

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: A PROPOSED MINISTRY STRUCTURE**  
**FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE**

**What is the goal of this ministry structure change?**

Our mission as a Conference is *to discover, develop, and deploy passionate spiritual leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*. Our ministry team framework needs increased flexibility to equip, support, resource, and train leaders and teams as they accomplish the conference mission.

**Why does the current ministry structure need to be changed?**

Streamlining the ministry structure will increase our ability to adapt to challenges, to respond quickly to ministry and leadership needs, and to be good stewards of the resources God has provided, using the most effective means possible. Our current structure was created at a time when change was needed; now we are now responding to a similar need as God calls us toward the future of the West Virginia Conference.

**What will this new ministry structure accomplish?**

The new ministry structure streamlines leadership where practical, while allowing related ministry areas to carry out their ministries with more flexibility. The structure provides for teams to rally around a specific need, phasing out when that need has been met. Ministry areas that continue to require sustained attention will receive ongoing support, such as campus ministry and mission projects.

**What values will guide the ministry framework and its leaders?**

The desire for the partnership of laity and clergy leadership guides this framework. Other guiding values include: a capacity for generating ministry involvement based on giftedness and passion; and increased leadership interaction across our conference cultures—especially geographic, racial, gender, abilities, age, and ethnicity.

**How does this proposal impact current ministry teams?**

Current ministry teams will continue to carry out valuable ministry on behalf of the West Virginia Conference, with support and flexibility to adapt those ministries to ever-changing needs, identifying and equipping new leaders and participants as needed. Ministry areas that have been vital to the people of this Conference, such as camping ministry and disaster recovery, will continue.

**How will this structure meet the requirements of the Book of Discipline?**

*The Book of Discipline* language gives both flexibility for structuring ministry and specific requirements for certain committees. This structure meets those requirements. The ministry framework will “provide for the connectional relationship of the local church, district, and conference with the general agencies of the denomination, as directed by the Discipline of the United Methodist Church” (*Book of Discipline*, ¶610).

**What teams are structured by the *Discipline* and how will this framework meet these requirements?**

The following teams are specifically designated by the current *Discipline*. The Nominations Team will identify and nominate members of these teams, according to our conference rules.

- the Administrative Review Committee
- the Board of Ordained Ministry

- the Board of Pensions
- the Commission on Archives & History
- the Commission on Religion and Race
- the Committee on Episcopacy
- the Committee on Equitable Compensation
- the Committee on Finance and Administration
- the Conference Trustees
- Lay Ministry
- United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women
- United Methodist Youth

**What other ministry areas will continue, even if they are named in our Conference Rules?**

The West Virginia Conference will continue to care for the ministry areas which accomplish and facilitate its mission, including such vital ministries as:

- discipleship and spiritual formation for all age levels and life stages, including ministry with college students and camping ministries
- lay leadership development, including lay servant ministries
- congregational vitality, with emphases on racial/ethnic congregations and communities
- ministries of mission and outreach, including conference mission projects and community ministries
- disaster response and volunteers in mission
- ministries of advocacy and justice, including racial, ethnic, gender, and economic justice concerns
- Annual Conference planning and coordination
- communication systems to support and facilitate coordination across ministry areas

**What is the Core Leadership Team?**

The purpose of the Core Leadership Team is to accomplish the mission of the West Virginia Conference by coordinating, aligning, and strengthening conference ministry leadership and teams. The Core Leadership Team will generate and coordinate additional ministry leaders and teams as needed to fulfill the mission of the West Virginia Conference. This team will consist of 12-18 leaders from throughout the Conference, clergy and lay. The Core Leadership Team and its connected ministry leaders and teams will replace the Covenant Council.

**Why is the Core Leadership Team so small?**

The size of the current Covenant Council makes decision-making and adapting to change challenging and cumbersome, though it has served well for many years. The focus of the proposed Core Leadership Team is generating and equipping leaders and ministry to accomplish the mission of the Conference, while providing alignment and accountability. Our current and future challenges call for a simplified structure, with a decision-making process that is nimble, and leadership development that prioritizes generating new leaders and ministries with clear expectations and systems of accountability.

**How will leaders be identified in this structure?**

The Nominations Team will name leaders and members for teams required by the current *Discipline* and named in the WV Conference Rules. The Core Leadership Team, also nominated by the Nominations team, will oversee, connect, and equip all teams providing direction in accomplishing the mission of the West Virginia Conference. Additional leaders and teams will be identified, developed, trained, and administered through the Core Leadership Team and staffed by

the Office of Connectional Ministries as needed. Both the Nominations Team and the Core Leadership Team will be accountable to the Annual Conference for ministry that reflects the values named: achieving diversity of leadership interaction and decision-making, including laity and clergy of various racial, gender, age, abilities, and leadership participation from various geographic regions within the conference.

**How will ministry financial decision-making be handled?**

The Council on Finance & Administration will maintain its budget oversight, as assigned by the *Discipline* and the conference rules. CFA will continue to follow the annual process of consultation and collaboration with ministry areas and administrative teams, providing guidance and budgeting parameters for available ministry funding. During the budgeting process, ministry areas will request funding according to planned ministry objectives. The Core Leadership Team will make related recommendations in consultation with the Council on Finance & Administration.

**How will this ministry structure impact our current West Virginia Conference Rules?**

The proposed ministry structure will be represented by proposals to change current *West Virginia Conference Rules* within *Section I: Organization*, *Section II: Conference Agencies*, and *Section IV: Miscellaneous Standing Rules of the Conference*. The detailed proposals may be found in the Rules Committee Report of the 2021 Annual Conference Workbook. Section II details the conference agencies whose members will be named by the Conference Nominations Committee. Note: within the new ministry structure, the disciplinary term “Conference agency” is most often referred to as a “team.”

**How have current ministry leaders been involved in this process?**

The Nominations Operational Team surveyed ministry leaders during this last quadrennium. Many expressed a desire to better understand their team’s purpose, its alignment with the mission, and difficulty in activating the members of their teams or committees. Several teams have moved beyond the nominated list of members to instead involve those demonstrating the passions, gifts and calling for that area of ministry. It has become clear that the ministry framework needs to support the flourishing of new ministries while facilitating the healthy transitions of ministries at the end of their life cycle.

In response to the need for a more streamlined, flexible ministry structure, in September of 2020, Bishop Steiner Ball tasked the following people to brainstorm and form a proposal, consulting with key teams and leaders. This proposal was completed and submitted to the Rules committee in February 2021. That ad hoc team was Eva Faulkner, Joe Hill, Judi Kenaston, Bonnie MacDonald, Scott Mayberry, Scott Sears, Amy Shanholtzer, Kristi Wilkerson, and Ken Willard. Leadership teams providing input have included the Nominations Team, the Bishop’s Lead Team, the Covenant Council Leadership Team, and the Cabinet.