

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: A PROPOSED MINISTRY STRUCTURE FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

Introduction

The mission of the West Virginia Conference is to discover, develop, and deploy passionate spiritual leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

While the current conference ministry structure has served well for many years, providing for sustained and substantial ministry investment throughout the West Virginia Conference, there is a need and opportunity in this time and context for a revised framework for ministry at the conference level so that our mission might be accomplished with an orientation toward the future.

The support structure for ministry within the West Virginia Conference must be framed in such a way that it frees up leaders and ministry teams to follow Jesus in accomplishing this mission. The supportive framework for administrative and ministry teams must be flexible enough to equip, support, resource, and train leaders while releasing them to make new disciples and create new ministries, all in alignment with the conference mission and vision as our communities constantly shift and change.

To this end, there exists a need for simplifying the ministry structure currently in place. This ministry structure streamlines the core leadership functions, while allowing related ministry areas to carry out their ministries with more focus and creativity. This structure provides for teams to rally around a specific need, phasing out when that need has been met. Ministry areas that require sustained attention will be cared for.

The values which will continue to guide this ministry framework remain a deep desire for the diverse partnership of laity and clergy leadership, capacity for generating ministry involvement based on giftedness, passion, & flexibility; increased leadership interaction across conference cultures—geographic, racial, gender, abilities, age, ethnic.

Overview

The West Virginia Conference is committed to carrying out its mission while being effective stewards of the resources God has provided. This commitment calls us to structure program and administrative ministries to accomplish the mission by the most effective means possible. In so doing, it 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). The ministry structure will be organized to provide for diversity of leadership interaction and decision-making, including laity and clergy of various racial, gender, age, abilities, and from various geographic regions within the conference.

Leadership required by the current Discipline and/or that which is essential to the mission of the West Virginia Conference will be identified, developed, trained, and administered through the **Core Leadership Team** and staffed by the Office of Connectional Ministries. The Core Leadership Team and its connected ministry leaders and teams will replace the Covenant Council ministry structure.

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. Guided by the Book of Discipline, the West Virginia Conference will care for the ministry areas which accomplish and facilitate its mission, including but not limited to:

- 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

The West Virginia Conference will provide systems of communication to support and facilitate coordination across ministry areas. A nominations process will recommend leaders for the Core Leadership Team, with commitment to diversity (racial, gender, age, abilities, and geographic) as a guiding principle.

In addition, the West Virginia Conference will meet requirements for administrative teams specifically designated by the current Discipline, including but not limited to the Committee on Finance and Administration, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Administrative Review Committee, the Committee on Episcopacy, the Board of Pensions, the Conference Trustees, the Commission on Archives & History, and the ministries of the United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men. The Nominations Team will identify and nominate leaders and members of teams required by the current Discipline. Additionally, the Nominations Team will be responsible for nominating membership of the Core Leadership Team. All nominations will be presented to the annual conference for approval.

The Core Leadership Team will involve at least 12 people, but not more than 18, including leaders with expertise in the core ministry areas identified. The Core Leadership Team will represent the diversity of the Conference, consisting of laity and clergy, of various racial, gender, age, abilities, and geographic regions within the conference. Conference staff will be represented and included in the total number. Members will be nominated for a period of four years, to serve not more than eight. The Convener of the Core Leadership Team will be chosen by the team for a period of at least two years and not more than eight years. The Core Leadership Team will be accountable to the West Virginia Annual Conference, reporting at least annually.

The Core Leadership Team will make ministry budget recommendations to the Council on Finance and Administration as CFA carries out its responsibility to “develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference (§611).” The Core Leadership Team will oversee budgeted funds designated by CFA for ministry use, annually setting expectations and reporting procedures for responsible stewardship of such funds by ministry teams. Ministry spending will follow the Fiscal Policies set by CFA and approved by the Annual Conference.

Rationale and Explanation

- A need exists for flexibility in conference ministry structure that will support the flourishing of new ministries while facilitating the healthy transitions of ministries at the end of their life cycle. Our current conference ministry structure and guiding set of Conference Rules have served the Conference well for many years. Current realities of context, leadership, and ministry priorities require capacity for a streamlined structure, a decision-making process that is nimble, and leadership development that prioritizes generating new leaders and ministries with clear expectations and accountability systems.
- This **Core Leadership Team** model replaces many “representative,” designated roles with fewer leadership roles designed to generate additional leadership and ministry. In addition, the Core Team will represent the diversity of the Conference. This team will set goals and strategies for accountability for ministry reflecting this diversity and connected to budget allocation.

Specifically, the proposed structure **replaces the following roles currently named** within the Covenant Council with broader leadership oversight. For example:

- All current committees not required by the Discipline have the flexibility to be reconsidered & reshaped.
- The WV Conference Global Ministries area will be facilitated by leadership in its ministry networks rather than representation on the Core Leadership Team. Disaster Response, Volunteers in Mission, Mission Projects, Health and Welfare ministries will continue to flourish with flexibility to adapt to changing contexts and challenges.

Financial Oversight

- The Discipline and conference rules assign the Council on Finance & Administration budget oversight. Within this proposed ministry structure, CFA will continue to follow the annual process of consultation and collaboration with ministry areas, providing guidance and budgeting parameters for available ministry funding. The Core Team will have flexibility to assign funds for ministry areas, guided by annual requests aligned with the conference mission and priorities.
- 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.

Leadership

- The nominations process will reflect 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.
- The Nominations team will consult with other conference leaders to recommend the membership of the Core Leadership Team, nominated to serve for at least 4 years, and not more than 8 years.
- The Nominations team will nominate the members of teams required/designated by the Discipline. Additional teams will have flexibility of membership and format, guided by the mission and ministry needs of the conference.

- The Core Leadership Team will require substantial commitment from its members, including time commitment and a focus on leadership and ministry throughout the Conference. It will have flexibility of meeting schedule, style, and oversight of related teams.

Disciplinary Questions

- The Book of Discipline language gives flexibility to conferences regarding ministry structure except for those teams specifically required.