

Proceedings

Afternoon Proceedings for May 2

Plenary 1

BISHOP DAVID GRAVES: All right, I'm glad you're all in a wonderful mood as we begin this afternoon. Good afternoon, members of the General Conference, guests, and those watching on the livestream. I am David Graves. I'm the resident bishop of the Alabama-West Florida and South Georgia annual conferences.

(cheering)

Got a few fans in the house. So also my home conference is the Holston Conference,

(cheering)

which this year is celebrating two hundred years as an annual conference. I give thanks for my two bishops that are sharing this journey with me behind me, Bishop Leonard Fairley and Bishop Tracy Smith Malone.

As we begin to center our time for this afternoon, most mornings a centering scripture that I read that comes from Galatians 5:22 and 23—I think most of you are very familiar with it. It's entitled, "The Fruits of the Spirit." And the scripture says, "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace"—and a beautiful word called—"patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." So may we all exercise, including myself, these wonderful fruits of the Spirit as we do, this afternoon, some pretty intense work. So may we center ourselves in a spirit of prayer.

Come, Holy Spirit. God, we are humbled and filled with gratitude for your grace. The realization that you know what we are really like, and yet, you love us anyway. For the facing of this hour and this afternoon, we just ask your blessing and guidance to be upon our time. Use us in an overwhelming and unreasonable way. So we offer ourselves to this work this afternoon. May we reflect on your goodness and grace for the sake of God's promise and according to God's will, for, God, you know the future and you know the destiny for us. In this hour, the world needs your love and touch. Our nations need your love and touch. Our churches and communities need your love and touch, and we would call upon your Holy Spirit to fill the hearts of us here. Help us move through our work today. In the name of Jesus, we pray, and all of God's people said,

ALL: Amen.

BISHOP GRAVES: So, friends, as we begin our work today, I just want to lift up—we have a lot of work to do and kind of calling upon what other people have said, we're ready to get to some of this work, right? So I just want to encourage you. We can only get to what you allow us to do. So let us focus on what is before us, and, I mean the work is up to you. But I'm kind of giving you a hint of how we might move forward.

Calendar Items

All right. Our first action item today is from Petition 535, the Revised Social Principles. I would—the chair recognizes Shannon Klen—Shandon Klein. There you go. Forgive me if I mispronounce any names.

SHANDON KLEIN (North Texas): No problem, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, for the Committee on Church and Society 2 to present our first calendar item of the day.

KLEIN: All right.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you.

KLEIN: Good afternoon, church!

ALL: Good afternoon!

KLEIN: I know it, it's been a long time. My name is Shandon Klein. My pronouns are she/her. I am a Black woman, queer, young adult adjacent, lay delegate from the North Texas Conference, and it has been one of my greatest honors of my life to serve as chair for the incredible Church and Society 2 Legislative Committee.

(cheering)

Yay! Our vice-chair, Rob Vaughn; secretary, Hortência Langa Bacela; three subcommittee chairs, Jonathan Ulanday—our newly elected Judicial Council member, congratulations—Anna Guillozet, and Anish Hermon; and the whole of our beautifully diverse members of four different languages from around the world, I give you greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. I'm truly grateful for their holy conferencing this past week. And for me it has represented the fullness of what the church could be with respect, grace, and love. So I'd personally like to thank all of you.

The next item before us is found on p. 2235 of Tuesday's *DCA*, Calendar Item 535, and the petition itself is located in volume 2, section 1, p. 208 in the English version of the *ADCA*. Petition 20730 entitled "Revised Social Principles-161 and 162." This will be our final piece of our Revised Social Principles to be discussed before the body. Church and Society 2 recommends adopting the proposed petition to honor the work of the General Board of Church and Society as commissioned by the 2012 General Conference. Our committee spent much time speaking about the Revised Social Principles, how they are used in various global contexts, what about our—the section of our Revised Social Principles made us proud to be United Methodist, and the challenges that we had with them as well. We invited Neal Christie, who led workshops across our jurisdictions and central conferences regarding the Revised Social Principles, to speak to the process and called on Dr. Randall Miller to share more about their editing processes as well. With over twelve years of writing, listening, and workshopping, with fifty-two writers, including several central conference writers and consultations from over four thousand United Methodists, inclusive of central conference input. Our committee voted in favor by a supermajority with 75 percent of votes in the affirmative, 50—or 45 to 15. Thus, we recommend adoption.

BISHOP GRAVES: It is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 535.

The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item 535.

You may now register to speak. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

Yeah. All right. Kabala Chala [Kalaba Chali]? If you'll come to mic. no. 4. From the Great Plains district, Delegate Kabala Chala [Kalaba Chali]. And please pronounce your name correctly if I do not get it correct.

KALABA CHALI (Great Plains Conference): Bishop, mic. no. 4. My name is Kalaba Chali.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you.

CHALI: All right. I speak to—I stand to speak in favor of the motion from Church and Society 2. I am one of those many voices that were involved in the writing or revision of the Social Principles. I was a convener, and we spent a lot of time to talk about the differences between creating Social Principles that are general enough without forcing every context to do things the same way but contextually enough that they are applicable in each context. One of the things for me that has given joy is when I read places like our stance against war, thinking of the work Bishop Unda in East Congo has done, amazing work, to take care of people who have been victims of the civil war. Some of you may not remember, after the Second World War, East Congo is the part of the world that has lost the most people. It's not in Ukraine. It's not in Israel. It's not in anywhere, but in East Congo alone, over six million people have died, and we don't talk about those. The Social Principles give the church in East Congo, the rest of Congo, and the rest of the world a tool to engage with faith, not in revenge, but to speak for peace. I encourage all of us to support this. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, thank you very much.

Let me call upon Nimia Peralta, Delegate Nimia Peralta to come to mic. no. 6, a speech against. And then we have a speech for, let me just go ahead and call James Howell to mic. 3 so we can keep moving. Mic 6.

NIMIA PERALTA (Northwest Philippines): OK. I'm Nimia Peralta from Northwest Philippines, lay, and I am a female. While I have no opposition as to the other provisions, I have one concern, and that is the provision on marriage.

I stand before you to speak against as I deem there is no necessity to amend the same, and so as to not skew the core values of the next generations. To those who use the pronouns they, their, and theirs, and those who support you, my Filipino friends who are like siblings to me and have embraced your culture, I mean no harm. I love you with the love of the Lord. But, please understand where I am coming from, literally. In June 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court, the highest court, had already made a favorable ruling on the issue of same sex marriage. That's a victory for our other siblings. Happily in the Philippines, our law still maintains the definition of marriage is between a man and a woman; God designed marriage to be between a man and a woman.

When we rejoice that we have approved the worldwide regionalization, I firmly believe that God's word can never be regionalized. The proposed definition of marriage runs counter to our Christian teaching. I hold on to the biblical definition of marriage as defined in Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9 defining marriage as between a man and a woman. Jesus affirms that marriage reflects God's design for male and female to care for creation. So, I vote for a no. Thank you.

(applause)

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you. We've had one speech—let's not applaud, please. If we can hold our applause.

We've had one speech for, one speech against. Now I call upon James Howell, Delegate James Howell, mic. 3.

JAMES HOWELL (Western North Carolina): James Howell, clergy, Western Carolina, White, older adult, straight, he/him/his.

When I first read the statement on marriage, I was really struck by the way that the authors had come up with some language that could embrace everyone; if you think it should be man and woman, that's embraced by this. It's in the same way that our scriptures, the genius of scripture, inspired scripture is that the language is there—it's for Jew and Gentile, it's for people across all cultures as we witness here by so many people here who believe in Jesus Christ from so many kinds of settings.

Scripture enables us to keep our arms around all people who dream, who are broken, who are seeking the grace and the mercy of God. We've talked a lot about regions here, and the region where I work what we know is that cynics and young adults will not listen to us talk about Jesus if we say that we do not condone people that they love and care about; they just shut us out if we do this. I always suspect that the important verse of the day might be Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus."

When we had the hope and joy that we experienced yesterday in the middle part of the day, I remember something that I said on the General Conference floor in 2012. And that is that there are United Methodists who, for their entire lifetimes, for decades, we have said we do not condone you; you are incompatible with what we think is good, and yet they have stayed. They have continued to love and work in our churches. I think that is some type of miracle. I think that is the great embodiment of grace. So to them, I just want to say thank you and we love you. And, friends, it's time. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, thank you for that. We've had two speeches for, one against. I'm going to go to another speech against. I call upon Delegate Holly Grant, mic. no. 5.

HOLLY GRANT (East Ohio): Holly Grant, lady from East Ohio.

I stand to speak against this Social Principle. It breaks my heart that we are at this place. I understand—I've been here for years, several years to General Conference, and this has been pushed at me over and over and over again each time at General Conference that I am not loving because of the stand I take on marriage and human sexuality. It has been pushed on me even this time at General Conference that I am not loving because I support disaffiliation. And if we—you have failed already, we have failed already as a United Methodist Church to be the big tent that we have sought to create. It cannot be done because I hold to my conviction that what this says in here is not compatible with scripture. If I could, with all my heart and sincerity, change this, I would love to. But I cannot. In all the conscience and the support of what scripture says, what God says, I cannot change it. And I think that for that reason I would ask that you consider voting against it.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, we have had two speeches for, two speeches against. I also have someone wanting to make an amendment; in fact I've got three people wanting to make an amendment. I want to call the first person that got into the pool from East Zambia [East Zimbabwe], Delegate Molly

Mwayera. If you will come to mic. 4, you have an amendment. So please be prepared to come and state your amendment, and be prepared to provide it in writing. Mic. 4. State your amendment; be prepared to put it in writing.

MOLLY MWAYERA (East Zimbabwe): Thank you, Bishop. I'm Molly (*undecipherable*) Mwayera, Zimbabwe East Annual Conference, delegate, lay. I'm a woman.

I have no problems in adoption of what has been recommended, provided we take note of the amendment. I will be—

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. What is your specific amendment?

MWYERA: My specific amendment, I rise and move in terms of Rule 14 as read with Rule 36 and 28. My amendment is: Considering that regionalization has passed, regions are to come up with legislative instruments which are applicable to specific regions, and those have to be in conformity with *The Book of Discipline*, the main legislation for the United Methodists.

So, it's necessary in the definition of marriage to then cater across the board—

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

MWYERA: to accommodate the diverse nature of our congregations by having that paragraph to say marriage between two consenting adults in subparagraph 1.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, I'm going to have to stop you because you've not specifically given me an amendment, so I'm ruling your, you out of order.

MWYERA: But.

BISHOP GRAVES: I'm ruling you out of order.

MWYERA: No. Fine, I'll give you the amendment.

BISHOP GRAVES: Let's get there, OK. Let's get to it. What's the amendment?

MWYERA: The amendment is I'm adopting everything which is in the, except on the definition: We affirm—that's the amendment—the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between adult men and woman of consenting age. That is Roman numeral one. And then, Roman numeral two: Two adult persons of consenting age. And then we go on with everything as it appears in the—if I'm allowed to speak on the justification, I will proceed, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: Can you help me a little bit? It seems like you're asking to strike out some specific texts of this petition. Is that correct?

MWYERA: No, Bishop, I'm asking to add amendment in addition of the marriage which has been left out throughout in all the adoption of regionalization.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. OK. In order for us to kind of move forward and help one another because we're just trying to help one another here, right?

MWYERA: Yes.

BISHOP GRAVES: If you will please write this out—

MWYERA: I've written it down, and I also have the rationale.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, if you'll—if you'll please just bring that up to the Secretary's table, and then we'll come back and address it a little bit later, OK? But we need to get this in writing up here, so if you can just bring it up in writing—

MWYERA: Yes. Unfortunately, Bishop, I do not have a typed copy. I have a longhand copy because I don't have access to printing here.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. Well, just bring that forward, give it to the secretary.

MWYERA: I will, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: And we'll come back to it, OK.

MWYERA: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. Thank you. And thank you for being patient with me.

We have two more people wishing to amend. So let's get this amendment to the table. And we have opportunity for one speech against, let's go ahead and to that. And then we'll look at this amendment, hopefully.

(pause)

OK, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I'm just trying to think here. We've had two speeches for it; two speeches against. We can have one more against and one more for. So let's do that. And then we'll come back to this amendment. Yeah.

(pause)

All right we're going to wait a moment.

(pause)

OK, thank you for your patience. We have other amendments. OK. We have a question. Point of info and inquiry. From Zambia, mic. 2, Delegate Kenneth Kalichi? Delegate Kenneth Kalichi, mic. 2, from Zambia. We have a question of inquiry. I see him coming.

KENNETH KALICHI (Zambia): I'm Kenneth Kalichi from Zambia Annual Conference. Bishop, I stand here—

BISHOP GRAVES: Let me just make sure you state your point of inquiry.

KALICHI: Yes. That's why I'm coming, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. All right.

KALICHI: My point of inquiry is that want to make sure that we understand what want to do at this point, especially because the motion was on the adoption then it came to debate. And I'm seeking for clarification if we can be clarified on what motion we are debating on, so that we understand what we

are doing at the point. Because, yesterday, we had a lot of complexes, especially from our brothers, those that francophone. The French-speaking brothers and sisters.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK

KALICHI: They say that we didn't understand properly what we are voting on and ended up voting wrongly.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK

KALICHI: And when we went to the Internet, we just saw that people were celebrating and doing what. They said, "Where is this coming from?" So they didn't get it properly.

BISHOP GRAVES: Let me, let me try to help you and call upon the chair to restate the motion that we're—

KALICHI: Bishop, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: voting on.

KLEIN: Sure. We are calling on the adoption of Calendar Item 535, which is the revised Social Principles, paragraphs 161 through 162. It's located in the second volume in the first section in p. 208 in the English version of the *ADCA*. That's where the petition is located. The petition itself is Petition No. 20730.

BISHOP GRAVES: It's also up on the screen. The numbers are on the screen, as well. It's a good question for clarity.

(pause)

All right, we're gonna move. We still have not received that amendment, yet. But we're going to go to another amendment. David Grout. Delegate David Grout. Mic. 5, from Kentucky.

DAVID GROUT (Kentucky): Thank you, Bishop. I rise to amend section C in the proposed revised Social Principles. The paragraph, which would be on p. 209 of the volume 2, I think it is. The paragraph beginning with "We support the rights of all people"—if everyone would find that little paragraph. So I move to amend by deletion in revised Social Principles. That is replacing as was mentioned paragraph 161, 162, section C on human sexuality, the following words from the section starting with, as I mentioned, "We support."

To delete starting at "to exercise personal consent in sexual relationships, to make decisions about their own bodies and be supported in those decisions" and then the rest of the paragraph proceeding as is. If there's a second, I'd love to speak to it.

IAN URRIOLO (Upper New York): Bishop, point of order.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, point of order.

URRIOLA: Ian Carlos Urriola, I'm a Latinx, lay, young adult delegate from the Upper New York Annual Conference. We are in violation of Rules 24 and 25 on p. 2051 of the *Daily Christian Advocate*. The delegate East Zimbabwe properly brought a motion to amend the report from the committee, and we cannot act on any other business until we debate that motion.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. OK, let me try to help us a little bit here. And we may be out, way out of order, OK? So, um, she, she stated her amendment. We never got a second. I was trying to help her, and we were trying to get it up here, so it was really not properly before us. We're trying to get it properly before us, if we can.

URRIOLA: OK, Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you for raising that.

All right, the chair recognizes delegate Bethany Amey, mic. 5, from Greater New Jersey. Point of order, so, please move to your point of order. Mic. 5. What rule are in violation of, if that's where we are?

BETHANY AMEY (Greater New Jersey): So it's kind of like a point of order/question at the same time.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

AMEY: So can we—

BISHOP GRAVES: We'll try it.

AMEY: Can that be together?

BISHOP GRAVES: We'll try it.

AMEY: So, my question is, I did not hear you call for the second towards her amendment. And I understand you can't call for the second until you receive her amendment, so I'm not really sure how we can continue to move forward without you receiving it, us allowing to second, and then move forward. It would seem kind of to be out of order because you haven't received it yet. That seems like a not us issue.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you for the great question. But we can't second something until we're clear on what we're trying to second so that is what I was trying to do is to be helpful.

AMEY: I appreciate that, but in fairness to our delegate, I think—and I understand our wanting to continue to move along in our business, but in fairness to the delegate.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. All right, let me, let me, I want to thank you—

AMEY: You would be... it would be appreciated if you would be patient for her to bring it to her.

BISHOP GRAVES: Yep. That's what I'm trying to be. And thank you for that. We're trying that to get that worked out. So let's move on to see. All right. I want to call upon the chair recognizes Mark Holland for a point of order. Mic. 4. Great Plains Conference.

MARK HOLLAND (Great Plains): I think the issues have been raised. A motion is before us. We can't move to another motion until that's dealt with. So I think we need to ask, is there a second so there is reason to even—people heard it verbally, so if someone wants to second it, they should have that opportunity to determine if we need to wait for it to come to the stage. Thank you.

(pause)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bishop, I second the delegate's motion.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. That's not in order. Friends, we're trying to be helpful here. So we have the amendment, I believe. And I'm going to call upon the secretary for General Conference to read the amendment and then we'll see where we are.

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary to General Conference): The amendment submitted by Molly Mwayera. I move to amend Petition No. 20730 by having a double-barreled definition of marriage to reflect our diverse nature. We affirm the sanctity of marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between (1) adult man and woman of consenting order; (2) two adult persons of consenting age.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

(pause)

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, here we go. So, if I can get Delegate Molly Mwayera to come back to mic. 4. OK. Delegate Molly Mwayera will please come back. Here she comes.

MWAYERA: Yes, Bishop?

BISHOP GRAVES: Yes, in your written motion, what you're lacking in terms of this parliamentary process, is you don't give us where this text needs to be inserted. You've just shared it with us. But we don't know exactly where it needs to be inserted.

MWAYERA: Sorry, Bishop. I inserted it into right after the words *we affirm*. It's a repetition of the exact motion as it appears. The only addition is having the marriage where it's man and woman. So as to cut across the regions. It's exactly the same motion. But the addition is that.

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah, I—I need it exactly what sentence. Where does it go in this petition?

MWAYERA: Fine, let me request for the *DC [DCA]* volume, because I am simply—what I was doing was seeking adoption of the motion with the addition of the diverse nature which would include marriage between man and woman. And not changing the marriage between persons or contending—

BISHOP GRAVES: Right, but we need it exactly where it would appear in the text of the petition.

MWAYERA: Under marriage on—I'm now in the *DC [DCA]*, p. 209.

BISHOP GRAVES: Fine.

MWAYERA: P. 209 in the *DC [DCA]*, under marriage 161(d). We—within the church we affirm marriage as a sacred lifelong covenant that brings (1) adult man and woman of consenting age together and (2)—the Roman numerals—people of faith in union with one another. Then it goes on just as it is.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, so can you reframe this for us, Gary? OK. I will call upon general secretary to—of the conference to frame this for us exactly.

GRAVES: Please tell me if we put this into the proper place: Within the church—and I'm reading from section d, marriage. Within the church, we affirm marriage as a sacred lifelong covenant that brings an adult man and woman of consenting order—

MWAYERA: age, age, a-g-e

GRAVES: I will change that. It is order, o-r-d-e-r on here, and I will change that to age.

MWAYERA: Is it in writing...

GRAVES: No, we've got it. Thank you. And two adult persons of consenting age.

MWAYERA: Yes.

GRAVES: So the first is adult man and woman of consenting age.

MWAYERA: Yes.

GRAVES: Or, two adult persons of consenting age

MWAYERA: Yes.

GRAVES: And that is the end of the sentence? And then you continue with "While The United Methodist Church."

MWAYERA: Yes.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, do we have a second to this?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, I hear a second.

OK. As we prepare for you to share and to speak on this, I want to ask the tech team to give us, to clear the poll—the pool. And give us another pool so we can speak to the amendment. All right you may proceed. You may speak to it.

MWAYERA: Am I still recognized, Bishop?

BISHOP GRAVES: Yes, it's you. Yes.

MWAYERA: Thank you. The rationale is that in the Wesleyan tradition, we aim to live by admonishment to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God. The failure to specify the acceptable nature of marriage is discriminatory and counter the whole notion of regionalization, the intent of which, is among other things, to contextualize marriage with the cultural values and territorial laws of each region, centered on the biblical interpretation by each region, history, experience, and reason. Third, defining marriage conforms with the faith that marriage officers have the discretion to preside or decline to preside over a marriage in tune with the conscience and in their context. I urge people to accept the amendment and then adopt, considering that we are looking at the diverse nature and if we look at countries in Africa, maybe with the exception of South Africa, the legislation there, the constitutions that is the supreme laws of those countries do not allow same sex marriages. They allow marriage between a man and a woman. But in the spirit of removing the harmful language, the two forms of marriages, hence the double-barreled suggestion, would then be recognized and the regions will be able to operate. Also when it comes to having the legislative instruments in the regions, they are supposed to be in conformity with *The Book of Discipline*, which is the main constitution of the United Methodist. So if we do not have the clause—

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, your three—your two minutes are up.

MWAYERA: Thank you, may I request just a second to wind up?

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah, your—your two minutes are up. All right, Gary needs, the secretary needs to ask—

GRAVES: Before you leave the microphone, I want to make one—make sure that we are clear. Instead of continuing after the portion that I read with you, are you replacing only the words *two people of faith* and then the rest of that paragraph would continue? Because if we did it the other way, it doesn't have anything that ends that sentence.

MWAYERA: I didn't seek to remove. I sought to add in the amendment. And the addition was to include the other type of marriage, which is a marriage between a man and a woman. We have a double-barreled definition of marriage. So the sentence will go as it is in sequence for it to make sense.

GRAVES: As a sacred lifelong covenant that brings an adult man and woman of consenting age, or two adult persons of consenting age into union with one another. Is that—

MWAYERA: I had used a conjunction *and* I didn't use *or*.

GRAVES: And?

MWAYERA: Thank you, Bishop. Can—if I can—am I excused?

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. Thank you.

MWAYERA: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. So, what we've—she is seeking to add and not strike language. You're seeking to add.

MWAYERA: (*indecipherable*) the motion adopted is—

BISHOP GRAVES: That's what, that's what you've done, you've added. So, thank you. And we've had a second, and we've got a lot of other things going on here too.

(*pause*)

All right, point of information and inquiry. I call upon Delegate Matt Dailey from Florida. Mic. 2.

MATT DAILEY (Florida): Thank you so much, Bishop. My name is Matt Dailey. White, young adult, layperson, from Florida. There seems to be some confusion on the floor as to the text of this amendment. I recognize that this question favors English, but is there a way we can get this language displayed on the screen?

(*pause*)

BISHOP GRAVES: We will work to do that.

(*pause*)

We are projected on the screen. It'll only be in English, so we might have to work through the interpreters as well. We have other points of inquiry. Let's go—I'm going to call upon Delegate Alexe Johnson, Iowa, mic. 5.

ALEXE JOHNSON (Iowa): Thank you, Bishop. Alexe Johnson, White, layperson, from Iowa, non-binary. My point of inquiry is regarding the word *and* in the amendment. It is—does adding the word *and* rather than the word *or*—

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah, I think you're—I think you're speaking to the amendment so we would deal with it at that time.

JOHNSON: Yes.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, OK, so it is a good question. I'm sorry.

JOHNSON: It's OK. Does adding the word *and* rather than *or* make it so that marriage would be between a man, a woman, and also two other consenting adults?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, that's what it sounds like.

JOHNSON: Because I don't think that's the intention.

BISHOP GRAVES: Very excellent point.

(laughter)

BISHOP GRAVES: Oh my my.

(laughter)

OK.

If there is no objection, the chair would like to ask this. If there is no objection, with the amendment that we would strike out *and* insert the word *or*. Is there any objection to that?

I don't hear or see anyone.

There is an objection. OK. OK.

So, I've heard the question. I gave an answer. But you all—you all, sorry—are not willing to just take the amendment, so it's going to be up to the body to make the decision; be up to the body. All right.

So, we're going to go to speeches for the amendment because, friends, we do want to move on, right?

We have three speeches for.

(pause)

All right, I want to call upon—let us skip around. Jerry Kulah, mic. 1, from Liberia, to speak against this amendment. Delegate Jerry Kulah. Mic. 1. Speech against the amendment.

Mic. 1.

JERRY KULAH (Liberia): Yes, Bishop. Jerry Kulah here from Liberia. I have my Bible in my hands, and this is the word of God.

BISHOP GRAVES: Let's, let's—

KULAH: I'm coming to it—

BISHOP GRAVES: Why are you speaking against the amendment?

KULAH: I am speaking the amendment because we do not have another Bible apart from this Bible. So we cannot have the two options that the amendment offers to us. And so, I vote against the amendment, that's the reason I was trying to explain—

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

KULAH: Yes, that this Bible—2 Timothy 3:16 says, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. When it comes to the issue of human sexuality, the Bible is very emphatic that we have marriage between a man and a woman, and that's what our current *Book of Discipline* holds.

For the past fifty-two years, every attempt has been made to alter the biblical truth. Today, we have a majority General Conference characterized by liberals and progressives who are doing everything to change the Bible to something else. Because of that, I vote against this amendment. Thank you very much.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. Let me call upon—the chair recognizes delegate Jørgen Tharrup from Denmark. Mic. no. 2.

JØRGEN THAARUP (Denmark): Thank you. My name is Jørgen Thaarup, Denmark Annual Conference. I am a native European. I want to say thank you for the amendment, and I will speak in favor of the amendment because this amendment opens for understanding marriage as two things. If we see in Wesley's Sunday Service he gave to the church when it was established, Wesley had two ceremonies text for marriage. One text for marriages where it was expected that there should come children. And another ceremony for marriages where there was not expected that any children should be born in that marriage. So, the thinking that marriage is not one thing but can be two things, we have it already from John Wesley.

Concerning all your scriptural arguments, we have no Bible text saying anything about marriage. What we have and what is important is Jesus' quotation in Matthew 19. That is a text about divorce. That is the opposite of marriage. The critical thing with Jesus' quote is that he take argument from Old Testament before the Mosaic Law and even before sin. The second text from Genesis 2, the Greek word is not *man* but *anthropos*. It's a man—it's a human being. The human being is leaving his family and connect with another family; nothing about man. The first text is about reproduction, not marriage, and here gender is mentioned.

So please read your text but not your translations.

(crowd responds)

BISHOP GRAVES: Time expired, I'm sorry about that. We were trying to get some things here. My bad.

All right. We're now going to show the text on the screen.

(pause)

And you'll notice the question of *and*—where that is.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Point of order

BISHOP GRAVES: You need to register. Get in the pool for a point of order.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My point of order is in regard to the pool.

BISHOP GRAVES: You're not recognized, please. You are not recognized. Get in the pool for a point of order. Other people are asking for a point of order too. OK.

Daniel Colbert. I call upon Delegate Daniel Colbert, mic. 6, Baltimore-Washington.

DANIEL COLBERT (Baltimore-Washington): Yes, Bishop. Daniel Colbert, Baltimore-Washington, lay delegate, a White adult man.

I believe that we are in violation of Rule 25 because there are people in the queue—in the pool, excuse me—to move to amend the amendment that is before the body and that should take precedence.

BISHOP GRAVES: I'm going to have to rule that out of order because an amendment is not a ranking motion or precedence in recognition. So, it is properly before us. Thank you.

All right, where are we going now?

(pause)

We've got about thirty people in this pool, and I feel like I'm drowning up here. We're trying to do the best we can; it's tough. And we got multiple people wanting to amend.

All right, let me call—the chair recognizes Delegate Ian Urriola, Upper New York, mic. 5, for an amendment.

And as you're coming we need to make sure your amendment is in writing and will be able to come to us.

URRIOLA: Hi, Bishop. Ian Carlos Urriola. I am a Latinx, lay, young adult, delegate from the Upper New York Annual Conference. And I move that we amend this amendment by replacing the word *and* after the first consenting age with the conjunction *or*.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

BISHOP GRAVES: It's properly before us.

URRIOLA: I don't believe this needs much rationale. But—so I will yield my floor speech for the expedience of time.

(pause)

BISHOP GRAVES: Let me try this again. Anybody needs to discuss this, or can we just move to vote on this amendment to the amendment? Anybody opposed?

(pause)

All right, so get your voting devices, so what—so wanting to be able to say this: get your voting devices. You may have to wake them up a little bit. They've been to lunch and been sitting there for a while. So

this is what we're voting on. It is moved to amend the amendment to strike *is and* to *or*. Those—OK. There's a typo. It is moved to amend to strike out *and* and insert *or*. Is that clear? OK. So. We're preparing to vote. If you are in favor of striking out *and* and inserting *or*, you'll press *one (1)*. If you are opposed, you'll press *two (2)*. And you may vote now.

(*pause*)

Let's see if we got some—any flags up, anywhere? I can see some way back here. Give you time to get those things going.

(*pause*)

Anybody need any more time? OK. I see you. A little more time.

(*pause*)

We think we got it? OK, I see one more.

(*pause*)

All right. Anyone else? OK, I'm going to declare the vote is closed. We can show the results.

See that 548 voted yes; 121 voted no. So this the amended to the amendment.

[*Yes, 548; No, 121*]

So we're back to the amendment. The first amendment, right?

Will the tech team restore the speaker recognition poll? And we've had some speeches for the amendment and against the amendment. I'll just get a speech against. That one.

(*pause*)

OK.

(*pause*)

All right, let me call upon, the chair recognizes Delegate Mike Jen, mic. 6, from Southern Nigeria. This is a speech against.

(*pause*)

Mic. 6.

OK, we'll go to another one. Chair recognizes Delegate Edwin Momah [Momoh], Sierra Leone, mic. 5, speech against.

EDWIN MOMOH (Sierra Leone): Bishop, I am Edwin Momoh. Male, clergy, the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. Bishop, this his morning we experienced how the commissioning of missionaries and I was so heartened, people singing and people opting to go out into the world to make disciples for transformation of the world. It is not—the Social Principles are not a matter convenience. We are looking at a decision where there are diverse people are coming into mission with different cultures and

tradition. But when we all come together we're united by the tradition and culture of the church handed down to us by the church of old. In my country, Sierra Leone, we see graves people who have given their lives to maintaining the tradition of the church. And so our Social Principles, which are our personal and social piety, are rooted in the tradition of the church and not in our local traditions. And, therefore, if we want to be Christ-like we should be following the traditions of the church rather than the traditions—our local traditions and cultures in our local areas. And so, I will be happy to see us being brought together in unity by the traditions of the church rather than depending on the traditions that we come from, the local cultures have come from. I will vote against this particular petition because it is not rooted in the church's tradition but in local tradition.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. Let me test the body. We've had two speeches for, two against. Did I have someone offer—OK sorry. Let me call upon—the chair recognizes Delegate Johnathan Page from Virginia, mic. 1.

JOHNATHAN PAGE (Virginia): Bishop, would mic. 2 be in order?

BISHOP GRAVES: That'll be great.

PAGE: Johnathan Page, clergy, Virginia Annual Conference, White, male, he/his pronouns. I move that we end debate.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. This—

PAGE: Or, call the question. Excuse me.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

PAGE: On all this before us.

BISHOP GRAVES: Close the debate. Yeah. It's been—it says a different thing, right? OK. OK?

OK so let me make sure, what you just said at the end, is "everything before us," which is the amendment and 535, is that what you want to do?

PAGE: That was my intention. Yes, sir.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. And it's been seconded, right?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second!

BISHOP GRAVES: All right.

(pause)

It is moved and seconded that debate be closed. We have given the opportunity for two speeches for, two speeches against. Therefore, the motion to close debate is in order. The motion is not debatable. In accordance with Rule 7.3 the chair informs the delegates that there are the following individuals currently in the pool: there are eight individuals which speeches in favor. Seven individuals with speeches against. And four people proposing amendments. We would be closing the debate on the motion to amend Calendar No. 535 and its pending amendment. This motion requires two-thirds vote. We will now proceed to vote. So get your voting devices out. The question is on closing debate and all

pending items related to 535. Those in favor of closing debate press *one (1)*; those opposed to closing debate press *two (2)*. Vote now.

(*pause*)

Everyone had a chance to vote?

Anyone? Looking for flags. I see one. OK. See one over to my left. Are we good over here? We got it? OK? Now we got some more right over here. All right.

(*pause*)

All right, I'm gonna declare the voting is closed. Let us see the results. OK. You have 567 yes, 128 no. Debate is closed on all items on the floor.

[*Yes, 567; No, 128*]

We will now proceed—listen closely—to vote on the motion to amend Calendar Item, hold on.

KLEIN: Wait, are we voting on the motion to amend, first and then, OK. I'm good.

(*pause*)

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah, we needed to deal with this amendment first, and then I will call upon the chair. So now we're proceeding to vote on the motion to amend—to the amendment to Calendar Item 535. This is the amendment we've been working on for quite some time. Those in favor of the amendment, the Calendar Item No. 535 press *one (1)*; for those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(*pause*)

Everyone had a chance to vote. Are anybody's we're still working with. I don't see anyone? I declare this vote is closed. We'll see the results on the screen.

OK, you have voted to adopt amendment to Calendar Item 535 as amended. All right. So now we're back to the main petition with the amendment. And I would call upon the chair.

KLEIN: All right, my siblings in Christ. The revised Social Principles are ultimately a living document. It may not be perfect as this debate as revealed, but neither are we as living human beings. What we have before us is a grace-filled document that boldly seeks to harmonize mission for our social community across varieties of contexts, not solely American contexts, not solely African contexts or Filipino contexts, or European contexts or other concordat contexts but a fully global context in mission together. This undertaking requires more generalities in language to afford agency to our annual conferences in its interpretations. As a reminder, while the Constitution in our *Book of Discipline* lays out our central beliefs as Methodism in the Articles of Religion and outlines the basic governance structures of The United Methodist Church the Social Principles to simply provide guidelines for how United Methodists respond to important social issues. They are not church law. Nevertheless, the Social Principles are grounded in United Methodist theology and our historic social as a church regarding the statements on marriage, this petition may remain more general than some of us would like. However, what it does do is get to the essence of marriage as an expression of a couple's faith that is grounded in their relationship with God and one another. Again, the 2012 General Conference commissioned the General Board of Church and Society to do this work and they have done so admirably, involving fifty-

two writing teams, members from The Philippines, Africa, Congo, Wes Africa, Central and Southern Europe. North, Northern Europe. Eurasia and central conferences and all five U.S. Jurisdictions. They engaged in speaking to over four thousand people, including a diverse representations of cultures.

We would be remiss if we denied ourselves the reception of this gift of hard labor. Of over twelve years of work from GBCS, a love letter to our church. We can choose to perfect it further at our next General Conference, once we have time to live into it. We humbly to ask for you to adopt this petition to move forward in our social witness to the world. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, thank you. So we will now proceed to vote on Calendar Item 535, which has been amended. Those in favor of Calendar Item No. 535, as amended—remember we just approved that—press *one (1)*. Those opposed press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

All right, has everybody had a chance to vote? Anybody still—I don't see anybody waving a flag. I declare the vote is closed. Wait for the results. You have approved this 523 to 161. You all have done some great work here. Give yourself a hand clap of praise for doing good work.

[Yes, 523; No, 161]

(*applause*)

All right. So now we have—we have moved to 554. Please register in the pool. Hold on. OK, let me call upon—the chair recognizes Delegate Effie McAvoy? Mic. Yeah right there. Whatever that is, one? Yes. An—and you're—you're asking—let me—you're asking for a

EFFIE MCAVOY MCCLAIN (New England): Point of order?

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah. It says a point of information or inquiry.

MCAVOY: I just pressed fast, Bishop. I'm sorry. It wasn't open. Do you want me to resubmit?

BISHOP GRAVES: No, no, no, just—so just restate what you're asking, I guess.

MCAVOY: Yes, sir. Can I give my information for the monitors, please?

BISHOP GRAVES: OK

MCAVOY: Rev. Effie McAvoy, clergy, New England Annual Conference, she/her pronouns. I would like us to look at Rule No. 23, paragraph 8, and pause for a time to pray. If that would be OK? Please?

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, we had a time of prayer yesterday.

(*laughter*)

We've had a time of prayer every day, right? I feel like—

MCAVOY: I'm confused as a Methodist Christian.

BISHOP GRAVES: We used this rule, you are correct. We did use this rule. So let's have a moment of prayer.

MCAVOY: Thank you, sir.

BISHOP GRAVES: And let me pray for us.

MCAVOY: Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: O Lord, we come in your midst and as we know that we have moved through this time, there are those that felt affirmed, and those that felt otherwise, but that's— we're supposed to be as United Methodists. And so this is an historic moment in the life of the church as of this point. So help us to continue to know that in Christian love, that above all of our thoughts and opinions and some of our strong theological beliefs, that those are OK. But we are called to love and we move forward. May this time that we have just spent help us all move forward in making disciples for the transformation of the world. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

OK, now that we're in the groove, let's go to 554. And the next item of business is one of our calendar items. I would recognize—the chair recognizes Lindsey Freeman and Emily Kincaid from the Committee on Ordained Ministry to present our next calendar item.

LINDSEY FREEMAN (Virginia): Thank you, Bishop. My name is Lindsey Baynham Freeman, clergy, Virginia Annual Conference, U.S., adult female, multi-racial, Black African American and White Anglo and it was my great joy and honor to chair the Ordained Ministry Legislative Committee.

EMILY KINCAID (Alabama-West Florida): My name is Emily Kincaid. I serve as clergy in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. U.S. adult, female, White, and I have the great joy and honor of serving as the secretary of the best legislative committee, the Ordained Ministry Committee.

FREEMAN: Calendar Item 554 can be found on p. 2237 of the *DCA* and p. 1637 and 1638 of volume 3 of the *ADCA*. Petition 20897. And the information is on the screen.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

FREEMAN: The committee voted to adopt Petition 20897. This petition takes into consideration the study of ministry report which recommends reconsidering sacramental authority. Ordination authorizes sacraments and extending this authority to deacons honors bridging the church to the world through the sacraments. This petition still holds together the distinction of the orders, while not limiting the role of ordained persons to one particular role. The petition also expands the sacraments to gathered and dispersed church.

(pause)

BISHOP GRAVES: You're out of order, because you've got to get into the queue to do this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I'm just trying. It's not open. The title—

BISHOP GRAVES: Well, you're interrupting the speaker. So try to get back in the queue and we'll come back to you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's not open. The screen was talking about gun violence, which is not the title of this petition.

FREEMAN: I can—if I may, Bishop, I can clarify.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, let's go back, let's let the chair complete her work. Thank you.

FREEMAN: Petition 20897 is dealing with granting sacramental authority to deacons in their ministry setting. OK, so I'll continue if I may. The Book of Acts gives a beautiful example of how the sacraments meet people in the world through Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian. We affirm the ministry and witness of our deacons and support their sacramental authority within their ministry context. Bishop, I move that Calendar Item 554, Petition 20897 be adopted.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 554. Question on the adoption of Calendar Item 554 is before us. You may register to speak. Is there any discussion?

The chair recognizes Delegate Karen Jones, to mic. 4, South Carolina. This is a speech for. Mic. 4.

KAREN JONES (South Carolina): Good afternoon, Bishop. Karen Jones, clergy, I am a deacon, I'm married to a deacon, female, multiracial, Korean and American, she/her. This is a speech for, if I may. So, although this current *Book of Discipline* allows deacons to have sacramental authority, we have to request it from our bishop. As the former chair of the Order of Deacons, and working with deacons across the United States, there are very few deacons who have actually been granted that authority through the current *Book of Discipline*, and I'd like to share a story of my husband who actually was granted the rare privilege of sacramental authority. He works beyond the local church in a nursing home with memory care patients. And when he could not find elders help him bring the sacraments he got permission to do a Service of Word and Table for nursing home and memory care patients. There was one woman who did not recognize the elements. She called it a cookie. Can you give me the cookie, a cookie? With trying to explain it, what it is, he gave up and he said, this is Christ's body broken for you, Christ's blood. When it touched her tongue, her eyes lifted as if scales had fallen off and she said I know what this is. Please approve this petition to open up sacramental authority for deacons so that we may joyfully be obedient to the Holy Spirit taking sacraments to a broken world. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you. That was a speech for. This is a speech against. The chair recognizes Delegate Karli Pidgeon, mic. 2.

KARLI PIDGEON (Louisiana): Good afternoon. Karli Pidgeon, Black African American Female, Louisiana Conference, clergy.

I rise to speak against this petition. Particularly around the fact that this initially came up in the Study of Ministry, and it was just posed as a question. So, I think that we need to allow the Study of Ministry to continue their work so that we can address all of the Orders and how this will impact all of the Orders, and our theological understanding of ordination.

The call for deacons is for word, service, justice, and compassion which is so needed right now in our world. It is different from the call of our elders who current have sacramental authority. So, I think it's a no; it's a not now, so that we can continue to pray, to study, to discern how this will impact our entire church.

So, for me, that's why I'm requesting to vote this petition no so that we can continue to do the work, to be in ministry together with one another; so that we can have a strong, solid understanding on what our theological stance on ordination across the board, as well as sacramental authority. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. This is a speech against. We've had one speech for, one speech against. Let me call upon Megan Walter [Walther] for a speech for. I call upon Delegate Walter [Walther] from the Michigan Conference, mic. 5, speech for.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mic. 6.

BISHOP GRAVES: That will work great.

MEGAN WALTHER (Michigan): All right. Megan Walther, Clergy, White, she/her pronouns.

I speak to you as an elder from the Michigan Conference where the Order of Deacons is strong. I have served alongside three appointed deacons in my local church. I know that some of you remember when the Order of Deacons was created in 1996, and back then discussions did not include sacraments. I was ten years old in 1996, and I've grown a little older since then, and by God's grace, I've grown in perspective and call.

I think most of us have grown and changed since the turn of the century, and similarly our understanding of the call and the work of the deacon have evolved. As has been mentioned, deacons may receive limited authority to preside at the sacraments currently, but that depends on the bishops and all of our bishop perceive the ministry of deacons in the same way. Not all deacons feel sacramental authority is necessary. However, in many context broader authority would enhance ministry as deacons follow their distinct call to justice and to compassion. And there is space in our Wesleyan Theology for sacramental authority for deacons as noted in "A Sacred Trust." We elders should not have the monopoly on the sacraments, and I strongly encourage us to approve sacramental authority more broadly for our deacon siblings. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: That is two speeches for, one against. I have eighteen (persons) in the pool who wish to speak for. But, I also have someone, nobody wishing to speak against. But I do have someone with an amendment, so the chair recognizes delegate Michael Cheatham, mic. 4, South Carolina. And please have it in writing. Amen?

Mic. 4.

MICHAEL CHEATHAM (South Carolina): Amen. I'm Michael Cheatham, lay delegate from South Carolina.

I move to amend this petition. After the word *deacon*, in the second instance, add these words: *and certified lay ministers assigned as a senior pastor of a local church*. And if I get a second, I'll speak to it.

(*pause*)

BISHOP GRAVES: There is no second, so it is not before us.

All right, I hear a second now.

CHEATHAM: Thank you. Certified lay ministers often serve—

BISHOP GRAVES: Hold on just one moment, OK. Just hold on a moment.

(*pause*)

OK. It is has been moved and seconded, so now you may speak.

CHEATHAM: Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you.

CHEATHAM: Certified ministers, lay ministers often serve very small congregations, and it's difficult, many times, to find an elder who is willing to come to our worship services which are many times held as the same time as others' services simply to serve Communion. With this difficulty, our congregations suffer for lack of full attendance to the ordinances of God and the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. So, have you got a copy of that coming to us up here? We got it. OK. Thank you.

(pause)

So, we have the amendment before us. The pool has been clear and now we have new people coming in.

I call upon John Branning, mic. 6. Delegate John Branning from Mississippi, a speech against —wait, hold on.

All right, we have a point of order. The chair recognizes delegate Jason Stanley, mic. 1 from Virginia. So, please come forward, state your point of order.

JASON STANLEY (Virginia): Bishop Graves, I'm at mic. 2.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, that's great.

STANLEY: The question—excuse me, the paragraph that—

BISHOP GRAVES: What rule are you coming about?

STANLEY: I don't know. What rule am I coming about?

(laughter)

Can you work with me and try to help me out?

(laughter)

What's the rule number?

BISHOP GRAVES: So, do you have an inquiry? Is that what you've got?

STANLEY: Let's go with that.

(laughter)

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, let's try it.

STANLEY: The paragraph that we are working on is paragraph 328, which pertains to the ministry of the deacon, and therefore I think this amendment is not suited for this paragraph.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

(pause)

OK. Let's try this.

The point is very well taken. And we give thanks for the certified lay ministers that are serving our churches all over the world. However, it is correct; this is a paragraph about deacons. Therefore, this is not the proper place to bring a certified lay minister to in terms of sacramental rights. Therefore, this amendment is not in proper order with this petition that we're now dealing with.

All right. So, let's go back to the previous poll because we're not working with the amendment.

We've had two speeches for; we had no one speaking against. Let's see if we have anything else.

(pause)

OK. Just bear with us a moment. We're trying to get the previous pool back, so be prepared if you need to speak to get in this pool. We've got—yeah. We've got many people wanting to speak for. We have one against. Let's see. That other one's new. OK. All right, so this is a speech against. The chair recognizes Delegate Olivier Izwela from Lukoshi. Mic. 2, a speech against. Mic. 2.

OLIVIER IZWELA (Lukoshi): *(simultaneous interpretation from French)* Thank you for allowing me to speak, Bishop. I am against this because we are a church and a church is a body and in a body each organ has its role to play. The eye cannot serve as the mouth. And a mouth cannot serve the role of an arm or of a leg. That is how it works in the church. Elders have their role. Laypeople have their role. Deacons have their role. I think that each one should limit themselves to fulfilling their role. Deacons are not forbidden to celebrating the sacraments. They just need the bishop's permission. But if we want to make that institutionally wide, I don't think that is good. I think each person should stay in their role. Deacons in their role, elders in their role. That is why I am opposed to this petition. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. We've had two speeches for, two speeches against. We have eighteen people in the pool that want to speak in favor—twenty-three, excuse me, that want to speak in favor. None against. So I'm going to call upon Amie Stewart. The chair recognizes Delegate Amie Stewart, mic. 2. North Carolina.

AMIE STEWART (North Carolina): My name is Amie Stewart, White, female, clergy, deacon, from North Carolina. I move to close debate.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, thank you. Thank you for being patient with me a little while ago as well. All right, we now need to vote on closing debate. Be a moment. Was that seconded?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Yes.

BISHOP GRAVES: That's in the affirmative. It is moved and seconded that debate be closed. We have given the opportunity for two speeches for and two speeches against. Therefore the motion to close debate is in order. This motion is not debatable. In accordance with Rule 7.3 the chair informs the delegates that there are the following individuals currently in the pool: twenty-three individuals with speeches in favor, no persons wanting to speak against, zero people proposing amendments. We would be closing debate on the motion to amend Calendar 554. OK? Get out your voting devices. Please vote now.

Voting to close debate.

(pause)

Anyone having trouble voting? I'm not seeing anyone. I declare this vote is closed. End debate. You have voted 616 to 36 to end debate.

[Yes, 616; No, 36]

All right, let me ask the chairs if y'all would like to come and say anything else. Rev. Emily Kincaid.

KINCAID: Thank you, Bishop, and thank you, Lindsey, for the opportunity to speak to this. Friends, the decision of this body to grant sacramental authority to deacons is a missional one. In 1784, John Wesley founded the Methodist movement for this very reason. To extend the sacraments to places where the Church of England was unwilling to offer them. Wesley's Three Simple Rules culminate with "attend to the ordinances of God," which includes the sacraments. Deacons often find ourselves in places where the mission of God is being extended outside the walls of the church and where elders are not always present to offer the converting sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. These places include prisons, nursing homes, homeless shelters, camping and retreat ministries, hospitals, and many other marginal and liminal places. In our liturgy, we pray that God would pour out the Holy Spirit on us and on the bread and wine that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by Jesus' blood. Granting sacramental authority to deacons will free us as a church for joyful obedience to extend the witness of God's saving love and forgiveness into all the world. It will allow us to live into Wesley's belief that the world is truly our parish. The committee recommends that the body support this petition.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, if you will get out your voting devices, we will now proceed to vote on Calendar Item No. 554.

Those in favor of Calendar Item No. 554, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

Everyone had a chance to vote? I don't see any—oh, I see a hand. OK, thank you.

(pause)

All right, let's close the vote.

And you see the vote, yes 448 to 240.

[Yes, 448; No, 240]

(applause)

Let's, we'll hold our applause to the end of this time. But this is an historic moment.

OK, I belie—OK. Calendar Item No. 554 is adopted.

All right. OK, so I'll ask you to present the next item. Petition 555. Not? Oh, I'm sorry. 463.

FREEMAN: Yes, sir.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. Calendar Item 463. All right.

FREEMAN: Calendar Item 463 can be found on p. 2179 and 2180 of the *DCA*. And p. 1630 of the *ADCA* and this is Petition 20880. And the title is correct. The committee voted to adopt Petition 20880. This petition aligns the voting thresholds between Boards of Ordained Ministry and District Committees on Ordained Ministry for the discontinuance of candidates for ministry. Bishop, I move that Calendar Item 463, Petition 20880, be adopted.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, thank you. I would also ask the tech team for a new speaker recognition pool please. It is moved to adopt—oh, oh.

It is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 463.

The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 463. You may now register to speak. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

OK. Chair recognizes Delegate Effie McAvoy, point of order, mic. 1, New England.

MCAVOY MCCLAIN: Effie McAvoy, New England, clergy.

I would request that we look to Rule 33, line 8, paragraph 8 to pray over what we just did for the Order of Deacons as a means to speak to the divine—Bishop, I am a praying preacher. Everybody knows that I call for prayer all the time. And I just think we need to recognize what the body has done in this historic General Conference for many different groups of people.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK.

MCAVOY MCCLAIN: And so I'm asking that we pray.

BISHOP GRAVES: I'm with you, I'm with you.

MCAVOY MCCLAIN: Thank you.

I said when she's get—When I saw you getting up, I said she's going to want me to pray.

(laughter)

MCAVOY MCCLAIN: I'm going to want you to pray always!

BISHOP GRAVES: All right, I'm going to call upon Rev. Emily Kincaid to come, deacon, Alabama-West Florida Conference. I think it'd be appropriate for you—and she's going to be at mic. 5. So the bishop's taking a personal privilege here to have one of mine I think pray and also help co-chair this. Lead us in prayer, Emily.

KINCAID: Thank you, Bishop. The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

KINCAID: Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for the opportunity to be a part of your church and your mission in the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As we come to another historic moment in the life of our church, we are in awe of all that you can do. We thank you for the opportunities so many will have to participate in the sacraments because

of this decision. Grant us your grace, your wisdom, and discernment as we go forward. In your name we pray. Amen.

BISHOP GRAVES: All right. Chair recognizes Delegate Alvin Makunke [Makunike], point of info/inquiry—point of inquiry, South Africa Provisional Conference, mic. 3. Please come prepared to state your point.

ALVIN MAKUNIKE (South Africa Provisional): Bishop, Alvin Makunike, South Africa Annual Conference, African male, adult.

Bishop, I think I was in the deep end for some time in the pool. I don't remember that—

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, you don't remember?

MAKUNIKE: Yes.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, thank you. Sorry. OK.

All right. Chair recognizes Delegate Stefan Drockenfuss [Schröckenfuchs] from—how was my German there?—an other—an other parliamentary procedure, Austria Provisional Conference, mic. 5.

STEFAN SCHRÖCKENFUCHS (Austria Provisional): No? No.

BISHOP GRAVES: Yeah, you're—you're at 6. And that's fine.

SCHRÖCKENFUCHS: Oh, sorry.

BISHOP GRAVES: So, go straight to what you're asking us.

SCHRÖCKENFUCHS: I move that we suspend Rule 7, part 3 of our rules, found on p. 2046 of the *DCA*, that for the rest of our time together this week, we would not have three speeches in favor, and three against. That two speeches in favor and two against. This would be my request. Stefan Schröckenfuchs. Thank you.

BISHOP GRAVES: OK. Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

(pause)

BISHOP GRAVES: OK, so we're asking for a suspension of the rules. Typically we suspend the rules for a session. But you're asking for a suspension for the rest of the conference. So I need to ask the body, is there any objection to suspending the rules of two speeches for and against, from three to two, for the remainder of the conference? OK.

(pause)

OK. OK. So we're going—because there's an objection, we're going to go to an immediate vote on suspending the rules. There's no debate. For the remainder of this General Conference. OK, if that's allowed, then we'll process his motion.

So we need to go—we need to go straight to a vote to suspend the rules from three to two speeches for and against.

If you will vote to suspend the rules for the remainder of the General Conference, you will press *one (1)* for yes, *two (2)* for no.

(pause)

All right, anybody need a little more time?

I'm not seeing any, so this vote is closed. Please post the results. Yes, 536. No, 106.

[Yes, 536; No, 106]

Motion to suspend the rules.

So, now. We will now process his request to suspend the rules, from three speeches to two for the remainder of the General Conference. And Rule 7.

Now, we're moving to adopt a change in Rule 7 for this General Conference, for the remainder of it. 7.3.

Clear? Get your voting devices out.

If you will approve the motion that you allowed to take place, you will press *one (1)* for yes, *two (2)* for no.

(pause)

Anybody still waiting to vote? I think we've got it. I don't see anyone.

I'm going to declare the vote is closed. Post the results.

Yes, 519. No, 95. And this has been approved.

[Yes, 519; No, 95]

You've amended Rule 7 for this General Conference. Amended the Rules 7.3, for this General Conference to go from three speeches for and against to two for and against.

So now we're going to stop this session because order of the day is here. I'm going to turn it over to secretary of the General Conference, Rev. Gary Graves, and then I will have a closing remark.

GRAVES: Thank you, Bishop. We have received Judicial Council decisions that I am prepared to share with you.

Decision 1498: The question was regarding the effect of paragraph 408.1b and paragraph 357.1 with regard to a series of five questions.

The decision of the Judicial Council: Paragraph 357.1 applies to ordained elders, not bishops. If a central conference bishop fits the requirements for retirement, under paragraph 408.1b, of the 2012 *Discipline*, the bishop must retire no later than one year from the end of the General Conference session. There will be no need for episcopal oversight inasmuch as a new bishop will be elected at the central conference.

In Decision 1499: The question was to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council regarding Petition 20299, 20299, which was adopted on consent calendar. And the question: Does eliminating travel costs for retired bishops conflict with our Social Principles and Constitution by creating a standard

that inhibits some members' participation due to their age from attending membership meetings by requiring paying their own travel expenses for global leadership?

The decision of the Judicial Council: Under paragraph 47 of the constitution, the Council of Bishops shall be composed of all bishops of The United Methodist Church. All bishops, active and retired, of The United Methodist Church are authorized to attend meetings of the Council of Bishops with expenses paid. Petition 20299 as amended violates paragraph 47 and is unconstitutional, null, and void.

Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP GRAVES: Thank you.

As we conclude this afternoon session, before we go into our second afternoon session, I just want to thank you for the great work that you did and have done here in this afternoon. If I mispronounced your name, or offended anyone in any way, I apologize for that.

You've been a great group to work with.

I give thanks to Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, Bishop Leonard Fairley for backing me up. It took a village to kind of move us through this time, and that's what it takes. We do things as a team, and I'm so grateful for all of that.

So, delegates, we have reached the time for a break. We will take a recess until 4:05 P.M. When we resume, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling will be our presiding officer. Thank you so much.

(applause)

Plenary 2

BISHOP M. LATRELLE EASTERLING: Beloved of God, I am LaTrelle Miller Easterling, a Black adult female and the servant leader of the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware conferences.

The birthplace of Methodism, as a plan developed during a historic meeting between Asbury and Coke at Barratt's Chapel, was birthed at the Christmas Conference held at Lovely Lane Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

I am honored to be joined by Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank, the resident bishop of California-Pacific Conference, and James (Jimmy) Nunn, the resident bishop of Oklahoma Conference and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

I sit before you as a third-generation Methodist, the daughter of Walter and Mary Miller, who loved this church and worked tirelessly to uphold her mission and ministry and poured their faith into their children. I am also the daughter of University United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, where we were served by the Rev. George Rice and the Rev. Harry A. Coleman.

My heart verse: "If you have raced with runners on foot and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if you stumble in a safe land, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:5).

Beloved, we have some significant work that we need to do this afternoon, so we need to stay the course. We need to be able to engage, and we need to be purposeful in the way that we manage our time together. Won't you join me in prayer?

Gracious and loving God, we humble ourselves before you right now as your disciples, as your children, assembled under the banner of The United Methodist Church in this time of holy conferencing. Lead us as you always do. Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our lives. Let peace fill our world. Let peace fill our universe. Peace, peace, peace. And all those assembled say together, amen.

I'd like to—just for a moment before we come to our calendar item, which we will resume Calendar Item 463. I want to talk a moment about the way that we've been using Rule 23.8. The rule states that it is appropriate to take time for prayerful discernment at the immediate moment. As I understand, that term, *discernment*, that would allow the body a time to pray, to think, to process how the body might move forward before we take an action, before we take a vote. So if we could begin to use that particular rule in that way, I think it would be helpful for the body. And I make the commitment to you that before we close this session this evening, we will ask for a collective and corporate prayer to celebrate all of the historic things that are about to take place in this last session today. And so if we can operate in that way, I think that we'll be able to achieve another goal that we have and that is to get as much of our legislative work done as possible. Amen? Amen.

Calendar Items

All right. And so, again, when we started our break, we were on Calendar Item 463, and it was open for discussion. We suspended the rules and moved to limit ourselves to two speeches for and two against, so that means once we reach that threshold, the question will automatically be called, and no one has to go to the microphone in order to enable that for us. We still have the same speaker recognition pool in place, and so the chair recognizes David Livingston of the Great Plains Conference, who rises to speak against. David Livingstone, if you could come to mic. 4.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE (Great Plains): (*indecipherable*)

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. All right, then the chair recognizes Jerry Kulah. Comes to us from Liberia. He has a point of inquiry. So as you're coming, Delegate Kulah, if you could be prepared quickly to share with us what your question is, and it says that you're close to mic. 1. Delegate Kulah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (*indecipherable*)

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, so if we can then clear the pool. We are looking for then speeches for or against Calendar Item 463.

All right. There's no one in the pool at this moment. With no one in the pool, then we can move to a vote.

All right, so we'll get that ballot prepared.

All right. The ballot is prepared, so you are voting on—

(*pause*)

All right. The maker of the motion does not want to speak to it, so the pool is o—the item is open. You’re voting on Calendar Item No. 463. If you vote in the affirmative, you would support it. If not, you would press *two (2)*. Vote now.

(pause)

All right. I’m not seeing any flags. All right. So the ballot is closed. We could have the results. 461 voted in the affirmative; 60 voted against. The Calendar Item does carry. Thank you.

[Yes, 461; No, 60]

All right. We’ll ask the committee to present the next item.

LINDSEY FREEMAN (Virginia): The next calendar item before us is 468. Calendar Item 468 can be found on p. 2180 of the *DCA* and p. 1640 of the *ADCA*. Petition 20904.

Bishop, the committee voted to adopt Petition 20904. This petition adds language to paragraph 338.2(A)(3) of *The Book of Discipline*, which seeks to clarify the voting process for approving less-than-fulltime appointments. It ensures that those who consulted on a less-than-fulltime appointment would not also vote on this matter in the clergy session. Bishop, I move that Calendar Item 468, Petition 20904, be adopted.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 468, and so the question on adoption is now before you. You may register to speak. Is there any discussion?

And as we’re waiting to see if you populate the pool for discussion, we have an “other parliamentary” inquiry. Delegate Horne, Odell Horne, of North Georgia, if you could come to mic. 5 and share your question with us.

(pause)

ODELL HORNE (North Georgia): Bishop Miller Easterling, Odell Horne, North Georgia Conference lay delegate. I just want to—at the most appropriate time—request a declaratory decision.

BISHOP EASTERLING: That is in order.

(pause)

HORNE: Bishop, I request—

BISHOP EASTERLING: I’m sorry, give—if you give the chair a moment, please.

HORNE: Yes.

(pause)

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair apologizes. This is not an interrupting motion, but the chair will come back to you as soon as we conclude this calendar item.

HORNE: Duly noted.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. So, again, we’re looking for speeches for or against. Calendar Item 468. There’s no one in the speaker recognition pool, right now. All right. Seeing none we will proceed to a

vote. The motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 468. The ballot is open. If you affirm, press *one (1)*. If not, press *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right. Everyone that wanted to cast a ballot been able to do so? All right. We'll close the ballot. If we could have the results? All right. 492 voted in the affirmative. 86 voted against. Calendar Item 468 carries.

[Yes, 492; No, 86]

And so, as promised, if we could have delegate Odell Horne come back to mic. 5. You wanted to ask for a declaratory decision.

HORNE: Thank you Bishop. I'm requesting the Judicial Council to determine the constitutionality of paragraph 543.7 as amended by Petition No. 21040 found on ADCA p. 1303.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, is there a second. All right, I hear—we have a second. Will you please state the reason for the declaratory decision?

HORNE: I'm requesting the decision on regional conferences delegating authority to annual conferences. Based upon church law, the legislative function and the judicial council has repeatedly held that such legislative authority may not be delegated.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. This motion is not debatable and so we will proceed directly to a vote. The question is no the adoption of the motion that the General Conference request a declaratory decision from Judicial Council on paragraph 543.7 as amended by Petition 21040 found in the ADCA on p. 1303. It will require a one-fifth approval of the body or 20 percent of the General Conference to be adopted. If you wish to support the request for a declaratory decision, please press *one (1)*. If you do not wish to support the request for a declaratory decision, please press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

And we'll need to have that request in writing and brought to the dais, please. The vote is now closed. We have the results.

All right, at 238, affirmed; 361 did not, but as it required a one-fifth vote, the motion is adopted. And, again, if we could please have that brought to the table in writing, we would appreciate it.

[Yes, 238; No, 361]

And so we'll return to the committee for the next item.

FREEMAN: The next calendar item is 555, which can be found on pp. 2237 and 2238 of the DCA, and p. 319 of the ADCA. Petition 20070. The committee voted to adopt Petition 20070 as amended. This petition, as amended, seeks to clarify the approving bodies for theological education within our worldwide church. Bishop, I move that Calendar Item 555, Petition 20070 be adopted.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 555. The question is on the adoption of that item. You may now register to speak. Is there any discussion?

I'll just state that as of right now, there's no one in the pool, but we'll give it a moment.

(pause)

All right, seeing no flags. All right, so we have a point of enquiry. Jay Horton, of North Georgia. A point of enquiry. If you could come to mic. 5 and share your question? That's just fine, thank you.

JAY HORTON (North Georgia): I'm Jay Horton, North Georgia, laity, young adult, he/him pronouns. White male. My question is actually the pool wasn't open on the last declaratory decision vote, and because that is a request, upon ratification of constitutional amendments, how does the Judicial Council make a decision where there are Constitutional Amendments pending ratification?

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, give us just a moment to confer. Thank you for your question.

(pause)

All right. Delegate Horton, if you will restate your question, please. Mic. 6.

HORTON: Yes, my question is that the petition we were requesting a declaratory decision on, is—the way I understand it—is based on ratification of constitutional amendments, and so I don't understand how the Judicial Council can make a decision based on our current constitution on that.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, can you give us just a moment to inquire.

(pause)

All right, and so the chair will share that—so when you first asked the question, you asked about why the pool wasn't open, and a motion for a declaratory decision is non-debatable. So the pool, it was appropriate not to have the pool open. With respect to whether or not this could be sent to Judicial Council, the General Conference can put any matter that it wants before the Judicial Council. They will determine whether or not they have jurisdiction, and they will guide us on their discernment with respect to that particular question. So the chair rules that it was in order for it to go to Judicial Council.

HORTON: Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. And again, by way of trying to facilitate our work, if there is a point of inquiry—if it could be germane to the matter that is before the body at the moment, that would really help us to be able to process our work. All right. So thank you. Now, we have a speech for, and that is delegate Cindy Johnson from Rio Texas. If you could come to mic. 1. This is a speech for.

CINDY JOHNSON (Rio Texas): I apologize. I did not press it.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, very good. Thank you. Then the chair will call on Emily Allen with a point of inquiry, from California-Nevada. Emily Allen, if you could come to mic. 5 and state your question.

EMILY ALLEN (California-Nevada): Emily Allen, California-Nevada Annual Conference, I apologize, I am consulting three very large books at once.

BISHOP EASTERLING: That's all right.

ALLEN: OK. We previously, as a body, adopted Calendar Item 22, Petition 21039. Included in that item were amendments to constitutional paragraph 35, which is now currently under discussion. My question is, what is the effect of approving the current petition on the action we have already taken?

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, I'd ask the committee to respond to that question. The chair would ask the committee to respond to that question. We may need it restated.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, please.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. If we could have that restated, please, Delegate Allen.

ALLEN: Thank you. Our normal practice is for each petition to affect only one paragraph of *The Book of Discipline*. In the case of Calendar Item 22, it affected many paragraphs—constitutional paragraphs. One of those paragraphs was paragraph 35. Some of the changes to that paragraph are similar to what this petition addresses. But the wording is not exactly the same. And so my question is, if the current petition under discussion is adopted by this body, what is the effect that that has on the work we have already passed on Calendar Item 22?

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair would like to recognize the secretary.

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary of the General Conference): In consultation with the Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision, the word I'm getting from the person who is tracking that legislation is that it is not in conflict and it expands the understanding of that paragraph.

ALLEN: Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, there's no one in the pool wishing to discuss the matter so we will move to a vote. If we could have the ballot.

We're moving to vote on Calendar Item 555. If you affirm it, you would press *one (1)*; if you do not, press *two (2)*. This is a constitutional amendment and therefore it requires a two-thirds vote. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right, believing that everyone that wanted to cast a vote has done so, the pool is—the ballot is now closed. We'll have our results. With 547 voting in the affirmative, 99 voting to the contrary. There are—there is a two-thirds majority, and the motion is adopted. Calendar Item 555 is adopted.

[Yes, 547; No, 99]

All right. And so now we thank the committee for their work. Now the chair recognizes Lonnie Chafin to come and bring the proposed items before the body.

LONNIE CHAFIN (Northern Illinois): Thank you, Bishop. Hello, General Conference. The Conferences Committee was led by a very talented group of people. Katie Simpson was our able secretary; subcommittee chairs were Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Isa Dunah, Dexter Ceballos, and Jan Nelson; subcommittee secretaries included Joshua Shaw, Derrick Scott, Emily Allen, Sandra Olewine and Allie Scott. We're very grateful for all their contributions and excellence of work. The committee vice-chair, Ande Emmanuel, will present this item on our behalf.

ANDE EMMANUEL (Southern Nigeria): Bishop, my name is Rev. Ande Emmanuel. Clergy delegate from Southern Nigeria Annual Conference. Our next item is Petition 444, found in p. 2177 of the ADCA. Item No. 444 on p. 2177. This petition ensures voting rights for retired deaconesses and home missionaries. Deaconesses and home missionaries is a lay order in The United Methodist Church called to a lifetime of commitment to love and justice and service in The United Methodist Church. Bishops appoint deaconesses and home missionaries each year at annual conference. The change to paragraph 32, met in this petition removed the word *active* under episcopal appointment to allow for retired deaconesses and home missionaries to vote at the annual conference in the same manner as the retired elders and deacons. Bishop, I move for the adoption of the Calendar Item 444.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 444. You may register to speak now. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

All right. The chair would like to recognize Gail Douglas Boykin with a speech for from New York at mic. 3.

GAIL DOUGLAS BOYKIN (New York): Good Afternoon, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Good afternoon.

DOUGLAS BOYKIN: Deaconess Gail Douglas Boykin, New York Conference, laity. Deaconess. And, oh, just got to catch my breath here for a moment. Black. Female. Deaconess. I rise to support this petition. The order of deaconesses and home missionaries, as defined by our *Book of Discipline* in paragraph 1914, are consecrated to a lifetime work of love, service, and justice. As a consecrated order, as you experienced in Monday's consecration service, we become part of the global *diakonia*, an ecumenical community with other similar orders. To reiterate, this is a lifelong consecration. As consecrated persons, we are commissioned to serve in an assignment by an annual conference under episcopal appointment. Like our ordained order of elders and deacons, deaconesses and home missionaries are affirmed into the missional actions in our church and a lifetime call. However, unlike elders and deacons, we currently do not have the right of annual conference vote after we retire from active service. This seriously harms the missional and prophetic voice of our church. Because the service and work of deaconesses and home missionaries is so often situated in the margins and brokenness of our world, retired deaconesses and home missionaries bring vast experience and deeply significant theological perspective to our connectional life. Without voice in retirement, we lose their critical voice. Therefore, it is the request of the order of deaconess, home missionaries to allow voting rights of this group of retired laity. I support this petition and ask you—

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you.

DOUGLAS BOYKIN: Yes ma'am.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you very much. That was a speech for. The chair will recognize Jorgen Thaarup from Denmark at mic. 2. That will be a speech against. Jørgen Thaarup, mic. 2.

JØRGEN THAARUP (Denmark): Thank you. My name is Jørgen Thaarup, Denmark Annual Conference. I'm speaking against. Not because I'm not in favor of the intent of this motion. I am really. But of technical reasons, I am afraid of all of the amendments to the constitutions we are sending to all the

annual conferences this time. We have so many changes of the constitutions and I am afraid that we are giving the annual conferences a task they cannot overlook. So I think not it is needed to take this change this time. Save it for the next General Conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you, very much. The chair recognizes David Koch, mic. 5, from Eastern Pennsylvania, with a point of information or inquiry. As you come mic. 5, if you could state your question, please?

DAVID KOCH (Eastern Pennsylvania): Yes, thank you Bishop. Dave Koch from Eastern Pennsylvania. White. Male. Getting older by the minute. I was wondering, will these, if this passes, will these deaconess and lay and home missionaries be considered equalizing lay delegates, then, and reduce that number?

BISHOP EASTERLING: I turn to the committee to answer that question.

EMMANUEL: I would invite my chair to answer this question.

(laughter)

CHAFIN: Thank you, Ande, for this opportunity.

(laughter)

So they're not equalizing. The equalizing would not be, they would not be counted in the equalizing functions that annual conferences do in setting membership at the conference, to our understanding.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. Thank you. The chair recognizes Taylor Fuerst from the Rio Texas Conference. A point of information or inquiry. So, delegate Fuerst, as you approach mic. 1, if you could have your question prepared?

TAYLOR FUERST (Rio Texas): Taylor Fuerst, Rio Texas Conference, clergy, White, adult, female, she/her pronouns. I had the same question. I'm not sure that I feel that it really got answered because I'm not sure how we account for—you can't add more clergy members, and so if these are not taking the spots of equalizing lay delegate positions, then I'm not sure how we come up with more clergy to equalize that.

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair returns to the committee to respond to that.

CHAFIN: So we've learned that these would be counted as laypersons and automatically offered annual conference presence, and that would reduce the number of equalizing lay members necessary for the clergy. So the clergy will be equalized in equalizing lay members, local church lay members, and home missionaries, and deaconesses.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. The chair recognizes Paul Ketoka for an amendment. Delegate Paul Ketoka from East Congo, mic. 4. If you could have your amendment ready and, if you have not already done so, be prepared to deliver it to the dais so that we might be able to have it and work with it, as well.

(pause)

PAUL KETOKA (East Congo): (*simultaneous translation from French*) Thank you, Bishop for granting me the authority to speak. I do not have an amendment, but I wanted to speak as a motion against. So I pushed on amendment. I'm sorry.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Hate to interrupt you, but a motion to amend take precedent over other individuals who are in the speaker pool, and that's why the chair recognized you. Thank you.

We have a speech for and a speech against. The last was a speech against. The chair recognizes Nate Nims from Iowa, mic. 5. Delegate Nate Nims. Speech for. Mic. 5.

NATE NIMS (Iowa): Thank you, Bishop. Nate Nims, clergy, Iowa. White male. He/him/his. And for full disclosure, my spouse, Irene DeMeris, is a deaconess. Thank you for cheering for her. I get that a lot at this conference because most folks here know her a lot better than me. My spouse, Irene, has an MDiv, and in addition to that has gone through the discernment process with deaconesses and home missionaries in addition to other educational requirements that come before they are commissioned for their work. Their work, as was said before, is for a lifetime and previously they did have lifetime voting rights. This reaffirms what they once had and lost. And so I hope that you would support it.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. That was a speech for. So we've had two speeches for, and the chair will recognize Jethro Muyombi from South Congo. If you could come to mic. 2. Delegate Jethro Muyombi, mic. 2, with a speech against.

JETHRO MUYOMBI (South Congo): Jethro Muyombi—it's 'Muyombi' not 'Muyambo'—from South Congo. Lay.

Bishop, I want to speak against this petition. Why? Because I see in our church many lay—they don't want to go to university for theology. But after some time they want to become a pastor, so they want to take the short. I think that's not having sense. We have a two status: you are a clergy or you are a lay. So, why we need to answer this petition. I think it's easy if you are serving (*speaking in French*), as we say in French. So, you can be voting like delegate as lay, and you participate in the conference of General Conference. So, I didn't find any reason why we need to insert this, that's why I request to the General Conference to vote no. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you, and forgive the chair for mispronouncing your name. All right. So we have had two speeches for and two speeches against. According to our rules, now we can proceed to a ballot. But before we do so, the chair will ask delegate Emmanuel if he would like to have a final word.

EMMANUEL: We have already said here that the order of the home missionary and deaconess offers services, and after their retirement they are just redundant despite all the service they have rendered. So, this petition before you will offer them some sense of belonging, and we encourage you to adopt it.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. And so, we will proceed to a vote on the pending motion. The chair would like to inform the body that in the pool there were six individuals wishing to speak in favor, one against, and no one proposing an amendment. And so now we will proceed to a vote. If we could have the ballot.

If you support Calendar Item 444, you will press *one (1)*. If not, you will press *two (2)*. Please vote now. And I will share that this is a constitutional amendment requiring a two-thirds vote.

(*pause*)

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, not seeing any flags. I believe everyone that has wanted to vote has had the opportunity to do so. The chair will close the ballot. But, before we show the vote, because this requires a two-thirds majority, we want to be meticulous and check our math, so the ballot is closed.

All right, if we could have the results.

With 422 persons voting in favor and 248 voting against, again remembering that it requires a two-thirds majority, it does not pass.

[*Yes, 422; No, 248*]

The chair will now recognize—and thank the committee for your work. Thank you very much.

(*applause*)

It's appropriate to celebrate them and thank them for their work. Amen.

The chair would like to remind delegate Odell Horne that we still do not have your motion form for the request for declaratory decision. If you'd please ensure that that comes to the dais, we would appreciate it.

The chair now recognizes April Casperson and Eric Swanson bring the next item before the body.

APRIL CASPERSON (West Ohio): Good afternoon. My name is April Casperson. I am clergy, an ordained deacon in the West Ohio Conference in the United States. Adult, female, multiracial. My pronouns are she/her.

I want to, again, thank the Higher Education and Superintendency Legislative Committee, the Executive Leadership, as well as the thoughtful and committed voting body. The item before us is Calendar Item No. 291. Calendar Item No. 291. It is found in the *DCA* on p. 2158, and again on p. 2235, and p. 2239 of the *DCA*. Again, found in the *DCA* on pp. 2158, 2235, and 2239. The Petition No. is 20296, mandatory retirement for bishops. The page is 973 of the *ADCA*.

The full committee voted unanimously in favor of this petition. The desire of this petition was to align the mandatory retirement age of seventy-two years of age to a maximum service window of a bishop without going over the age of seventy-two. And that's the rationale for changing birthday to the first day of assignment and closing the gap that the July 1 date previously set.

This petition came from a heart of harmonizing our existing elder retirement date to the episcopal start date. The item is now before us, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 291. The question is before the body. Please register in the pool if you wish to have discussion.

Seeing no flags and seeing no names in the pool, then we will now proceed to a vote on Calendar Item 291. If you support Calendar Item 291, mandatory retirement for bishops, you would vote in the affirmative by pressing—

All right, if you vote to support that, press *one (1)*. If you do not, you would press *two (2)*. The ballot is open. Please vote now.

All right, we have a flag in Section B. I think I see someone moving to come and respond to that. All right. And there's a flag in Section D. Appreciate the pages and others helping us to resolve these technical difficulties.

All right, not seeing any other flags, the ballot will close. May we have the results? With 617 voting in the affirmative and 56 in the negative, Calendar Item 291 is adopted. Thank you.

[Yes, 617; No, 56]

We return to the committee.

CASPERSON: Our next item before us is Calendar Item 457. Calendar Item 457. It is found on the *DCA*, on pp. 2178–2179, pp. 2178–2179 of the *DCA*. The Petition No. is 20968, and it is found on 1614 of the *ADCA*. The committee voted to adopt this petition as amended. The desire of this petition is multi-layered. As we continue to hear the financial complexities with the episcopal fund, being able to limit the lifetime service of the episcopacy could be a means of assisting to sustain the episcopal fund, especially in seasons of numeric reduction. Additionally, in our discussion, the committee was provided with some correlations of these types of service term limitations that already exist in our connections in the central conferences. This petition also presents the opportunity for, perhaps, newer, younger, and more diverse leaders to continue to offer themselves in service to this office for a season, and when their service has concluded, they are able to return to the order of elders, and serve the church in their remaining years of ministry in varying capacities, understanding that calls may evolve. The item is now before us, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you very much. It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 457. The question is on that adoption. You may now register for discussion. The chair would recognize Sarah Schlieckert for other parliamentary inquiry. Sarah Schlieckert, Baltimore-Washington Conference, mic. 6.

SARAH SCHLIECKERT (Baltimore-Washington): Good afternoon, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Good afternoon.

SCHLIECKERT: Sarah Schlieckert, Baltimore-Washington Conference, female, White, adult. I would move that we refer this petition to the Interjurisdictional Episcopacy Committee.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, a motion to refer is in order. Is there a second? All right, there's a second. You may speak to it.

SCHLIECKERT: May I speak to it? As was—this is an important topic that the General Conference has addressed before. And in 2016, there was a petition around term limits that did not meet the two-thirds threshold but did receive a majority. But we have a lot of significant work before us this year. Including, as was mentioned earlier, significant constitutional work to be done in the annual conferences around a regionalization. As our Interjurisdictional Episcopacy Committee becomes more active, this feels like an appropriate topic for them to refer and come back to the General Conference next time we meet.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. The chair asks the tech team, if you could please clear the pool, that we might be able to adequately address this motion to refer? It is moved and seconded to

refer Calendar Item 457 to the Interjurisdictional Committee. In a moment, we'll open the pool. If you desire to speak for or against this motion to refer, please be prepared. Register in the pool. All right, you may do so now. The chair recognizes Forbes Matonga with a speech against, from West Zimbabwe. Forbes Matonga, mic. 4

FORBES MATONGA (West Zimbabwe): Bishop, is mic. 6 is OK?

BISHOP EASTERLING: Absolutely.

MATONGA: Thank you very much. Forbes Matonga, West Zimbabwe Annual Conference. Male. It's just to remind the mover of the motion that the United Methodist is global. And therefore, this, this issue is affecting the whole connection, not just the US. So the referring it to the Interjurisdictional is ignoring the other parts of the connection, so I vote not to support this. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, that was speech against. The chair now recognizes Bonnie Marden from the New England Conference, a speech for. Delegate Bonnie Marden, mic. 1.

BONNIE MARDEN (New England): Bonnie Marden, New England Conference, lay, Anglo, woman. As the Finance and Administration folks have begun to look at this petition as it comes to the body, there's a fair number of questions arising about the implementation. And so I rise to support the recommendation for referral because we're not clear about some of the implications and consequences of trying to implement this as it is currently presented. So I strongly urge the body, knowing that term episcopacy is something that is likely on the horizon but that we spend some time figuring out how to do it well, so we then don't end up with more complexities that we have to figure out how to unravel. So, encouraging us to take the time to look at it and answer some of the questions that have already surfaced as people have looked at the petition as it's currently written.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right thank you. That has been two speeches for and one against. The chair recognizes Jeffrey Kuan with a speech against. Jeffrey Kuan of the California-Nevada Conference, mic. 5.

JEFFREY KUAN (California-Nevada): Jeffrey Kuan, California-Nevada Conference, clergy, older adult. As previous speakers have stated, this matter has been not only on the horizon, this matter has been with us for a long time. And the matter of term episcopacy in the United States and it is about time that we take action on this. And because there are constitutional implications, it cannot be implemented at this year's Jurisdictional Conference, but if we do not vote on this and delay this as a referral, we will be going to defer this again for another quadrennium. So I urge this conference to take action on this right now.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. Thank you. So we've had two speeches for and two against. According to our rule, now we move immediately to a vote. You're voting on the motion to refer Calendar Item 457 to the Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy. If you would vote to support that motion to refer, you would press *one* (1). If you do not support that motion to refer, you would press *two* (2). The chair will just advise you that there were two persons in the pool to speak in favor, zero against. You may vote now.

(pause)

All right, the chair's trying—OK, I think that's just someone fanning.

All right, seeing no flags, we'll close the ballot. Oh, I'm sorry, there is a flag? All right, let's go ahead and have the result of the ballot.

With 284 voting in the affirmative and 390 voting against, it does not carry. The motion to defer does not carry.

[Yes, 284; No, 390]

So we return to the main motion, and the previous recognition pool. Again, we are Calendar Item 457. We had had no speeches for or against.

And so the chair would like to recognize Jeffrey Kuan, mic. 5, California-Nevada Conference. If you could have your motion to amend prepared also in writing and make sure that the desk receives a copy of that.

KUAN: Bishop, Jeffrey Kuan, California-Nevada Conference, clergy, older adult.

I move to amend toward the end of the paragraph 50, in the section that begins with, "All bishops elected prior to 2024 shall continue to be entitled as bishop, specify in *The Book of Discipline* at their election relevant central conference rules and other church law. Bishops who have completed their term of service shall before clergy members of the annual conference of their choosing..." And this is where I would move to add the words after *choosing*, with the consent of the bishop of the said annual conference in consultation with the Board of Ordained Ministry, and follow with the words that are printed.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. Again, if we can have a copy of that written amendment. Is there a second to that amendment? The chair has heard a second. You may speak to it.

KUAN: Bishop, this amendment is intend to bring the petition in line with two other paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline*: paragraph 347, regarding transfer from other annual conferences; and paragraph 635.2, where the transfer of clergy from one conference to another or clergy joining one conference would need the consent of the bishop and the consent of the bishop in consultation with the board of ministry. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. You've heard the amendment and the rationale. It is properly before the body as it has been moved and seconded. Are there speeches for or against? There's no one in the pool at the moment.

Is there anyone who wishes to speak for or against the amendment? All right. Seeing none, then. We will move to a vote on the amendment. I don't know if the body needs to hear that read again. Again, we don't have a copy. Does the body need to have that read to you again?

(affirmative response from floor)

All right. If we can have the maker of the motion to read your amendment again. And then, again, make sure you present a copy of that to the desk. Just the words that you would like to amend would be helpful.

KUAN: The words that I would like to amend, after *choosing*, with the consent of the bishop of the same annual conference in consultation with the board of ministry.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. Those who would vote in favor of the amendment would press *one (1)*. Those who would not support the amendment, please press *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right, not seeing any flags. Ballot is closed. May we have the results?

With 459 voting in the affirmative, 188 voting to the contrary, the amendment does pass.

[Yes, 459; No, 188]

So now we will return to the motion—main motion as amended; the main motion as amended. May we have a new speaker pool so that we can return to perfecting this motion as amended?

All right. The chair sees another amendment. Mic. 6, Sarah Schlieckert, Baltimore-Washington Conference. A motion to amend. Again, the chair would respectfully ask that all those who are making amendments, please ensure that the secretary has a copy of those so that they can be duly processed. Sarah Schlieckert, please.

SCHLIECKERT: Thank you, Bishop. Sarah Schlieckert, Baltimore Washington Conference, female, White, adult.

I move that we amend the motion in the second paragraph by striking the sentence, "...in rare circumstances of missional need upon the recommendation of Jurisdictional Committee of Episcopacy, and in consultation with the Bishop, four years may be added by election of the Jurisdictional Conference..." and instead in its place these words, "Bishops may serve additional terms of eight years by re-election of the Jurisdictional Conference."

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. You've heard the amendment. Is there a second? There is a second. You may speak to it.

SCHLIECKERT: Thank you, Bishop. I understand many of the arguments that folks have shared with me around term limits. I believe that having terms without limits gives us the greatest flexibility. It leaves discretion to the Jurisdictional Conference for their missional needs, and it allow persons who are serving or considering to serve as bishops the flexibility of determining that they no longer, as elders serving in that role, want to continue serving. So, I believe that it gives us the greatest flexibility.

It is a model that comes out of our own tradition. My family comes out of the Evangelical United Brethren tradition, which had term episcopacy without limits. I understand that incumbency is a powerful force, and I think that it should be difficult to remove bishops because I think that there is important wisdom that comes with experience, and I believe that it should be up to the conferences, the jurisdictional conferences, to determine how they would like to fill their episcopal roles. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. All right, the chair recognizes Adam Hamilton. Forgive me. That would have been a speech for, and the maker has already made a speech for. And so the chair needs to recognize David Livingston, mic. 4 of the Great Plains Conference.

DAVID LIVINGSTON (Great Plains): Thank you, Bishop—I think, I don't know in our delegation—David Livingston, clergy, Great Plains. White, male. I'd speak against this. My concern is that this is an amendment on paragraph 50 and this amendment to the potential constitutional amendment that, the

fact that we've had a couple of amendments here indicates that we're not probably all of one mind. We've started to do some legislation on the floor. And this constitutional amendment is to the same paragraph that—or one of the paragraphs that—we also have an amendment to in the first worldwide regionalization plan that we've passed. So what we're asking is for all of our conferences to make a decision about worldwide regionalization and then at the same time to parse through this paragraph which now on the floor we're amending it as well. It's ripe for confusion, and confusion generally leads to votes against. And I'm concerned about that for—for this specific amendment to the petition as well as for the petition as a whole.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. The chair recognizes Delegate Lydia Muñoz, mic. 5, Eastern Pennsylvania, with a point of inquiry or information. Delegate Muñoz, if you could come with your question, please.

LYDIA MUÑOZ (Eastern Pennsylvania): Thank you, Bishop. Lydia Muñoz, clergy, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, Latina, *ella/her*. I'm wondering if I could ask for an analysis of the cost difference between the times of service, like if it's eight or twelve. I'm really confused, and I'd really like to see some numbers on what the difference that would mean or the impact of that to our jurisdictions.

BISHOP EASTERLING: OK, so, the chair apologizes, but, we're on the amendment and I don't believe—the chair does not believe that that's a question that's germane to the amendment.

MUÑOZ: OK.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. But, but the delegate may re-ask that when we return to the main motion because the chair believes that's more germane to the main motion.

MUÑOZ: Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. All right, so we have—the chair recognizes another point of information or inquiry. Judith Kenaston, of the West Virginia Conference, mic. 1. If you have your question prepared.

JUDITH KENASTON (West Virginia): Bishop, Judi Kenaston, West Virginia Conference, laity. I was trying to get out of the pool because I think it's the same problem that the former delegate had.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, very good. Thank you. And so now the chair recognize delegate Adam Hamilton with a speech for. Adam Hamilton, mic. 4, Great Plains Conference.

ADAM HAMILTON (Great Plains): Thank you, Bishop. Adam Hamilton, clergy, Great Plains Annual Conference, and with all due respect to my colleague from the Great Plains Annual Conference, I support this amendment. I like the idea of term limits, I think that can be important. But recognizing, when I became a pastor, at year four, I was just starting to learn the job. And so we're going to elect people as bishops and they may be ineffective, and by eight years we'll figure that out, and they'll return to being elders. But if they are effective, their effectiveness—I would hope that we would recognize that effectiveness and say, "This is a really great bishop and we need them. They are gifted for this and called for this and they can be effective in another annual conference..." as opposed to being required to return them to being elders. So I think that some of our very effective bishops should—I've thought of over the years been really effective in a second annual conference. I think we need to keep that as an option. The jurisdictional conferences will still be electing so they can decide, this is a bishop would be

best returned to the local church, but here's a bishop we really need for such a time as this somewhere else. This amendment allows us—it doesn't tie our hands and allows us to be able to vote and elect or reelect a bishop. So I support the amendment.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. Thank you very much. That's two speeches for and one against. And so I—the chair recognizes Frederick Brewington with a speech against, mic. 3, the New York Conference, and I would ask the maker of the amendment to be prepared to read it to—read it to the body again after delegate Brewington finishes because we will be at our speech maximum.

FREDERICK BREWINGTON (New York): Good afternoon, Bishop. Fred Brewington, New York Annual Conference, African American male, older adult, straight. While I respect my brother, Jeffrey Kuan, I have to disagree with him. We are at a point now where we have done some incredible work. We have things before us from the jurisdictional study committee. We have regionalism before us. And all of the intricacies of what deals with our episcopacy is intertwined within those pieces of legislation throughout. The Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy has a monumental task to deal with in caring for our episcopacy. And that's important. I think at this time, we need to make sure that we don't choke by trying to take too big bites. And that we need to take small bites, do the work that we've laid before ourselves now, and set that up so that we can know where we're going to land after we deal with the regionalism because the issues of jurisdictions and the episcopacy may very well need to be answered in a different way in a very short period of time. So I'm going to ask my sibling delegates in this situation not to dismiss this issue, but to look at it as one that needs to be dealt with in a careful way. And I define careful as two words: *care* and *full of care*. Because we're not just dealing with an office. We are dealing with the people in that office, their livelihoods, and the process as it affects us as a church that now is moving forward. We have hit the runway and we're about to take off. We don't need to catch any flat tires.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. That concludes our speeches. The chair would ask the secretary to read the amendment.

GRAVES: Thank you, Bishop. On p. 2179 in the left column, strike the words "in rare circumstances of missional need, upon the recommendation of the Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy and in consultation with the bishop, four years may be added by reelection of the jurisdictional conference." Replace that text, which has been stricken, with these words, "Bishops may serve additional terms of eight years by reelection by the jurisdictional conference."

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. We will proceed to a vote. The chair will share with the body that in the pool, there was one person who wished to speak in favor, one who wish to speak against, and zero amendments. And so if you would support the amendment, the Calendar Item 457, you would press *one (1)* to vote yes; if you do not support that amendment, you would vote no by pressing *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right, seeing no flags. If we could close the ballot and have our results. With 457 voting in the affirmative, 208 voting in the negative, the amendment does carry.

[Yes, 457; No, 208]

So now we are back on Calendar Item 457 as amended. We have had no votes for or against. The chair recognizes Robert Amundsen, Robert Amundsen, mic. 5, Red Bird Missionary Conference with a point of information or inquiry. If you could have your question prepared.

ROBERT AMUNDSEN (Red Bird Missionary): Good afternoon, Bishop. Robert Amundsen, Central Appalachian Missionary Conference, formerly Red Bird, White male, adult, clergy. Just had an inquiry. In light of the declaratory decision earlier today about bishops and retired bishops, if this were to happen and there were term limits, would those who termed out still be recognized as bishops and required to attend those meetings at the cost of the general church? That was my inquiry.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, the chair turns to the committee to respond.

CASPERSON: I'll invite one of our subcommittee chairs, Eric Swanson, to respond to your inquiry.

ERIC SWANSON (Illinois Great Rivers): Good afternoon, Eric Swanson, Illinois Great Rivers, male, he/him. When considering this piece of legislation, and you look at it in its entirety, the only corrections that come after the paragraph 50 amendments would be two paragraphs, 408 and 411. Those are largely editorial in bringing the language in line with the rest of the *Discipline*. Paragraph 409, which was ruled on earlier, is not included within this legislation as amended and brought to the body this morning, or this afternoon.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. The chair recognizes delegate Judith Kenaston, with a point of inquiry or information, mic. 1, West Virginia. Judith Kenaston.

KENASTON: Thank you, Bishop. Judi Kenaston, White laywoman, West Virginia. My question is similar. I'd like to know how the term limits on bishops affect the episcopacy pension program in terms of contributions and benefits when a U.S. bishop becomes a serving elder in an annual conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: And I wonder if Andy Hendren is in the plenary and can come to a microphone to address this? I believe I see him moving toward mic. 4. And Delegate Kenaston, you may have to repeat your question if—

(pause)

ANDY HENDREN (General Secretary, Wespath Benefits and Investments): Andy Hendren, White, male, straight, adult. General Secretary, Wespath Benefits and Investments. I think I understand the question: what would be the impact to bishops if, in their retirement, if they moved from the status of bishop back to an elder in an annual conference? Luckily, yesterday, you approved the new retirement plan, Compass, and I believe—and this is an off-the-cuff answer because I didn't expect this question—I believe that because that plan is purely a defined contribution plan with an account balance, that bishops' service would be at their salary as a bishop, their account would accumulate based on that compensation from year to year, and when they moved back to their annual conference, they would get the same sort of benefit based on their salary level plus the fixed dollar contribution plus the match. The only difference would be who would be remitting the contributions for the plan sponsor portion, the church portion. When they're a bishop, it would be GCFA from the episcopal fund, and when they're back in their annual conference, it would be their annual conference plan sponsor.

KENASTON: And that would work—that would be true for health insurance as well?

BISHOP EASTERLING: Sorry, the chair apologizes to have to interrupt, but there's no follow-up question. The chair recognizes delegate Lydia Muñoz, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, mic. 5, with a point of information or inquiry.

MUÑOZ: Lydia Muñoz, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, clergy, *ella* and her. I guess I—I need a—I would like to request if somebody could answer the question about the analysis done on the cost or the impact that it would have on jurisdictions? And if I may, can I ask a second question?

BISHOP EASTERLING: No, the chair has entertained your first question with respect to the impact on jurisdictions. The cost of the bishops and the impact on jurisdictions. Did the chair hear that correctly?

MUÑOZ: Yes.

BISHOP EASTERLING: I'm going to turn to the committee.

SWANSON: We did hear from GCFA during their time in with us. And I would invite them, if they're available, to speak to it more accurately than I can at this moment.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Is General Secretary Kumar present to be able to address that?

MOSES KUMAR (Secretary of General Council on Finance and Administration): Yes, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, please proceed.

KUMAR: Mic. 6.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you.

KUMAR: At this point of time, Bishop, we are not able to estimate if there is any significant savings or increase in the episcopal fund, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. The chair recognizes Alex Shanks, mic. 2, from the Florida Conference, with other parliamentary. Alex Shanks, mic. 2.

ALEX SHANKS (Florida): Thank you, Bishop. Alex Shanks, clergy, from the Florida Conference, White, male, adult. I'd like to make a motion to table. If I'll have a second, I'll speak to it. Bishop, can I speak to the motion to table?

BISHOP EASTERLING: So, if the delegate wishes to table this matter, can the delegate tell the chair what the emergency is or the rationale for tabling this? We haven't had any opportunity to continue to debate this.

SHANKS: So, Bishop, I think a motion to table would help this body have more information. There has been a number of questions raised, and I don't think we have the information we need to make a proper decision. In addition, we've made multiple amendments to this petition. It would be helpful if we had the text of the amendments. In addition, in looking at p. 2179, the amendment as presented in the *DCA*, has an error in it. It did not strike the words, "shall have life tenure," and so it's a little confusing as to what we are actually voting on. I think it would be helpful if we had information about how term limits impact the episcopacy in the central conferences. Why is this a constitutional amendment for the jurisdictions when the term limits are not in the constitution for the central conferences? And the financial impact of having multiple elections every eight years. All of this would be helpful information,

so I move that we place this petition on the table so that more information can be gathered and we can properly vote on it with all the information ahead of us and a properly amended text so we know what we're voting on. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. And so you've asked for a motion to table, but it really sounds like the maker of the motion would like to postpone this matter.

SHANKS: Yes ma'am.

BISHOP EASTERLING: If that's the case, then when would you—what would be the time frame of your postponement?

SHANKS: Thank you for the correction. I apologize. It is a motion to postpone this petition until all of these answers and information can be gathered and until we can have a properly printed version of the amended text for us to vote on.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, and so you're making a motion that it would be postponed until tomorrow and could—and be before the body again with all the pertinent information.

SHANKS: Correct.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Is there a second? All right, can we have the speaker recognition pool cleared so that the chair can determine whether or not there are individuals who want to speak for or against this motion to postpone? Is there any discussion? All right. The chair recognizes delegate Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Baltimore-Washington Conference, mic. 6.

GINGER GAINES-CIRELLI (Baltimore-Washington): Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, clergy, Baltimore Washington Conference, White, cisgender, woman. I vote in favor of tabling because we have indeed heard a number of our colleagues asking questions, needing more information, pointing out pieces that need to be cleared up or brought into alignment before we might fully be able to support what we are working on right now.

There has also been serious consideration that I think I need to think more about that have been given voice to during this debate. I'm grateful for the things that we've heard from Rev. Hamilton, Rev. Livingston, Rev. Brewington, and just now from Rev. Shanks. I think a lot of what's been brought forward has been very helpful. So, I would urge us to table this until we can have the full information and language that we need to really think about this very important conversation thoughtfully and fully. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. That is two speeches for. The chair recognizes Lauren Godwin, mic. 1, West Virginia, for other parliamentary inquiry. Lauren Godwin, mic. 1.

LAUREN GODWIN (West Virginia): Thank you, Bishop. Lauren Godwin. Clergy, White woman from West Virginia. And I might need a little help. But I believe that if we're going to honor what Alex Shanks was asking us to do, we might need to suspend the rules to fix the time for printing for the *ADCA*. Or, the *DCA*, for tomorrow.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, just a second.

(pause)

All right, the chair would like to recognize the secretary to share some critical information

GRAVES: We would be happy to consult with the editors of the *Daily Christian Advocate*. However, there is a print deadline at the printer that, if we do not make that print deadline, you may not have a *Daily Christian Advocate* tomorrow. It has to be translated into the French, the Portuguese, and the Kiswahili, and we have to get it to the printers in time for them to turn it around. We would be happy to ask if there's any leeway at this moment, but just because we would like to do that doesn't mean it can physically be done.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, and so hearing that, the chair would like to just take a moment so that that phone call can actually be made so that the body has the information it needs to determine whether it wasn't to vote for or against the motion to postpone.

So, please don't leave your seats, but just give us a moment to make that call.

(pause)

All right, the chair recognizes delegate Alex Shanks with a point of order. Delegate Alex Shanks with a point of order if you would come to mic.—

SHANKS: 2.

BISHOP EASTERLING: —2, and state what rule you think we're violating.

SHANKS: Well, it may not be a rule, Bishop. My concern is, when you asked me, when I think it could come off the table, my answer to you was, "When all of this information could be gathered and presented back and the text could be properly printed and be before us". I'm not sure that would be before tomorrow.

And so, if it makes more sense, I can alter my motion but I'm not sure that we will have it all together by tomorrow. So, that's my concern.

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair understands.

SHANKS: If it would be in order, I could change my motion to postpone indefinitely or postpone to the next general conference, if that would be more properly before us because of the amount of information that is needed.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, the chair would like to return to our secretary to ascertain the information he was able to gather.

GRAVES: With the limitation on the information that can be translated and submitted to the printers in order to make the deadline, and in light of the fact that still ahead of us is a very large amount of information coming from GCFA related to the budget, which must be printed, it almost becomes a choice of either/or. And if we need to make sure that the budget is available and before us, they do not believe that they can make the deadline with both pieces of this information.

BISHOP EASTERLING: So having received that information from the secretary, the delegate has indicated that he would be willing to modify the motion to postpone. Is that a formal request, then, to withdraw the motion to postpone?

SHANKS: Yes, Bishop, I would withdraw the motion to postpone, and instead, make a motion to postpone indefinitely until the next general conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Just a second please.

All right. Does the body support the motion to withdraw the postponement? Is there any objection to that?

There is an objection, we need to vote, then, on the motion to withdraw. Can we prepare a ballot on the motion to withdraw?

If you support the motion to withdraw you would vote yes, press *one (1)*. If you do not support the motion to withdraw, you would press *two (2)* and vote no.

All right, give us just a second to prepare the ballot. And this is the motion to postpone; withdrawing the motion to postpone.

The ballot is open. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right, seeing no flags. We'll close that ballot. We can have the results?

With 552 voting in the affirmative, 103 voting to the contrary, the motion to withdraw the motion to postpone has been supported.

[Yes, 552; No, 103]

The delegate then indicated that there would be—the delegate would like to offer a motion to postpone indefinitely, and that would be out of order because one conference cannot bind another. But also because you would have to re-enter the pool to be able to address that again.

All right. Is there any further discussion then on the motion? Calendar Item 457, which is before us. And prior to the inquiries that we just had, we have not had any speeches for or against.

The chair recognizes Anthony Dioh, delegate from Liberia, mic. 1, with other parliamentary. Anthony Dioh, mic. 1

ANTHONY DIOH (Liberia): Thank you, Bishop. Anthony Dioh, clergy delegate for the Liberia Annual Conference. Bishop, I want to inquire regarding the Interjurisdictional Committee. Do we still have Jurisdictional Committee in addition to this committee? That's my question.

BISHOP EASTERLING: If the chair understands you correctly, I think you're saying—there is an Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy, but you're asking then is there still Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy that would handle matters for each jurisdictional. Is the chair correct?

DIOH: That is correct.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Yes, we do. OK, thank you. The chair recognizes delegate Giovanni Arroyo, Baltimore-Washington Conference, with other parliamentary. Mic. 6.

GIOVANNI ARROYO (Baltimore-Washington): Giovanni Arroyo, Baltimore-Washington Conference, clergy, Latinx, male. I move to refer this to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in order to report back at the next General Conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, it has been properly moved and seconded. You may speak to it.

ARROYO: It is very evident in our discourse this afternoon that there is a lot of questions regarding how do we navigate the questions before the body. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is the adequate body to continue this work to explore and answer the questions that could help this body to be better in discernment for how we'll deal with episcopal tenures and limited episcopacy. I have had a conversation with the General Board of Higher Education general secretary, if they would be open to engaging such process and they're open to it. So I invite the body to consider us using our bodies that already exist within our church to engage in deeper examination of the proposal and to come back to this General Conference in the future with a recommendation that is vetted and well-informed for us to decide on.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. We now have a motion to refer properly before us. There has been one speech in favor. The speaker pool has been cleared. Is there any discussion on the motion to refer to Higher Education and Ministry? All right. The chair recognizes Matthew Laferty, mic. 5 from East Ohio, with an amendment. Michael Laferty, East Ohio, mic. 5 with an amendment.

MATTHEW LAFERTY (East Ohio): I'll just bend over. I'm sorry. My name is Matthew Laferty.

(laughter)

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, let's contain our laughter, please. Go ahead.

LAFERTY: East Ohio Conference, clergy, White, male, adult and I'm very cold because the Holy Spirit has been blowing very hard down here in the front row all day long. I would like to amend the motion by adding the motion to refer to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, "in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order".

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, is there a second? All right, there's a second. Would you speak to it, please?

LAFERTY: For many years now, we have had a Committee on Faith and Order, which is responsible for helping guide the church on asking important theological questions. One of the main concerns that I've had in this whole discussion is that we have let money drive the conversation with very, very little theological discourse on this very important matter. The Committee on Faith and Order is a body of sixteen members made up of theologians, scholars, who can help guide that conversation in consultation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, which would bring other technical—other technical skills to that conversation to help bring back a motion or an action for our next General Conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, thank you. That is a motion to amend by adding that it would also be referred to—in consultation with Faith and Order. So that is a speech in favor. Is there a speech against the motion to amend? The speaker pool has been cleared. Are there persons now wishing to address the amendment?

All right, again, we need the forms from all parties who have made amendments. The chair recognizes Benita Rollins, mic. 5, East Ohio, with a speech for the amendment. Benita Rollins, mic. 5.

BENITA ROLLINS (East Ohio): Benita Rollins, clergy, East Ohio. I stand to ask the body to be in favor of this motion. I do believe in this liminal time for missional needs, for flexibility, consistency, and for the flourishing of our beloved denomination. I believe that we do not want to tie the hands at this point, and I believe that it is in good order to have both the General Board of Higher Education in consultation with Faith and Order to further clarify, discuss, and bring information that will be helpful to the next General Conference to address this issue. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you, that was a speech for. We've had two speeches for. The chair recognizes Ande Emmanuel. Mic. 5 from Southern Nigeria with a point of information or inquiry. Ande Emmanuel if you will come to mic. 6 and have your question prepared.

EMMANUEL: Bishop, my name is Rev. Ande Emmanuel. I rise for point of information. I don't know whether that is in order.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Yes, let's go ahead, and if it's germane to the matter that's before the body right now. We're dealing with a motion to amend to add "in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order". Is it germane to that matter?

EMMANUEL: Well, Bishop, it's not directly germane to this, it's regarding the full information—

BISHOP EASTERLING: OK, then, the chair needs to stop you now. We need to address the matter that is before the body, which is the motion to amend to add "in consultation with Faith and Order".

EMMANUEL: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Absolutely. After we finish, it might be appropriate to come back to your inquiry. All right, we've had two speeches in favor, the chair recognizes Kim Jenne. I'm sorry. The chair recognizes Scott Brewer, from Great Plains Conference, mic. 4. Scott Brewer, mic. no. 4.

SCOTT BREWER (Great Plains): Thank you, Bishop. I rise to speak against the motion to amend, speaking as a proud, former General Agency bureaucrat for fifteen years, I believe that this unnecessarily complicates a process of bringing back to the next General Conference a matter that we have now debated, I think, for the five last General Conferences that I have attended. I believe GBHEM, will, in their work will certainly not only consult with the Committee on Faith and Order, but with other agencies as well as the Council of Bishops. I would encourage folks to try to simplify this process so that we can move on and come back in four years, God willing, to consider how we wish to act on whatever is recommended or brought before us. Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you. That was a speech against. We've already had two for. The chair would recognize John Seth, Western Pennsylvania Conference, for a speech against. Mic. 1. John Seth.

JOHN SETH (Western Pennsylvania): John Seth, Western Pennsylvania, and I really did try to get out of the pool.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, so the chair recognizes Joe Stains, Western Pennsylvania Conference, with a speech against, mic. 1.

JOE STAINS (Western Pennsylvania): Joe Stains, Western Pennsylvania, clergy, male, older adult. I have to agree with my predecessor at the microphone. This issue has been brought before the General Conference for at least the last three or four sessions. And it's not a new issue. It's not an issue that has not had good examination by the General Council of Higher Education and Superintendency. It's time to move on it. I'd like to offer some information too that I suspect many of our delegates, especially U.S. delegates, probably don't know and would not hurt for them to hear now, rather than four years from now. This is an issue that has been really runs deeper in our Methodist roots than many know. Fifty-five years ago, The United Methodist Church began because the United Methodist—the Methodists joined with Evangelical United Brethren, whose bishops served tenured terms. It's not a new issue in the Methodist tradition, not at all. The—all of the central conferences adopted tenured bishops, all of them. And they've served it well. Right now, we have a two-tiered system of seniority in the Council of Bishops that will go on another four years if we don't deal with this this time. It seems we start over in trying to inform the delegation about this. There's nothing more U.S.-centric than to cling to instant lifetime tenure at such a time as this. And for U.S.—

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you, thank you very much for your speech against. So we've had two speeches for and two speeches against. We move directly to a vote. The chair will share that in the speaker pool, there was one person to speak in favor and zero against. And so now you have an opportunity to vote on the amendment to add "in consultation with Higher Education"—I'm sorry, that after Higher Education and Ministry, you would add the words, "in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order." Those who would support this amendment would press *one (1)*, to vote yes. Those opposed would press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(*pause*)

All right, I'm not seeing any flags. I believe all that have wanted to vote have been able to do so. Will you close the ballot please, and then we'll have our results.

With 404 in the affirmative, 248 voting in the contrary, your motion to amend carries.

[*Yes, 404; No, 248*]

If we can clear the speaker pool now, we can go back to the motion to refer.

All right. The chair would like to ask the general secretary to read the motion to refer as it has been amended, and then the chair will remind the body that we have had one speech for.

If we can have the motion as amended.

GRAVES: Thank you, Bishop. The motion is to refer to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order to provide a report back to the next general conference.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right, you've heard the motion as amended. We've had a speech for. All right.

The chair recognizes Ken Ow, mic. 6, Baltimore-Washington, with a motion to amend. Ken Ow, mic. 6, Baltimore-Washington, motion to amend.

KEN OW (Baltimore-Washington): Ken Ow, Baltimore Washington, Laity, Chinese, golden oldie. The General Council on Finance and Administration would also like to be a part of this referral.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Is there a second?

There's no second.

OW: Fine.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you.

We are back on the motion to refer. There was already a speech for. The chair is looking for a speech against. All right. Seeing none, the chair recognizes Jan Nelson, mic. 5, Oregon-Idaho. Jan Nelson with a speech for. Mic. 5.

JAN NELSON (Oregon-Idaho): Thank you, Bishop. Jan Nelson, Oregon-Idaho, lay delegate, female, older adult, queer delegate.

I am speaking in favor of the referral. I've been in favor of considering term limits. I think it's time that we consider that for Bishops. But, I'm remembering that this is all about the US. The central conferences deal with this in other ways, and I think maybe if we refer this, maybe, God willing, we may be able to consider this at a US regional conference, where it would be more appropriate to settle this matter. So, I urge you to support referral.

BISHOP EASTERLING: All right. Thank you. Rules require two speeches in favor, two against. But since we have not reached our threshold, the chair would recognize— All right, there's just been others to hit the pool.

The chair would recognize Mark Holland, Great Plains Conference, with a point of information or inquiry, mic. 4. Delegate Holland, if you could come and have your question prepared. Mic. 4.

MARK HOLLAND (Great Plains): Yes, Bishop. Mark Holland, Clergy, Great Plains. Can we have the secretary of the general conference tell us in announcements before dinner how many petitions we have left? Thank you.

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair recognizes the— Oh, OK. All right, thank you, before dinner. Very good.

Another point of inquiry or information. Delegate Dawn Taylor-Storm, mic. 5, Eastern Pennsylvania. Delegate Taylor-Storm.

DAWN TAYLOR-STORM (Eastern Pennsylvania): Thank you, Bishop. Dawn Taylor-Storm, Eastern Pennsylvania, clergy, White, female, she/her. Bishop, I'm asking for a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council, if that's in order?

BISHOP EASTERLING: The chair rules that's not in order at this time. There's a pending motion on the floor. But, thank you, though. We can come back to it after we conclude the motion.

The chair recognizes Jesi Lipp, mic. 4, Great Plains Conference. Jesi Lipp, mic. 4, with other parliamentary.

JESI LIPP (Great Plains): Jesi Lipp, laity, Great Plains, still not sure—I'm thirty-four—which I am, White, they/them, non-binary person living with disability.

I move to suspend the rules, 7.2, and all the relevant portion of point three, in order to call the question on all that is before us.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Is there a second? You may speak to it.

I'm sorry, it's not debatable. So, we will proceed to vote on suspending the rules that we might move all that is before us. And that was your motion right? All that was before us.

Thank you. All right, if we could prepare a ballot, then, so that you'll be suspending the rules, that you could consider all before us.

If you support the motion to suspend the rule, you would vote in the affirmative and press *one (1)*. If not, you would vote *two (2)*. Please vote now.

(pause)

All right, not seeing any flags. Believing that everyone that has had an opportunity to vote has done so.

All right, the ballot is closed. May we see the results?

With 605 voting in the affirmative, 53 voting the contrary, the motion to suspend the rules carries.

[Yes, 605; No, 53]

And it was a motion to vote on everything that was before us. So, we would now turn to vote on the motion to refer. You would be voting on the motion to refer.

Do you need the secretary to read the motion to refer as amended to the body again?

All right, I'm not hearing that you need that. If we could prepare a ballot to vote on the motion to refer Calendar Item 457 to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order.

If you would support that, you will vote in the affirmative. If not, you will vote no. Please vote now.

(pause)

I'm not seeing any flags, so believing that all that have desired to vote of have done so, we'll close the ballot. If we could have the results. All right, with 494 voting in the affirmative, 152 voting to the contrary. The motion to refer carries.

[Yes, 494; No, 152]

Thank you very much. This will conclude all of the business that we are able to address in this session of our holy conferencing. The chair recognizes the secretary of the General Conference, Gary Graves, to provide any announcements.

GRAVES: Thank you, Bishop. We will begin with the most recent request for information. In addition to the GCFA petitions, which will be discussed tomorrow and are currently being prepared for publication, there are twenty-five calendar items remaining, seventeen of which require action under *The Book of Discipline*, paragraph 507.10. Twenty-five calendar items remaining; sixteen require action. Sixteen require action because we just dropped the one that we just did with the referral.

For those of you who are wondering how you will get back to an airport: I have been given a report that is being prepared and will be in tomorrow's *DCA*. I will prepare you now. The shuttles will begin at 3:00 A.M. They will work until 8:00 P.M., and the schedule that you will see in tomorrow's *DCA* is built, and you are recommended to depart your hotel at least two and half to three hours prior to your scheduled flight departure time due to the music festival in Charlotte that could cause traffic delays.

At the conclusion of General Conference on Friday, recycling bins will be available in halls B and C if you would like to have your *Advanced Daily Christian Advocate* and *Daily Christian Advocate* recycled. Please do not leave them on your table or chair.

As we were departing the room to go to lunch today, there were offerings at each of the doors that you were able to give to the pages and marshals. Some of you are still giving, and it's coming here, and so I will make sure this gets where it is appropriate. But if you would like to give electronically or you need to give after you get home, there will be a press release issued by the Office of the Business Manager that will give you instructions on how to do that. They are not quite ready at this point, but instructions will be released following General Conference. Thank you, Bishop. Those are my announcements.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Thank you so much for those announcements. Beloved of God, it has been an honor and a privilege to preside over this session of our holy conferencing. You were kind, you were patient, you worked with the chair and others for us to do good work, and we did good work this afternoon. I'd like to thank those who joined me in presiding. Again, Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank and Bishop Jimmy Nunn.

(*applause*)

Amen. I'd now like to turn to—OK, I'm sorry. I see a flag. Mic. 4. And once we conclude this, I'm going to ask Bishop Robert Schnase to pray for us because we had shared that we would ask for a prayer at the conclusion of our matter to celebrate any significant matters that the body undertook. And so, mic. 4.

EMMANUEL: Bishop, my name is Rev. Ande Emmanuel and I still rise for point of information to share with this body. There is a document that is being cycled online.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Sir, I'm sorry, this is not an order. All matters before the body have been concluded, and so the chair hates to do it, but I must inform you that you are out of order. Thank you.

EMMANUEL: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Now turn to Bishop Robert Schnase to offer a prayer in celebration of the historic matters that were undertaken today on behalf of this General Conference.

BISHOP ROBERT SCHANSE: Let's pray.

Be still and know that I am God. Dear Lord, this has been a long day and many of us are weary, but it's been a good day, and so we give you thanks. We open our hearts full of gratitude for the gift of life, for the gift of a new day. For the gift of friendship and fellowship, and for the gift of all those people who have revealed your grace to us. We thank you for the work that we've undertaken, and we pray that it has served your purposes for the building of the church and for the sharing of the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We give you thanks for the opportunity of reconnection with one another, of friendship, and the relationships that are rekindled. Some of us have known each other, others in this room, for

many years, and we are graced by that. As we remembered our missionaries, as we lifted up various ministries that extend your love to people all over the world. As we think about and praise you for this unity of spirit and for the grace of these last couple of days. You've brought us to places that have been long, that has taken us a while to get there, Lord. But we trust you, and we open our lives to your future and we give you thanks for all the hope in this room, all the anticipation, all the celebration. And now in humility, we bring this session to a close. Grant us rest, grant us grace, and prepare us for tomorrow so that our discussions, our deliberations, our decisions may serve you. All this we lift before you, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BISHOP EASTERLING: Amen. Thank you, Bishop Schnase. The ninth plenary will be adjourned immediately following our devotion. Thank you.

Evening Devotion

(chimes)

Alzira Isaac Machauene (Mozambique North): Friends, as we complete another day, we are reminded of God's call. We have heard God's words one more time to "therefore, Go," and we are aware that in just one more day, we will go back to our communities, bringing with us new experiences, new knowledge, and a renewed spirit. As we prepare for tomorrow, we join once more in praise, singing the hymn, *O Magnify The Lord*.

(music)

Karishma ANN MARIE Jeeboo (Caribbean and the Americas) and João Graça (Western Angola): Let us pray. Lord, soon comes the time for us to part ways. Though we leave one another, remind us that we remain in you. We are forever united in your love.

ALL: We may go in different directions, but we share the same mission. For ours is a common calling. You send us, bearing good news for those who long to hear. Bearing water for those who thirst, and bread for those who hunger.

Graça: No matter which ways we go forth from this place, we may go in stillness, knowing you are God and listening to hear your voice.

ALL: May we go with a hope that does not disappoint, poured into us by your Spirit.

Jeeboo: May we go, trusting with all our hearts that you will direct our steps.

ALL: May we go, rejoicing because you are good and faithful and always present.

Graça: May we go to serve as you serve, with humility and obedience.

ALL: May we go to embrace, as we have been embraced.

Jeeboo: May we go honoring you, your word, and one another.

ALL: Most of all, Lord, as we part from this place, may we go in love, knowing we are held in the love that made us, saves us, and keeps us; knowing all are held in the love that made us, saves us, and keeps us; and ready to love as we have been loved; offering what is precious to redeem what is lost. In the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

(music)

(applause)