of interested parties, including eu mail
- Other relevant materials (e.g. conference rules, resolutions, policies, reports)

➤ Send electronic copy of this form and all materials in PDF and Microsoft Word format to: **secretary@umcjudicialcouncil.org**

➤ Mail thirteen (13) sets of hard copies to:

**UMC Judicial Council, c/o LaNella Smith, Assistant to the J.C. Secretary,  
1215 Shady Lane, Durham, NC 27712**

1 Greater Pittsburgh Ministries\*  
 2 United Methodist Human Services of Johnstown  
 3 WPA Prison Outreach Ministries

4 \*Greater Pittsburgh Ministries refers to the Daily Bread Feeding Program, Kids Meal  
 5 Network, Bethany House Academy, Reading & Mentoring Program, and other UM  
 6 affiliated outreach ministries.

7 Donna Vizza, Chair, Connectional Leadership Table  
 8 Jonathan Fehl, Chair, Board of Global Ministries

9  
 10 P 611 TO REQUEST A DECLARATORY DECISION  
 11 ON THE MEANING, APPLICATION, AND EFFECT OF ¶¶16.3, 33, 502.3, & 511.5  
 12 (Section 6)

13 WHEREAS Scriptures teaches, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should  
 14 go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you” (*Psalms* 32:8),

15 WHEREAS the Commission on General Conference has published a press release stating  
 16 that General Conference 2020 cannot be held in 2022, and that there will be General  
 17 Conference held in 2024 ([https://www.umc.org/en/content/general-conference-further-](https://www.umc.org/en/content/general-conference-further-postponed-to-2024)  
 18 [postponed-to-2024](https://www.umc.org/en/content/general-conference-further-postponed-to-2024), last accessed 3/21/2022),

19 WHEREAS ¶33 reserves the right of the annual conference to “vote on [...] the election of  
 20 clergy and lay delegates to the General and Jurisdictional or central conferences” (2016  
 21 *Discipline*),

22 WHEREAS under ¶16.3 the General Conference has the authority to “define and fix the  
 23 powers and duties of the annual conferences” (2016 *Discipline*),

24 WHEREAS, the annual conference has the authorization to petition the Judicial Council  
 25 for a declaratory decision “on matters relating to annual conferences or work therein” under  
 26 ¶2610.2.j (2016 *Discipline*),

27  
 28 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Western PA Conference request a declaratory  
 29 decision from the Judicial Council under ¶2610.1 on the meaning, application, and effect  
 30 of ¶¶16.3, 33, 502.3, and 511.5 as they relate to the election of clergy and lay delegates to  
 31 the newly announced and scheduled General Conference to be held in 2024. In particular  
 32 the Judicial Council is asked to provide answers to the following questions:

33 1. What is the calendar year for the 2024 General Conference, announced by the  
 34 Commission on General Conference to have its opening session in 2024, as it applies to  
 35 ¶502.3?

36 2. Is the annual conference required to hold elections under ¶33 in compliance with  
 37 ¶502.3?

38 3. Is the annual conference required under ¶33 to hold new elections if the current  
 39 delegates were elected prior to 2022?

40 4. Is the 2020 or is the 2021 statistical report from General Council on Finance and  
 41 Administration the most recent clergy and professing lay membership figures for  
 42 calculating the number of delegates to General Conference under ¶511.5?

43 5. What is the number of delegates to be elected in accordance with ¶502.3 and ¶511.5?

44 Western PA General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegation  
 45 Robert F. Zilhaver, Secretary, General/Jurisdictional Conference Delegation  
 46

**Daily Journal** **469**

RS 606 Christian Education Weekend (Sept)..... 431  
87 – 0 – 0

RS 607 Volunteers in Mission Recognition & Awareness Weekend (Oct)..... 431  
84 – 0 – 0

RS 608 Youth Service Fund Weekend (Nov)..... 432  
85 – 0 – 0

RS 609 Doorways to Hope at Home Weekend (Dec) ..... 432  
83 – 0 – 0

RS 610 Funding for WPAUMC Regional Ministries..... 433  
84 – 0 – 0

**P 611 To Request a Declaratory Decision..... 434**  
**83 – 0 – 0**

**Section 7**

P 72 To Clarify Process for Deeding Church Property to Another Evangelical  
Denomination ¶2548.2 ..... 440  
93 – 12 – 5

Amendments: Motion to refer P72 to the Conference Connectional Leadership Team  
which may choose, at a future time, to refer it to an appropriate Task Team.

P 73 For Disaffiliation Agreement Pursuant To ¶2553 ..... 442  
93 – 9 – 3

Amendments:

Add line starting after line 19 on page 444

WHEREAS, ¶1504.23 states, “If a local church or charge in the United States changes its relationship to the United Methodist Church through closure, abandonment, or release from the trust clause pursuant to ¶2548, ¶2549, or otherwise, notwithstanding whether property with title held by the local church is subject to the trust (under term of ¶2501), the local church shall contribute a withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church’s share. Nothing in the foregoing prevents an annual conference from collecting other obligations from a church or charge.”

**DAILY PROCEEDINGS**  
**“Anchored in Christ”**  
**Erie Bayfront Convention Center, Erie, Pennsylvania**  
**Saturday, June 4, 2022**

**BIBLE STUDY** – During Bible Study, Bishop Moore-Koikoi related the first few chapters of the *Book of Hebrews* to our United Methodist Doctrinal Standards. She discussed both the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church and the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. No changes can be made to our Doctrinal Standards or new standards established that are contrary by anybody or any body of the church. The Bishop showed how the *Book of Hebrews* lays this out by showing who Jesus is, our great High Priest.

**CALL TO ORDER** – Following Bible Study, at 9:00 AM, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi called the plenary session to order.

**CONSENT CALENDAR** – After the 10-hour window lapsed, two pieces of legislation were pulled, RS 201 and P 73. RS 201 was adopted Friday and P 73 was scheduled for discussion shortly. Shane Siciliano moved the Consent Calendar for concurrence without RS 201 and P 73 included. The Consent Calendar was **ADOPTED**.

**LEGISLATION – P 73 – For Disaffiliation Agreement Pursuant to ¶2553** – W. Stephen Morse, on behalf of Section 7, moved concurrence for P 73 (93-9-3, *Daily Journal* page 469). Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi responded that P 73 is not properly before us, giving a Ruling of the Chair on this item as a Decision of Law:

*This petition takes away the authority given to the Board of Trustees under ¶2553 to determine if ¶2553 and conference policies have been complied with before the annual conference votes to approve or deny the request to disaffiliate.*

*Further, this petition takes away the authority of the Board of Trustees, cabinet, annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor given to them by ¶2553. And (it limits their ability to perform) their duty as officers of the denomination to preserve the safeguard and protect the interests and rights of the annual conference; to maintain the resources related to the annual conference’s interests and those of The United Methodist Church. (The implication of ¶2553.4a is that the Board of Trustees is acting on behalf of GCFA to ensure that the provisions of ¶807.9 are protected in any Disaffiliation Agreement.)*

*The only right of a local church to disaffiliate is in ¶2553, and this is a limited right. ¶2548.2 does not provide a right to a local congregation to disaffiliate, and the deeding of property pursuant to ¶2548.2 relates only to property and not to the disaffiliation or separation of the church itself. In addition, ¶2548.2 does not address any issues of pension liability, (therefore it’s inclusion in this petition is inappropriate).*

**Docket 1022-01**  
**Interested Parties / Persons**  
**Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference Request for Declaratory Decision**

**Interested Parties/Persons within the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference**

Rev John R Wilson [Conf Sec'y Western PA] <conference.secretary@wpaumc.org>,  
Rev Robert F Zilhaver [Delegation Secy, Submitted RDD] <Connellsville.DS@wpaumc.org>,  
Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi [Presiding Bishop Western Penn] <bishop@wpaumc.org>,  
Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi [Western Penn] <bishopsoffice@wpaumc.org>,

**Interested Parties Added September 20, 2022, and posted on or about September 26, 2022**

Bryan Mills Esq [GCFA General Legal Counsel] <bmills@gcfa.org>,  
Rev Gary W Graves [GC Secretary] <ggraves@umcgc.org>,

**Please also transmit copies of all submissions and correspondence to:**

Sara Hotchkiss [GC Bus Manager] <shotchkiss@umcgc.org>,  
Leticia Mayberry Wright [Deputy General Legal Counsel] <lmayberrywright@gcfa.org>,  
Lonnie Brooks [Provided Brief of Issue re Docket 3] <lonnieinalaska@gmail.com>,

Rev John R Wilson [Conf Sec'y Western PA] <conference.secretary@wpaumc.org>,  
Rev Robert F Zilhaver [Delegation Secy, Submitted RDD] <Connellsville.DS@wpaumc.org>,  
Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi [Presiding Bishop Western Penn] <bishop@wpaumc.org>,  
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