



**BYLAWS
FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF MYRTLE BEACH**

Revised February 2025

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ARTICLE 1 NAME AND PURPOSE

- A. Name: This congregation of believers shall be known as First Methodist Church of Myrtle Beach. The church is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of South Carolina.
- B. Purpose: This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986, for such purposes including, but not limited to, proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; establishing and maintaining religious worship; educating believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, and maintaining missionary activities in the United States and around the world.

ARTICLE 2 STATEMENT OF FAITH

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that this statement of faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members, staff, and volunteers. All literature, whether print or electronic, used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the statement of faith. All activities permitted or performed in any facilities owned, rented, or leased by this church, or engaged in by any member of the church staff (volunteer or paid), and all decisions of the administration of this church shall not conflict with the statement of faith. In all conflicts regarding interpretation of the statement of faith, the pastor and church council, on behalf of the church, have the final authority.

DOCTRINE¹

¶ **101. OUR HERITAGE OF FAITH.** As a Wesleyan expression of Christianity, First Methodist Church professes the Christian faith, established on the confession of Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God, and resurrected Lord of heaven and earth. This confession, expressed by Simon Peter in Matthew 16:16-19 and Acts 2:32, is foundational. It declares Jesus is the unique incarnate Word of God, and He lives today, calling all to receive Him as savior, and as the one to whom all authority has been given.

This faith has been tested and proved since its proclamation by Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the resurrection. It was defended by the women and men of the early church, many of whom gave their lives as testimony. Their labor, enabled and inspired by the Holy Spirit, resulted in the canon of scripture as the sufficient rule both for faith and practice (the Greek word *kanon* means rule). It formulated creeds such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian definition as accurate expressions of this faith. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers preserved this testimony, asserting the primacy of Scripture, the necessity of grace and faith, and the priesthood of all believers. Their doctrinal summations, the *Augsburg Confession*, the *Schleitheim Confession*, the *Anglican Articles of Religion*, and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, bore witness to this faith.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Pietists in all traditions sought to emphasize the experiential nature of this faith, as direct encounter with the risen Lord. They worked to develop the fruit of this faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in individual and communal life. These pietistic movements influenced many in the reformation traditions, including two Anglican brothers, John and Charles Wesley. Through the organization and published works by these brothers, a distinctly Methodist articulation of Christian faith and life, of "practical divinity," emerged. Methodism placed particular emphasis on the

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¹ Paragraphs 101–109 our historic Doctrinal Standards are taken directly from the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church*.

universal work of grace, the new birth, and the fullness of salvation, entire sanctification or perfection. Methodists created structures and communities alongside the established church to facilitate the mission “to reform the nation, especially the church, and spread scriptural holiness over the land.”

As Methodists moved to America, they brought this expression of faith with them. Although Methodism in England remained loyal to the established church until after John Wesley’s death, the American revolution dictated the formation of a new church, independent of the Church of England. Accordingly, in 1784, while gathered in Baltimore for the “Christmas Conference,” the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally constituted.

This new church adopted John Wesley’s revision of the Anglican Articles of Religion, the Methodist General Rules, a liturgy, and ordained the first Methodist clergy. Two other sources of authority were identified: the four volumes that included fifty-three of Wesley’s sermons and his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. When a constitution was adopted in 1808, the Restrictive Rules protected the Articles and General Rules from revocation or change.

Other Methodist expressions of “primitive Christianity” and “the scripture way of salvation” emerged. German-speaking Americans from pietistic Reformed, Anabaptist, and Lutheran traditions, created organizations with doctrine and discipline nearly identical to the English-speaking Methodist Episcopal Church. The work of Phillip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Jacob Albright established the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association. A number of African American Methodists, including Richard Allen, Jarena Lee, and James Varick, helped establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion to address racial discrimination and the injustices of slavery, while preserving doctrine and discipline.

Through separations and mergers, Methodist Christians have preserved testimony to the risen and reigning Christ by holding themselves accountable to standards of doctrine and discipline. Beginning with early Methodist work in the Caribbean, this Wesleyan understanding of doctrine has now spread across the globe, flourishing with the unique contributions of many cultures. When The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, with the merger of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, both the Methodist *Articles of Religion* and the Evangelical United Brethren *Confession of Faith* were accepted as doctrinal standards and deemed “congruent” articulations of this faith. For fifty years, the growing voices of Methodists in Africa, the Philippines, and Europe have joined in the engagement to maintain our doctrinal heritage, promoting fidelity to the doctrinal principles that launched our movement. First Methodist Church preserves this heritage.

¶ 102. THE WESLEYAN WAY OF SALVATION. The gift of grace is available to all persons. Our Father in Heaven is not willing that any should be lost (Matthew 18:14), but that all may come to “the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). With St. Paul, we affirm the proclamation found in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Grace is the manifestation of God’s love toward fallen creation, to be freely received and freely given. This undeserved gift works to liberate humanity from both the guilt and power of sin, and live as children of God, freed for joyful obedience. In the classic Wesleyan expression, grace works in numerous ways throughout our lives, beginning with the general providence of God toward all.

God’s *prevenient or preventing grace* refers to “the first dawning of grace in the soul,” mitigating the effects of original sin, even before we are aware of our need for God. It prevents the full consequences of humanity’s alienation from God and awakens conscience, giving an initial sense of God and the first inclinations toward life. Received prior to our ability to respond, preventing grace enables genuine response to the continuing work of God’s grace.

God’s convincing grace leads us to what the Bible terms “repentance,” awakening in us a desire to “flee the

wrath to come” and enabling us to begin to “fear God and work righteousness.”

God’s *justifying grace* works by faith to bring reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, what God does for us. It is pardon for sin and ordinarily results in assurance, “God’s Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God.”

God’s *sanctifying grace* begins with God’s work of regeneration, sometimes referred to as “being born again.” It is God’s work in us as we continually turn to Him and seek to be perfected in His love. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit works to replace sin with the fruit of the Spirit. With John Wesley, we believe that a life of holiness and ultimately “entire sanctification” should be the goal of each individual’s journey with God.

Our ultimate hope and promise in Christ is glorification, where our souls and bodies are perfectly restored through this grace. (Global Methodist Church, 2023)

¶ **103. PRINCIPLES OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER.** Wesley said, “there is no holiness but social.” By referring to “social holiness,” Wesley meant that the road to holiness was one that we could not travel by ourselves, but rather involved the community of faith at every step along the way. Our longing and hope are that our church may:

1. Remain rooted and grounded in the scriptures and in the historic teachings of the Christian church as defined in our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith and understood through the Wesleyan lens of faith.
2. Aspire to introduce all people, without exception, to Jesus Christ, recognizing that the mission in which we are engaged has eternal consequences. We are committed to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28 to go into all the world to make disciples of Christ, teaching and baptizing in His name.
3. Lead all those who experience new birth in Jesus to deepen and grow in their relationship with Him, inviting the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit within their lives as they similarly manifest the gifts of that Spirit. We encourage all to participate in discipleship and accountability groups, such as Wesleyan class and band meetings, and to utilize all the other means of grace to achieve this end.
4. Model the love of God in order to respond to the summons to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. To this end we are committed to fulfill the commandment in John 21 of lovingly feeding and tending to the flock of God and others, worshiping God in spirit, and in truth and watching over one another in love. This the church does until, perfected in love, it experiences the fullness of God's restored Kingdom with Christ.
5. Recognize the laity as the people of God and a royal priesthood, chosen and empowered for the work of God in this world in full partnership with our clergy. We affirm the participation and leadership of those of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexes, and ages in the Body of Christ.
6. Encourage and affirm the call of God in the lives of clergy who are grounded in the authoritative witness of the Scriptures, set apart by the church, and recognized to possess the necessary gifts and graces for ministry in alignment and accountability with our settled doctrines and discipline.
7. Display a "catholic spirit" to the church universal, cherishing our place within the greater Body of Christ through mutual respect, cooperative relationships, and shared mission with others wherever possible. We envision a global church in which all work together, resourcing and learning from one another, to fulfill the tasks of the church given to it by God.
8. Provide an organization and structure that is able to accomplish its primary functions of support, with a connectional polity that can empower and multiply the gifts of all for the sake of Christ's work in the world. (Global Methodist Church, 2023)

¶ **104. HOLY SCRIPTURE.** The canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (as specified in the Articles of Religion) are the primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured. (Global Methodist Church, 2023)

¶ **105. FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR OUR DOCTRINAL STANDARDS.** The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and express orthodox Christian teaching.

1. THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I
believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin
Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven,
Is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church, the communion of
saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.
*universal

2. THE NICENE CREED (A.D. 381)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic* and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen. * universal

3. THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON (A.D. 451)

Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same Person,
That He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body consisting of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood, like us in all respects, apart from sin. Begotten of His Father before the ages as regards His Godhead,
But in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the God- bearer.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, must be confessed to be in two natures, without confusion, without changes, without division, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him,
And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us,
And the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

(Global Methodist Church, 2023)

¶ **106. CONSTITUTIVE STANDARDS.** As is the case in many Christian communities, we recognize additional statements of faith that are consistent with the creedal tradition of the church universal, but which also express our church's particular emphases and concerns, as well as our theological heritage of faith. These constitutive standards embody the "faith once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3) and serve as a bulwark against false teaching, providing the framework for the praise of God in our teaching (orthodoxy), the development of our collective theology, and the launching point for our living and service (orthopraxis). Recognizing the complementary streams of the Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren faith communities, both the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith define the doctrinal boundaries of our church, until such time as a combined Articles of Faith may be approved by the church.

THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH.

Thirty- Nine Articles of Religion were finalized in 1571 to define the doctrine of the Church of England. When Methodism emerged as a church, independent of the Church of England two centuries later, John Wesley abbreviated the formulation to 24 Articles. An additional article dealing with the duty of Christians to civil authority was added by the Methodist Episcopal Church when it was formed in 1784. The Articles were officially adopted by the General Conference of 1808, when the first Restrictive Rule was also implemented, and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939 when three Methodist communions within America became one. The Twenty-Five Articles are as follows:

Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and good; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article II - Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile us to His Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church.

The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less. All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article VI - Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man.

Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII - Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Article IX - Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X - Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Article XII - Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore, they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII - Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XIV - Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

Article XV - Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

Article XVI - Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

Article XVII - Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

Article XIX - Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX - Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI - Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore, it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV - Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

The following Article from the *Methodist Protestant Discipline* was placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.]

Of Sanctification (*from the Methodist Protestant Discipline*)

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth all from sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin,

but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).

Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH.

In 1809, the Evangelical Association adopted a German translation of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Articles of Religion, adding an article on the last judgment from the Augsburg Confession. These were reduced to twenty-one in 1816, omitting polemical articles against Roman Catholics and Anabaptists, and later condensed to nineteen. In 1815, the United Brethren in Christ adopted a Confession of Faith based on an 1814 Confession and 1789 *Lehre* by Philip William Otterbein. A more comprehensive Confession was composed in 1889, including an article on sanctification reflecting the influence of the Heidelberg Catechism. The 1946 conference that formed the Evangelical United Brethren Church adopted both the Confession of Faith of the United Brethren in Christ and the Articles of Faith of the Evangelical Church. In 1962 a new Confession of Faith was completed, including articles on "Sanctification and Christian Perfection" (Article XI) and "The Judgement and Future State" (Article XII). This was adopted in the 1968 merger with the Methodist Church that produced the United Methodist Church.

Article I - God

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

Article II - Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.

Article III - The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

Article IV - The Holy Bible

We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.

Article V - The Church

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

Article VI - The Sacraments

We believe the Sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian's profession and of God's love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.

We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.

Article VII - Sin and Free Will

We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

Article VIII - Reconciliation Through Christ

We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.

Article IX - Justification and Regeneration

We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections. We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.

Article X - Good Works

We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.

Article XI - Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Article XII - The Judgment and the Future State

We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.

Article XIII - Public Worship

We believe divine worship is the duty and privilege of man who, in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. We believe divine worship is essential to the life of the Church, and that the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

We believe the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and *Discipline* of the Church.

Article XIV - The Lord's Day

We believe the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.

Article XV - The Christian and Property

We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church's mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.

Article XVI - Civil Government

We believe civil government derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.

¶ 107. **HISTORIC WESLEYAN STANDARDS** Representing the normative contributions and emphases of Methodism's articulation of the Christian faith, the Wesleyan Standards have, to one degree or another,

been broadly shared between the spiritual descendants of the eighteenth-century evangelical renewal led by John and Charles Wesley. These standards teach us what it means to be Methodist and the teachings of our communities should be consistent with them. These include the following:

1. ***THE STANDARD SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY***

Intended to provide patterns of preaching and teaching for the people called Methodists, John Wesley published several editions of his sermons, beginning in 1746, to set down what he found as “the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men.” The compilation of forty-four of those sermons were intended to provide a “model deed” for what was preached from a Methodist pulpit in the ongoing life of the church. These particular sermons were regarded by Wesley as being of distinct value, and intended to serve as “standards” for teaching Christian doctrine in the church:

1. *Salvation by Faith*, 2. *The Almost Christian*, 3. *Awake, Thou That Sleepest*
4. *Scriptural Christianity*, 5. *Justification By Faith*, 6. *The Righteousness of Faith*
7. *The Way to the Kingdom*, 8. *The First-Fruits of the Spirit*, 9. *The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption*
10. *The Witness of the Spirit - Discourse I*, 11. *The Witness of our own Spirit*
12. *The Means of Grace*, 13. *The Circumcision of the Heart*, 14. *The Marks of the New Birth*
15. *The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God*
- 16-28. *Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (13 Discourses)*
29. *The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law*
- 30-31. *The Law Established through Faith Discourse (2 Discourses)*
32. *The Nature of Enthusiasm*, 33. *A Caution against Bigotry*, 34. *Catholic Spirit*
35. *Christian Perfection*, 36. *Wondering Thoughts*, 37. *Satan's Devices*
38. *Original Sin*, 39. *The New Birth*, 40. *The Wilderness State*
41. *Heaviness through Manifold Temptations*, 42. *Self-Denial*
43. *The Cure of Evil Speaking*, 44. *The Use of Money*

The 1771 edition of Wesley's *Works* included nine additional sermons:

- The Witness of the Spirit, II On Sin in Believers*
- The Repentance of Believers, The Great Assize*
- The Lord Our Righteousness,*
- The Scripture Way of*
- Salvation, The Good Steward,*
- The Reformation of Manners, On the Death of George Whitefield*

In addition to the forty-four, these nine sermons were adopted as standards of doctrine for the American church in 1784. The 1787-88 edition of Wesley's sermons included only the forty-four, in keeping with the stipulations of the model deed.

The additional nine sermons supplement the original forty-four, providing additional teaching on matters of practical divinity and other topics.

2. ***THE EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT***

First published in 1755, John Wesley's New Testament text is based upon the King James Version and Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The notes were aimed at the “unlearned reader” and provide historical context for and Wesleyan theological interpretation of the Scriptures, drawing upon work of four earlier commentaries.

3. **THE GENERAL RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES.** In order to make explicit the expectations upon those who are members of the Methodist societies, John Wesley first devised a set of rules in 1738, publishing it five years later. The General Rules were subsequently adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1785, one year after its formation. The General Rules provide a

helpful summation of the kind of intentional discipleship which marked early Methodism, summed up in three simple rubrics: do no harm, do good to all, and stay connected to the sacramental and devotional life of the church. The Rules thus remain a part of the Constitution and are protected by the Restrictive Rules.

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

“In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than ‘a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.’

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called **classes**, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.
2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding. There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: ‘a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.’ But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding: buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing;

the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us. Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as: The putting on of gold and costly apparel.

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.

Softness and needless self-indulgence. Laying up treasure upon earth.

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that 'we are not to do good unless *our hearts be free to it.*'

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them *falsely*, for the Lord's sake. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are: The public worship of God.

The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded. The Supper of the Lord.

Family and private prayer. Searching the Scriptures. Fasting or Abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls."

¶ **108. THE RESTRICTIVE RULE.** In continuity with our Wesleyan heritage, the governing body of First Methodist Church shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or Confession of Faith, or establish any new standards of rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.

SOCIAL WITNESS²

¶ 201. OUR SOCIAL HERITAGE

1. Following both the example and teachings of Jesus, we believe that God calls us to love and serve others around the world in His name. Since God first stirred the hearts of John and Charles Wesley to feed the

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² Paragraphs 201-202 are taken directly from the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines of the Global Methodist Church*.

hungry, visit those in prison, oppose slavery, and care for those less fortunate, Methodists have believed in meeting people at their point of need and offering them Jesus. We are convinced that faith if it is not accompanied by action is dead (James 2:17) and that, as Jesus reminded us, when we do not do what is needed to care for the least of our sisters and brothers, we likewise have not done so for Christ either (Matthew 25:45).

2. It was in that spirit that the Methodist Episcopal Church became the first denomination in the world to adopt a formal Social Creed in 1908, spurred by the Social Gospel in response to the deplorable working conditions of millions. Though reflective of its own time, the statement is still remarkably relevant even today, calling for, among other things, “equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life, principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions, abolition of child labor, the suppression of the ‘sweating system,’ a reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, a release from employment one day in seven, and for a living wage in every industry.” In turn, that prophetic witness was subsequently embraced by each of the other branches of Methodism and the Evangelical United Brethren Church and continues this day within First Methodist Church. As a Methodist church, our Social Witness represents a consensus vision transcending cultures of what it means to be faithful disciples in a world that remains in rebellion against its Creator, wracked by violence and unfettered greed. It is a summons to prayerfully consider how to “do good” and “do no harm” to all as we put our faith into practice.

¶ 202. OUR WITNESS TO THE WORLD.

1. We believe that all persons irrespective of their station or circumstances in life have been made in the image of God and must be treated with dignity, justice, and respect. We denounce as sin racism, sexism, and other expressions that unjustly discriminate against any person (*Genesis 1-2, Deuteronomy 16:19-20, Luke 11:42, 19:9, Colossians 3:11*).
2. We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who may be powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn, those with disabilities or serious illness, and the aged (*Genesis 2:7, Leviticus 19:32, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:41-44*).
3. The sacredness of all life compels us to resist the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life when the wellbeing of the mother and the child are at stake. We do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection, and we call upon all Christians as disciples of the Lord of Life to prayerfully consider how we can support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources (*Exodus 22:23-23, Psalm 139:13-16, James 1:27*).
4. We believe that all should have the right to work in safe conditions with fair compensation and free of grinding toil or exploitation by others. We respect the right of workers to engage in collective bargaining to protect their welfare. We pray that all should be allowed to freely follow their vocations, especially those who work on the frontiers of truth and knowledge and those who may enrich the lives of others with beauty and joy. We acknowledge that science and technology are gifts of God intended to improve human life and we encourage dialogue between faith and science as mutual witnesses to God’s creative power (*Deuteronomy 5:12-14, Luke 10:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Timothy 5:18*). We believe that God has called us to share His concern for the poor and to alleviate the conditions and policies which have produced vast disparities in wealth and resources, both among individuals and nations, giving rise to poverty. We are called to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all God’s people as we share the good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed (*Leviticus 19:9-10, Matthew 25:37-40, Luke 6:20-25, James 2:1-5*).

5. We believe that all have been summoned to care for the earth as our common home, stewarding its resources, sharing in its bounty, and exercising responsible and sustainable consumption so that there is enough for all (*Genesis 2:15, Leviticus 26:34-35, Psalm 24:1*).
6. We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman (*Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:3-9, Ephesians 5:22-33*).
7. We are saddened by all expressions of sexual behavior, including pornography, polygamy, and promiscuity, that do not recognize the sacred worth of each individual or that seek to exploit, abuse, objectify, or degrade others, or that represent less than God's intentional design for His children. While affirming a scriptural view of sexuality and gender, we welcome all to experience the redemptive grace of Jesus and are committed to being a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for any who may have experienced brokenness in their sexual lives (*Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 6:9-20*).
8. We believe that children, whether through birth or adoption, are a sacred gift to us from God, and we accept our responsibility to both protect and nurture the youngest among us, particularly against such abuses as enforced child labor, involuntary conscription, human trafficking, and other such practices in the world (*Deuteronomy 4:9-10, Psalm 127:3-5, 1 Timothy 5:4,8,16*).
9. We believe that followers of God have been called to exercise self-control and holiness in their personal lives, generosity and kindness in their relations with others, and grace in all matters of life (*Romans 12:9-21, Galatians 5:22-23*).
10. We believe in the rule of justice and law in society, in the right of individuals to follow God's call and to lawfully immigrate to new places, and in the pursuit of peace both between nations and individuals. We offer ourselves to work in order to reduce the bitterness that has overflowed in God's world (*Genesis 12:1, Isaiah 11:1-9, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 2:19-10*).
11. We believe the practice of the Golden Rule, treating others as we would wish to be treated, can effectively guide our social and business relationships. We seek to cultivate the mind of Christ and a heart for others (*Matthew 7:12, Romans 12:1-2*).
12. We believe that each person should have the right to exercise their religious beliefs without fear of persecution and that governments should respect freedom of religion and the important role of faith communities within the greater society. We further denounce discrimination or persecution which may target any because of their gender, economic status, ethnic or tribal identity, age, or political views (*Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 5:44, Romans 8:35*).
13. We believe in the final triumph of righteousness when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and we accept our calling to work towards that end as Christ's light and the salt of the earth (*Matthew 5:13-16, Revelation 11:15-17, Revelation 21-22*).

ARTICLE 3³
THE MISSION AND OPERATION OF THE CHURCH

Section I. Foundational Principles

¶ **301. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.** The mission of First Methodist Church of Myrtle Beach is to Follow Jesus and Share Him with Others.

Anchored in our belief in Jesus Christ, the Church is of God and will be preserved to the end of time to worship God in spirit and in truth, to faithfully preach God's Word and offer the holy sacraments, to edify all who believe and encourage them to grow in their lives of holiness and service to others, to minister to those who are in special need, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to present the world with a clear and compelling invitation to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. All those of every age and station stand in need of the grace that God has promised to extend to others through His Body, the Church. While it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of individuals, ours is the task of sharing the good news of God as we respond to the summons of Christ in Matthew 28: *"As you are going, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,"* even as Christ has promised to remain with us always, *"even to the end of the age."*

Following the example of early Methodists, we believe God has raised us up in order to "spread scriptural holiness across the land," embodying that "grand *depositum*" of the faith that John Wesley believed had been entrusted to "the people called Methodists," the continued striving for entire sanctification in our lives. As individual believers in Christ, and as those gathered together in local congregations, our calling is to connect with the communities and the world around us, extending both grace and mercy. Growing in our personal faith, and effectively discipling others, are both life-long expressions of loving the Lord with all of our hearts, all of our being, and all of our minds, as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves.

¶ **302. A GLOBAL MISSION.** John Wesley famously declared in his journal on June 11, 1739, "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation." Since that time Methodists have recognized that at the core of our church's mission is ensuring that the Good News of Jesus Christ is shared around the globe. From Britain, to the Americas, to the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Asia, the Methodists who came before us shared Jesus' message of salvation. Today our mission receives this rich inheritance and moves forward boldly into a new chapter. We recognize the world is the parish of First Methodist Church. We are active in advancing the cause of Christ on multiple continents, and our faith communities will continue to do so.

¶ **303. OUR COVENANT IN CHRIST.** We believe that God has called us to live together in a faithful covenant that expresses our commitments both to God and to each other. With John Wesley, we affirm that the scriptures know of no such thing as "solitary religion," but that we have been designed to grow in our discipleship in the company of others.

¶ **304. THE MINISTRY OF THE LAITY.** God has entrusted His work in this world to the whole people of God. All Christians are called through their baptism to be in ministry to others, both as individuals and as a part of the church, using the gifts and graces with which they have been equipped by the Holy Spirit. Every layperson bears the responsibility for carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), but likewise each have been given the power by God to do so. For like the variety of spiritual gifts described in the scriptures, the diversity of our outreach efforts knows no limit either when we serve Christ with joy and thanksgiving. With other heirs of the Protestant Reformation, we embrace the notion of "the

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³ Paragraphs 301-343 have been adapted from the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines of the Global Methodist Church*. Revised to adapt the language to our context as an independent Methodist Church.

priesthood of all believers" and we call upon both laity and clergy to work together in a partnership of servanthood. As suggested in Ephesians 4:12-13, Christ has not given to pastors the task of doing the ministry by themselves, but of equipping those in the church for such works of service, so that "the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

We believe that it is only as each individual, whether lay or clergy, bears witness to God's grace that the world may come to know Christ and respond to His invitation to have life in abundance. Each member is therefore expected to be a witness for Christ in the world, a light and leaven in society, and a reconciler in a culture of conflict, identifying with the agony and suffering of the world and radiating and exemplifying the Christ of hope. As the people of God, we must either win the world to Christ or abandon it to those forces that oppose Him. Beyond the diverse forms of ministry is this ultimate concern: that all persons will be brought into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ and be renewed after the image of their creator (Colossians 3:10). This means that all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free. Toward that end, the full participation of all who believe is vital and cannot be evaded if the gospel is to be heard and received.

¶ **305. TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP.** In light of the mission of the Church and our covenant in Christ, First Methodist Church engages the commandment to make disciples of Jesus through an intentional process grounded in Scripture and in our Wesleyan heritage.

First Methodist Church defines a disciple as a person who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is following Jesus, whose life reflects the character of Christ and extends the mission of Christ in holy love of God and neighbor. The disciple's character and practice are informed by the Scriptures, nurtured by the community of faith, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The disciple's mission is to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus through works of teaching, service, multiplication, mercy, and justice making more obedient disciples who will reflect the character and mission of Christ and expanding the boundaries of Christ's Kingdom further out into the world.

The goal of transformational discipleship ministry in First Methodist Church is to make, develop, and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ through small groups where each person is invited, challenged, supported, and held accountable in living sanctified lives that reflect the practices, character, and mission of Christ.

¶ **306. CALLED TO INCLUSIVENESS.** We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidence of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the spiritual life of the Church and its service to the community and the world.

Therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or gender (defined throughout these bylaws by a person's immutable biological traits identified by or before birth). The services of worship of First Methodist Church shall be open to all persons and church activities wherever possible should take place in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. Similarly, inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of our *Bylaws* in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place.

Section II. The Church and Pastoral Charge

¶ **307. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.** The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society, providing the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

Section III. Church Membership

¶ **308. ELIGIBILITY.** First Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and, upon taking the vows of membership, become members of First Methodist Church. In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from assuming the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may assume the appropriate vows on their behalf.

¶ **309. DEFINITION OF MEMBERSHIP.** The membership of First Methodist Church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

1. The baptized membership shall include all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in the First Methodist Church congregation or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to First Methodist Church subsequent to baptism in some other congregation.
2. The professing membership of First Methodist Church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.
3. For statistical purposes, church membership is equated to the number of people listed on the roll of professing members.

¶ **310. THE MEANING OF A SACRAMENT.** A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God gives us the sign as a means whereby we receive this grace and as a tangible assurance that we do in fact receive it. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ are Holy Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist). We receive the Sacraments by faith in Christ, with repentance and thanksgiving. Faith in Christ enables us to receive the grace of God through the Sacraments, and obedience to Christ is necessary for the benefits of the Sacraments to bear fruit in our lives.

¶ **311. SACRAMENTAL AUTHORITY.** In keeping with the historic practice of the Christian church, Elders are ordained to oversee the Sacramental life of the church and thus have full authority to preside at celebrations of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Sacramental authority for a licensed local pastor is

limited to the appointed ministry setting and is exercised under the oversight and authority of an ordained elder.

¶ **312. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.** Through Holy Baptism we are united in Christ's death in repentance of our sins; raised to new life in Him through the power of the resurrection; incorporated into the Body of Christ; and empowered through the work of the Holy Spirit to go on to perfection. Holy Baptism is God's gracious gift to us, flowing from the once for all work of Christ Jesus, and our pledge to follow as His disciples.

¶ **313. THE MODE AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM.** Holy Baptism may be performed by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The outward and visible sign of Holy Baptism is water. Candidates are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness by faith through union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Holy Baptism is administered among a gathered congregation. Those present vow on behalf of Christ's Holy Church to receive the baptized into the Church universal, to grow together in grace, and to remember the profession made and benefits received in Holy Baptism. Candidates for Holy Baptism, and those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves, shall be instructed in the Christian faith and the meaning of Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism, as initiation into Christ's Holy Church, occurs once in a person's life. Holy Communion serves as the regular and continual affirmation of baptismal vows within the church. Through a service of baptismal remembrance and reaffirmation of baptismal vows people can renew the covenant declared at baptism.

¶ **314. BAPTISMAL VOWS.** In faithfulness with early Christian practice as well as the Wesleyan tradition, those wishing to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism within First Methodist Church shall first be asked the following questions or the revised liturgy in the United Methodist Hymnal:

Do you renounce the devil and all his works, and reject the evil powers of this world?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of your sin, turn to Jesus Christ, and confess Him as your Lord and Savior?

I do.

Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

I do.

Do you accept the responsibility to resist evil, injustice, and oppression by the grace and power of God?

I do.

Will you obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of your life by the grace and power of God?

I will.

Those who present candidates for Holy Baptism who are unable to answer for themselves will also be asked this question:

Will you nurture these children (persons) in Christ's Holy Church, that by your teaching and example they may be guided to accept God's grace for themselves, profess their faith openly, and lead a Christian life?

I (We) will.

The congregation is then asked to affirm their commitment to support the baptismal candidate in the faith.

Will you who witness these vows encourage [these persons] in the faith and do all in your power to support [these persons] in [their] life in Christ?

We will.

Baptismal candidates (or those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves) are then asked to confess their faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
[who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius
Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.]**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
[the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.]**

¶ **315. THE MEANING OF CONFIRMATION.** Through the Rite of Confirmation, we personally renew the covenant declared at our baptism, witness to God's work in our lives, affirm our commitment to Christ and His Holy Church, and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands enabling our lifelong journey toward holiness. The Apostles prayed for and laid hands on those who had been baptized.

It is the duty of pastors to prepare confirmands, teaching them the basic tenets of the historic Christian faith, the history and theology of the Wesleyan revival movement, and the practical meaning of church membership in agreement with the *Bylaws*.

¶ **316. PROFESSING MEMBERS.** Those wishing to become professing members of First Methodist Church may present themselves to the pastor and, after any appropriate counsel, be baptized if they have not already done so, and join by professing their faith in Jesus Christ and agreeing to the vows of discipleship. Those wishing to transfer their membership to First Methodist Church may do so by indicating such to the pastor who shall send a request for the transfer to their previous congregation. Persons may also be received by transfer from other denominations in which the Lordship of Christ is affirmed. The pastor in charge has the authority to determine the readiness of any person to assume the vows of membership. A person deferred by the pastor may appeal that decision to the Staff Parish Relations Committee or its equivalent. In order to fulfill the mandate to "watch over each other in love," professing members of First Methodist Church shall be encouraged to participate in a class meeting, small group setting, discipleship or other accountability group on a regular basis, as a key part of the fulfillment of their vows of membership.

¶ **317. VOWS OF MEMBERSHIP.** In addition to taking the vows of baptism (¶ 314) those wishing to become professing members of First Methodist Church shall be asked the following, or similar, questions before being received into the church:

Do you believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

Do you confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put your whole trust in His grace, and promise to serve Him as your Lord?

Do you promise, according to the grace given you, to keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of your life as a faithful member of Christ's holy church?

Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures?

Will you be loyal to Christ through this congregation and joining with your brothers and sisters around the world do all in your power to fulfill its mission?

Will you be a faithful member of First Methodist Church, doing all in your power to strengthen its ministries through your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness as Christ's representative in this world?

¶ **318. GROWTH IN FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP.** Faithful membership in First Methodist Church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves.

Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

¶ **319. THE MEANING OF HOLY COMMUNION.** In Holy Communion also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving"), we are invited into fellowship (*koinonia*) with Christ Jesus who is spiritually present in the whole of the Sacrament; we participate in the communion of saints with the Church universal; and we are given a foretaste of God's eternal banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Sacrament may be offered to all who repent of sin and desire to draw near to God and lead a life of obedience to Christ.

Holy Communion is normally celebrated in the midst of the congregation, physically gathered to remember and respond to God's mighty acts of salvation revealed in Holy Scripture. Local congregations are urged to ensure regular opportunities for the congregation to commune.

The elements of Holy Communion may be taken to those whose condition prevents them from being physically present. When Holy Communion cannot be offered, the Love Feast provides an opportunity for significant fellowship in a wide array of settings. We encourage the use of non-alcoholic wine or juice for Holy Communion. Non-alcoholic juice must be offered as an option where wine is used.

Section IV. Care of Members

¶ **320. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.**

1. Each member is called to fulfill their vows of baptism and membership, being faithful by participating in the spiritual formation, worship, stewardship, and service opportunities the church provides. It is the responsibility of the church to establish and communicate clear expectations of their members who share in the partnership (*koinonia*) of the gospel (Philippians 1:5), and the responsibility of each member or partner to strive to meet those expectations.

2. The pastor is responsible for ensuring that members are cared for by implementing a discipleship process focused on helping members to "go on to perfection" by loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and by loving their neighbor as themselves. Pastors are charged with

equipping all the members of the congregation to be in ministry by meeting people at their point of need and offering them Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-13).

3. All members of the church are called into a loving accountability with one another. If a member neglects the membership vows, however, the congregation shall use every means of encouraging that member to return to an active faith and to lovingly restore them to the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:15-17). Each local church shall establish a grace-filled process to restore negligent members to full participation in the life of the church. Negligent members may be placed on an inactive roll by a two-thirds vote of the church council.

4. Members placed on the inactive roll may remain in that status for up to two years while every attempt is made to return them to active membership. Members on the inactive roll are suspended from serving on church committees or voting on church matters during that time. If an inactive member does not complete the restoration process or show evidence of desiring to return to a more active status after two years, then the charge conference, with the recommendation of the pastor, may remove the member by a two-thirds vote.

5. Upon the approval of the charge conference, the church may require that individuals' membership be intentionally renewed on a yearly basis. Congregants who do not choose to renew their commitment may be placed on the inactive roll of the church (§ 320.3-4) for up to two years, after which the charge conference may, with the recommendation of the pastor, remove their names from the membership roll by a two-thirds vote.

¶ 321. TRANSFER FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS. A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with First Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member. Such a person may be received as a baptized member by notification of transfer from that person's former church or some certification of Christian baptism, and as a professing member upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith. In valid Christian baptism water is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by an authorized person. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. It is recommended that instruction in the faith, work, and polity of the Church be provided for all such persons. Persons received from churches that do not issue letters of transfer or recommendation shall be listed as "Received from Other Denominations."

¶ 322. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP. A professing member of another Christian church, who resides for an extended period in our community, may on request be enrolled as an associate member of our church. The home pastor shall be notified of the affiliate membership. Such membership shall entitle the person to the fellowship of our church, to its pastoral care and oversight, and to participation in its activities. Associate members shall be counted and reported as a professing member of the home church only.

¶ 323. CONSTITUENCY ROLL. A Constituency Roll shall be maintained, comprising four categories of persons: (1) Unbaptized infants ("Cradle Roll"); (2) Individuals over the age of eighteen who have not indicated a desire to become professing members, including the spouses and adult children of professing members, but who are those for whom the local church has a pastoral responsibility; (3) Persons who have attended worship more than twice, or participated more than twice in the ministries of the church, during the previous twelve calendar months ("Potential Members"); (4) Persons who, though unlikely to join the church due to distance or other faith commitments, nevertheless come under the pastoral care of the congregation and are recognized as part of its wider community ("Friends of the Church"). The Constituency Roll should be reviewed and audited annually.

¶ 324. OUTSIDE OF CONGREGATIONAL SETTINGS. Any candidate for church membership who for good reason is unable to appear before the congregation may, at the discretion of the pastor, be received elsewhere in accordance with the rituals of our church. In any such case lay members should be present to

represent the congregation. Names of such persons shall be placed on the church roll, and announcement of their reception shall be made to the congregation.

Section V. Membership Records and Reports

¶ 325. MEMBERSHIP RECORDS. 1. Active Membership Roll. Our church shall accurately maintain a permanent membership record for each baptized or professing member including: a) the person's name, date of birth, address, place of birth, date of baptism, officiating pastor, and sponsors; b) date of confirmation or profession of faith, officiating pastor, and sponsors; c) if transferred from another church, date of reception, sending church, and receiving pastor; d) if transferred to another church, date of transfer, receiving church, and address of receiving church; e) date of removal or withdrawal and reason; f) date of restoration of professing membership and officiating pastor; g) date of death, date and place of funeral/memorial, place of burial, and officiating pastor.

2. Inactive Membership Roll (¶ 320. 3-4).
3. Constituency Roll (¶ 323).
4. Associate Membership Roll (¶ 322).

¶ 326. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT AND REGULAR AUDIT. The pastor shall report to the charge conference annually the names of persons received into the membership of the church and the names of persons removed since the last charge conference, indicating how each was received or removed. The church shall be encouraged to audit the membership records regularly.

¶ 327. ANNUAL REPORT OF MEMBERS ATTENDING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. The pastor is encouraged to report annually the names and contact information for professing and baptized members attending colleges and universities to the chaplain or campus minister of such institutions where the church's ministries exist.

Section VI. Changes in Church Membership or Local Church Membership

¶ 328. MEMBERS WHO MOVE. If a member of the church shall move to another community so far removed from First Methodist Church that the member cannot participate regularly in its worship and activity, this member shall be encouraged to transfer membership to another church in the community of the newly established residence. As soon as the pastor is reliably informed of this change of residence, actual or contemplated, it shall be the pastor's duty and obligation to assist the member to become established in the fellowship of a church in the community of the future home.

¶ 329. TRANSFER TO OTHER DENOMINATIONS. The pastor, upon receiving a request from a member to transfer to a church of another denomination, or upon receiving such request from a pastor or duly authorized official of another denomination, shall (with the approval of the member) issue notification of transfer and, upon receiving confirmation of the member's reception into another congregation, shall properly record the transfer of such person on the membership record of the local church. If a pastor is informed that a member has without notice united with a church of another denomination, the pastor shall make diligent inquiry and, if the report is confirmed, shall enter "Transferred to a Church of Another Denomination" after the person's name on the membership roll and shall report the same to the next charge conference.

¶ 330. RESTORATION OF PROFESSING MEMBERSHIP.

1. A person whose name has been removed from professing membership by withdrawal, or action by charge conference, may ask to be restored to membership at First Methodist Church.

2. A person whose membership was recorded as having been withdrawn after becoming a member of another denomination may, when that denomination will not transfer membership, be restored to professing membership by reaffirmation of the membership vows.
3. A person who has withdrawn at his or her own written request may return to the church and, upon reaffirmation of the membership vows, become a professing member. A person whose name was removed by charge conference action may return to the church and, at his or her request, be restored to professing membership in the church through reaffirmation of the membership vows.
4. A person who withdrew under charges or was removed by trial court may ask to return to the church. Upon evidence of a renewed life, approval of the charge conference, and reaffirmation of the membership vows, the person may be restored to professing membership.

ARTICLE 4 ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

¶ **331. PRIMARY TASKS.** The church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community—reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond to the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives, encouraging people in developing their relationship with God, providing opportunities for them to strengthen and grow that relationship in spiritual formation, and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.

In carrying out its mission, adequate provision should be made to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness by: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the church; and (5) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.

¶ **332. ORGANIZATION.**

1. The basic organizational plan for our church may be designed by church council in such a manner that it provides for a comprehensive program of nurture, outreach and witness to all. In addition to a charge conference, the church must have a church council as a governing board. The charge conference shall determine how to allocate the other responsibilities outlined in these Bylaws.
2. Members of Church Council shall be persons of genuine Christian character who love the church, are morally disciplined, are committed to the mandate of inclusiveness in the life of the church, are loyal to the ethical standards of First Methodist Church and are competent to administer its affairs. It should include confirmed youth and young adult members chosen according to the same standards as adults. All persons with vote must be members of the church. The pastor(s) shall be the administrative officer(s) of the church and, as such, shall be an ex officio member(s) of all conferences, boards, councils, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless otherwise restricted by these Bylaws.

¶ **333. THE CHARGE CONFERENCE.**

1. The charge conference shall therefore be organized from the church and shall meet at least annually.
2. The membership of the charge conference shall be all members of the church council and any others as may be designated in these Bylaws. The Church Council shall fix the time and place of

the meetings of the charge conference and the chairperson shall preside at the meetings of the charge conference or may designate another church officer to preside.

3. The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.
4. Special sessions may be called by the pastor after consultation with Church Council. The purpose of such special session shall be stated in writing and duly announced to the congregation, and only such business shall be transacted as is in harmony with the purposes stated in the call. Any such special session may be convened as a church conference.
5. Notice of time and place of a regular or special session of the charge conference shall be given at least ten days in advance by three or more of the following (except as local laws may otherwise provide): from the pulpit of the church, in its weekly bulletin, in a local church publication, by email, or by mail.
6. The Church Conference. To encourage broader participation by members of the church, the charge conference may be convened as a church conference, extending the vote to all professing members of the local church present at such meetings for instances such as: selling all or part of the church property in excess of \$150,000, borrowing a sum of money in excess of \$150,000, spending more than \$150,000 on one project, affiliating with a denomination, changing the official name of the church, amending these Bylaws, and hiring a full time senior or associate pastor. Other Church Conferences may be called at the discretion of the Church Council or following the written request to the Church Council by one of the following: the pastor, or 10 percent of the professing members of the church. In any case a copy of the request shall be given to the pastor. Additional regulations governing the call and conduct of the charge conference shall apply also to the church conference.

¶ 334. POWERS AND DUTIES.

1. The charge conference may, in consultation with and upon the approval of the Church Council, modify the organizational plans, provided that the provisions of ¶¶ 336-337 are observed.
2. The primary responsibilities of the charge conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, elect leaders, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of First Methodist Church.
3. The charge conference recording secretary shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and shall be the custodian of all records and reports and, with the Chair of Church Council, shall sign the minutes. A copy of the minutes shall be retained for church files.
4. The charge conference may establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all of the elected or appointed officers of the local church, unless these Bylaws set a specific limit. It is recommended that no officer serve more than three consecutive years in the same office.
5. The charge conference shall examine and recommend candidates for ordained ministry who have been professing members in good standing of First Methodist Church for at least one year; whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and call to the ministry clearly establish them as candidates; and who have met the educational requirements. It is out of the faith and witness of the congregation that men and women respond to God's call to ordained ministry. Our church should intentionally nurture candidates for ordained ministry, providing for spiritual and financial support, and for their education and formation as servant leaders for the ministry of the whole people of God.
6. The charge conference shall examine and recommend, faithfully adhering to the provisions of these Bylaws, renewal of candidacy of candidates for the ordained ministry.
7. The charge conference shall receive reports annually on all local church organized mission teams and shall forward the combined report through the regular annual local church statistical report.
8. The charge conference shall, in consultation with the Staff Parish Relations Committee, set the compensation of the clergy.
9. The charge conference shall receive and act on the annual report from the pastor concerning the church's membership.

10. The charge conference shall promote awareness of and concurrence with the Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (§§ 101- 109), and with policies relative to the Social Witness of the church (§§ 201-202).

11. When authorized by the Church Council the charge conference may provide for the sponsoring of satellite congregations and the planting of new faith communities.

¶ **335. ELECTION OF LEADERS.** The church conference shall elect by simple majority vote leaders as needed to fulfill the mission of the church. In filling the offices of the church, special attention should be given to the inclusion of women, men, youth, young adults, persons over sixty-five years of age, persons with disabilities, and persons of various racial, ethnic, or tribal identities. Church offices may be shared between two persons.

¶ **336. REMOVAL OF OFFICERS AND FILLING OF VACANCIES.** If a leader or officer who has been elected by the charge conference is unable or unwilling to perform the duties reasonably expected of such a leader or officer, the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee shall meet as soon as possible to fulfill that vacancy. If the charge conference votes to remove a person or persons from office, the vacancy(ies) shall be filled in the manner prescribed for elections.

¶ **337. DUTIES OF LEADERS**

1. Out of the professing membership of the church, there shall be elected by the charge conference one or more *lay leader(s)* who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church and shall have the following responsibilities:
 - a. Fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;
 - b. Meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;
 - c. Serving as a member of the charge conference and the church council, the Finance Committee, the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee, and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
 - d. Continuing involvement in study and training opportunities to develop a growing understanding of the Church's reason for existence and the types of ministry that will most effectively fulfill the Church's mission;
 - e. Assisting in advising the church council of opportunities available and the needs expressed for more effective ministry of the church through its laity in the community;
 - f. The lay leader, at the discretion of Nominations and Leadership Development, may also serve as the chairperson of the church council or other governing body.
2. The *church council chairperson* shall be elected by the charge conference annually and shall have the following responsibilities:
 - a. Leading the council in fulfilling its responsibilities;
 - b. Preparing and communicating the agenda of the council meetings in consultation with the pastor(s), lay leader, and other appropriate persons;
 - c. Reviewing and assigning responsibility for the implementation of actions taken by the council;
 - d. Communicating with members of the council and others as appropriate to permit informed action at council meetings;
 - e. Coordinating the various activities of the council;
 - f. Providing initiative and leadership for the council as it engages in planning, establishing of objectives and goals, and evaluating ministry;
 - g. The church council chairperson shall be entitled to attend meetings of all boards and

committees of the church unless specifically limited by these Bylaws.

¶ 338. THE CHURCH COUNCIL.

1. The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a ministry of evangelizing and spreading scriptural holiness through nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The church council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the charge conference.
2. Mission and Ministry—Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:
 - a. The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.
 - b. The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries and missions of compassion, justice, and advocacy.
 - c. The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.
 - d. The leadership development and resourcing ministries shall give attention to the ongoing preparation and development of lay and clergy leaders for the ministry of the church.
3. Meetings
 - a. The council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings.
 - b. The council should make should decisions by trying to achieve a consensus driven by the Holy Spirit. If, in the opinion of the chair, a consensus cannot be achieved, then the Council may make a decision by voting with a simple majority as the standard.
4. Other Responsibilities—It will also be the responsibility of the church council to:
 - a. Review the membership of the local church;
 - b. Fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the annual charge conference;
 - c. Establish the budget on recommendation of the Finance Committee and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;
 - d. Recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee;
 - e. Review the recommendation of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee regarding provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s), and report the same to the charge conference for approval. Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration.
5. The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. Members of the church council shall be involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation. The membership of the council may consist of as few as eight persons or as many as the charge conference deems appropriate. The membership shall include but not be limited to the chairs of the committees responsible for pastor-parish relations, the finances of the church, the management of the church's properties and assets, the lay leader, and all appointed clergy.
6. Quorum—The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Section VIII. Local Church Administrative Committees

¶ 339. NOMINATIONS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

As the charge conference determines, there may be elected annually by that conference a Nominations and Leadership Development Committee or its equivalent that is composed of professing members of the church or the committee's responsibilities may be assigned to a different group. The responsibility of this committee is to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership for the congregation. Members of the committee shall engage in and be attentive to developing and enhancing their own Christian spiritual life in light of the mission of the Church. In conducting its work, the committee shall engage in biblical and theological reflection on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of the local church. It shall provide a means of identifying the spiritual gifts and abilities of the church's members. The committee shall work with the church council to determine the diverse ministry tasks of the congregation and the skills needed for leadership.

- a. The Nominations and Leadership Development Committee shall serve throughout the year to guide the church council on matters regarding the leadership (other than employed staff) of the congregation, so as to focus on mission and ministry as the context for service; guide the development and training of spiritual leaders; recruit, nurture and support spiritual leaders; and assist the church council in assessing changing leadership needs.
- b. The committee shall recommend to the charge conference, at its annual session, the names of people to serve as officers and leaders of designated ministries of the church council required for the work of the church and as these Bylaws require or as the charge conference deems necessary to its work.
- c. The pastor shall be the chairperson. A layperson elected by the committee shall serve as the vice chairperson of the committee.
- d. To secure experience and stability, the membership may be divided into three classes, one of which would be elected each year for a three-year term. Retiring members of the committee shall not succeed themselves. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. When vacancies occur during the year, successors shall be elected by the church council.
- e. In the identification and selection process, care shall be given that the leadership of ministries reflects inclusivity and diversity.

¶ 340. STAFF-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE.

1. As the charge conference determines, there may be elected annually by that conference a Staff Parish Relations Committee composed of professing members of the church. People serving on this committee must be engaged in and attentive to their Christian spiritual development to give proper leadership in the committee's responsibilities. In conducting its work, the committee shall identify and clarify its values for ministry. It shall engage in biblical and theological reflection on the mission of the church, the primary task and ministries of the local church, and on the role and work of the pastor(s) and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities.

2. No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. The lay leader is automatically a member of the committee.

3. To secure experience and stability, the membership may be divided into three classes, one of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The lay leader is exempt from the three-year term on this committee. Members of the committee may succeed themselves for a second three-year term. When vacancies occur during the year, the church council shall elect successors.

4. The committee shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the church council, the pastor, any other person accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. The committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor. The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee, except where he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself. The committee may meet with the Church Council Chair without the minister under consideration being present. However,

the minister under consideration shall be notified prior to such meeting and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter. The committee shall meet in closed session and information shared in the committee shall be confidential.

5. The duties of the committee shall include the following:
 - a. To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor(s) and staff and their family(ies).
 - b. To promote unity in the church.
 - c. To confer with and counsel the pastor(s) and staff on matters pertaining to their effectiveness in ministry; assessing their unique gifts and abilities; priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time; relationships with the congregation; the person's health and self-care, including conditions that may impede their effectiveness of ministry; and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry to the congregation, while interpreting the congregation's needs, values, and traditions to the pastor(s) and staff.
 - d. To provide evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastor(s) and staff to enhance their effective ministry and to identify continuing educational needs and plans.
 - e. To develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for associate pastors and other staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor. The term associate pastor is used as a general term to indicate any pastoral role in the church other than the pastor in charge. Committees are encouraged to develop specific titles for associate pastors that reflect the job descriptions and expectations.
 - f. To arrange with the church council for the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education, self-care, and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth, and to encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization.
 - g. To recognize and encourage any church member who may be experiencing God's calling into ordained ministry or missionary service, recognizing that First Methodist Church affirms the biblical and theological support of persons regardless of gender, race, ethnic or tribal origin, or disabilities for these ministries. The committee shall provide to the charge conference a list of persons who are preparing for ordained ministry, lay ministry, and/or missionary service, and shall maintain contact with these persons, supplying the charge conference with a progress report on each person.
 - h. After consultation with the pastor, to communicate with the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee when there is a need for other leaders, and/or the church council when there is a need for employed staff, to work in areas where utilization of the gifts of the pastor(s) or staff proves an inappropriate stewardship of time (cf. Acts 6:2).
 - i. The committee and the pastor shall recommend to the church council a written statement of policies and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not ordained clergy. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss non-appointed personnel. The committee shall further recommend to the church council a provision for adequate health and life insurance and severance pay for all lay employees. In addition, the committee shall recommend that the church council provide an equitable pension with local church contribution for eligible lay employees. The church council shall have authority to provide such retirement benefits through a qualified, licensed program. Members of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee shall keep themselves informed of personnel matters related to professional standards, liability issues, and civil law. They are responsible for communicating and interpreting such matters to staff. Committee members should make themselves available for educational and training opportunities that will enable them to be effective in their work.

- j. To consult on matters pertaining to pulpit supply, proposals for compensation, travel expense, vacation, health and life insurance, retirement, housing (which may be a church-owned parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of parsonage), continuing education, and other practical matters affecting the work and families of the pastor and staff, and to make annual recommendations regarding such matters to the church council, reporting budget items to the Finance Committee. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The committee will follow up to assure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health of the pastor or pastor's family. The chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and to give immediate resolution to parsonage issues affecting the family's health and well-being.

¶ **341. BOARD OF TRUSTEES.** There shall be a Board of Trustees, consisting of at least five professing members of the church representing the gender, race, and age of the congregation, provided that all members shall be of legal age as determined by the relevant and controlling civil law. The pastor shall be a member with voice but without vote of the Board of Trustees and may not be counted for the purpose of achieving a quorum or calculating a majority.

1. *Election of Trustees.* Members of the Board of Trustees of the congregation will be elected by the charge or church conference to a three-year term, equally divided into three classes, with one-third elected each year. A member of the Board of Trustees may be re-elected for no more than one additional term, and no member may serve longer than six consecutive years.
2. *Vacancies and Removal of Trustees.* Should a trustee withdraw from the membership of the church or be excluded therefrom, trusteeship therein shall automatically cease from the date of such withdrawal or exclusion. Should a trustee of the church be unable to carry out his/her responsibilities, or when he or she refuses to execute properly a legal instrument relating to any property of the church when directed to do so by the charge conference, and when all legal requirements have been satisfied in reference to such execution, the charge conference may by majority vote declare the trustee's membership on the Board of Trustees or Board vacated. Vacancies occurring in the Board of Trustees shall be filled by election for the unexpired term. A vacancy other than the preceding that occurs ad interim may be filled until the next charge conference by the church council.
3. *Organization.* The Board of Trustees may organize as follows:
 - a. Within thirty days after the beginning of the calendar or conference year (whichever applies to the term of office), the Board of Trustees shall convene at a time and place designated by the chairperson or the vice chairperson for the purpose of electing officers of the board for the ensuing year and transacting any other business properly brought before it.
 - b. The board shall elect from its members, to hold office for a term of one year or until their successors shall be elected, a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and, if need requires, a treasurer; provided, however, that the chairperson and vice chairperson shall not be members of the same class; and provided further, that the offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the same person. The charge conference may, if it is necessary to conform to the local laws, substitute the designations *president* and *vice president* in place of *chairperson* and *vice chairperson*.
 - c. Where necessary as a result of the incorporation of the church, the corporation directors, in addition to electing officers as provided above, shall ratify and confirm by appropriate action and, if required by law, elect as officers of the corporation the treasurer(s) elected by the charge conference in accordance with the provisions of the *Bylaws*. If more than one account is maintained in the name of the corporation in any financial institution(s), each such account and the treasurer thereof shall be appropriately designated.
4. *Meetings.* The board shall meet at the call of the pastor or of its chairperson at least 4 times per year at such times and places as designated in the meeting notice at least one week prior to the appointed

time of the meeting. Waiver of notice may be used as a means to validate meetings legally where the usual notice is impracticable. A majority of the members of the Board of Trustees shall constitute a quorum.

5. *Powers and Limitations.* The board shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

a. Oversight, and care of all real property owned by the church and of all property and equipment acquired directly by the local church or by any group, board, class, commission, or similar organization connected with it. The Board shall not, however, violate the rights the church organization elsewhere granted in the *Bylaws*, nor prevent or interfere with the pastor in the use of any of the said property for religious services or other proper meetings or purposes recognized by the law, usages, and customs of the church.

b. The use of the congregation's facilities or properties by an outside organization may be granted by the Board of Trustees after consideration of whether the purposes and programs of that organization are consistent with the values of the congregation and Bylaws.

c. Should the congregation possess a parsonage offered to the pastor for housing, the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson or designee of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and to give immediate resolution to parsonage issues affecting the family's health and well-being. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The Board of Trustees are responsible to ensure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health and well-being of the pastor or pastor's family and shall provide that the parsonage be maintained in good condition.

d. Subject to the direction of the charge conference, the Board of Trustees shall receive and administer all bequests made to the church, shall receive and administer all trusts, and shall invest all trust funds of the local church in conformity with laws of the country, state, or political unit in which the church is located. Nevertheless, upon notice to the Board of Trustees, the charge conference may delegate the power, duty, and authority to receive, administer, and invest bequests, trusts, and trust funds to a permanent endowment committee or to the church foundation.

e. The board shall conduct an annual accessibility audit of their buildings, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify any existing physical, architectural, or communication barriers that impede the full participation of people with disabilities and shall make plans and determine priorities for the elimination of all such barriers.

6. *Annual Report.* The board shall annually make a written report to the charge conference, in which shall be included the following:

- a. The legal description and the reasonable valuation of each parcel of real estate owned by the church;
- b. The specific name of the grantor in each deed of conveyance of real estate to the church.
- c. An inventory and the reasonable valuation of all personal property owned by the local church.
- d. The amount of income received from any income-producing property and a detailed list of expenditures in connection therewith; The amount received during the year for building, rebuilding, remodeling, and improving real estate, and an itemized statement of expenditures;
- e. Outstanding capital debts, payoff date, and how contracted;
- f. A detailed statement of the insurance carried on each parcel of real estate, indicating whether restricted by co-insurance or other limiting conditions and whether adequate insurance is carried;
- g. The name of the custodian of all legal papers of the church, and where they are kept;
- h. A detailed list of all trusts in which the church is the beneficiary, specifying where and how the funds are invested
- i. An evaluation of all church properties, including the chancel areas, to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities, and when applicable, a plan and timeline for resolving barriers to accessibility.

¶ 342. FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. As the charge conference determines, there will be elected annually by that conference a Finance Committee or its equivalent composed of the committee chairperson, the pastor(s), the chairperson of the church council, the chairperson or designee of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, a representative of the Board of Trustees to be selected by that board, the chairperson of the ministry group on stewardship (if any), the lay leader(s), the financial secretary, the treasurer, the church business administrator (if any), and other members to be added as the charge conference may determine.

Alternatively, the committee's responsibilities may be assigned to a different group. The chairperson of the Finance Committee shall be a member of the church council. The financial secretary, treasurer, and church business administrator, if paid employees, shall be members without vote. The positions of treasurer and financial secretary may not be combined and held by one person, and the persons holding these two positions should not be immediate family members. No immediate family members of any clergy may serve as treasurer, Finance Committee chair, financial secretary, counter, or serve in any paid or unpaid position under the responsibilities of the Finance Committee. These restrictions would apply only to the church where the clergy serves.

2. The Finance Committee shall oversee the stewardship of financial resources as their priority throughout the year, seeking as part of the ministry of discipleship to move members toward tithing and beyond, with an attitude of generosity.

3. All financial requests to be included in the annual budget of the church shall be submitted to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall compile annually a complete budget for the church and submit it to the church council for review and adoption. The Finance Committee shall be charged with responsibility for developing and implementing plans that will raise sufficient income to meet the budget adopted by the church council. It shall administer the funds received according to instructions from the church council. The committee shall carry out the church council's directions in guiding the treasurer(s) and financial secretary.

4. The committee shall designate at least two persons not of one immediate family residing in the same household to count the offering. They shall work under the supervision of the financial secretary. A record of all funds received shall be given to the financial secretary and treasurer. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in accordance with the procedures established by the Finance Committee. The financial secretary shall keep records of the contributions and payments.

5. The church treasurer(s) shall disburse all money contributed to causes represented in the church budget, and such other funds and contributions as the church council may determine. The church treasurer shall make regular and detailed reports on funds received and expended to the Finance Committee and the church council. The treasurer(s) shall be adequately bonded.

6. The Finance Committee shall establish written financial policies to document the internal controls of the local church (see below). The written financial policies should be reviewed for adequacy and effectiveness annually by the Finance Committee and submitted as a report to the charge conference annually.

7. The committee shall make provision for an annual audit of the financial statements of the church and all its organizations and accounts. The committee shall make a full and complete report to the annual charge conference. A church audit is defined as an independent evaluation of the financial reports and records and the internal controls of the church by a qualified person or persons. The audit shall be conducted to reasonably verify the accuracy and reliability of financial reporting, determine whether assets are being safeguarded, and determine compliance with local law, church policies and procedures, and the *Bylaws*.

The audit may include: 1) a review of the cash and investment reconciliations; 2) interviews with the treasurer, financial secretary, pastor(s), Finance Committee chair, business manager, those who count offerings, church secretary, etc., with inquiries regarding compliance with existing written financial policies and procedures; 3) a review of journal entries and authorized check signers for each checking and investment account; and 4) other procedures requested by the Finance Committee.

The audit shall be performed by an audit committee composed of persons unrelated to the persons listed in 2 above or by an independent certified public accountant (CPA), accounting firm, or equivalent.

8. The committee shall recommend to the church council proper depositories for the church's funds. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in the name of the church.

9. ~~Contributions designated for specific causes and objects shall be promptly forwarded according to the intent of the donor and shall not be retained or used for any other purpose.~~ Upon recommendation of the NCLL, replace with: The church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. If the church receives a designated contribution for these funds or for any other designated purpose, the church will attempt to honor the designation; however, all designated contributions shall be deemed advisory rather than legally mandatory in nature and shall remain subject to the control and discretion of the trustees and the church council.

10. After the budget of the church has been approved, additional appropriations or changes in the budget must be approved by the church council.

11. The committee shall prepare at least annually a report to the church council of all designated funds that are separate from the current expense budget.

First Methodist Church Myrtle Beach FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Policies

A. Segregation of Duties-The Three-Legged Stool of Internal Control:

If one handles cash, one cannot post the books. A person who neither handles cash nor posts the books should reconcile the bank accounts.

B. Delineation of Duties

i. Church Administrator

- delivers all cash deposits to the bank in a locked bank bag
- approves all invoices for Church and CDM
- responsible for accurate payroll

ii. Church Financial Secretary

- unlocks the safe along with A/R Clerk
- posts monies received in offering
- scans all FMCMB checks to the bank
- retrieves checks from CDM and scans to bank -ensures MICR numbers are redacted with indelible marker on all copied checks (which are retained and then destroyed after ninety days)
- reviews CDM payments posted by CDM Director/ Asst Director and reconciles with bank deposits
- reviews bank records the day after cash deposits to confirm accuracy
- prints checks for payables

iii. A/R Clerk

- unlocks safe along with Church Financial Secretary
- observes money counters but does not count or handle cash

iv. CDM Director

- along with Asst Director or designated staff can receive and post checks to CDM software

- and give receipt to payor
 - submits invoices to Church Administrator for approval and payment
- v. CDM Assistant Director
- may receive and post checks to CDM software and provide receipt to payor
 - monitors time clock and confirms accuracy of biweekly payroll
- vi. Money Counters
- two counters, approved by the Church Administrator, meet on Monday morning at the church to count the offering. The offering is counted twice with counters facing each other in the presence of the A/R Clerk
 - record and sign deposit total
 - return counted monies back to safe if not immediately taken to the bank by Church Administrator
- vii. Ushers
- ushers are instructed not to transfer/consolidate monies from one collection plate to another
 - two ushers should cover balcony and the two should carry money down stairs together
 - two ushers place offering in sealed envelope and immediately deposit in church safe
 - two ushers collect communion offering immediately after the service, place in sealed envelope and deposit in safe
- viii. Check Signers
- Church Administrator
 - Money Counters approved by Administrator
- ix. Finance Committee Treasurer
- reviews monthly bank statements and reports to Finance Committee

C. Financial Audit

- The church's financial books will undergo an annual "review" from an outside agency, and a full audit after years ending in zero or five commencing in 2030. A full audit may also be undertaken in the event of a change in Lead Pastor, Church Administrator or CDM Director

II. Procedures

A. First Methodist Church Myrtle Beach

- i. Two ushers place offering in sealed envelope and immediately deposit in church safe
- ii. Church Administrator and Financial Secretary use their two keys to unlock safe in the presence of the A/R Clerk and money counters
- iii. Two ushers collect communion offering immediately after the service, place in sealed envelope and deposit in safe.
- iv. On Monday morning, two money counters transfer the money from the safe to a secure room, and in the presence of the A/R Clerk, count the money twice while facing each other at all times
- v. Deposit total is recorded and signed by the two money counters
- vi. Checks are scanned by Financial Secretary, copied and MICR numbers redacted with indelible marker. Copied checks are held in secure place for ninety days and then destroyed
- vii. Money is transported by Church Administrator to the bank in a locked bag. Administrator returns a deposit slip to Financial Secretary who confirms accuracy with bank records the following day
- viii. Online giving will be encouraged to improve efficiency, safety and accuracy
- ix. Invoices are approved for payment by Church Administrator. Checks are processed by Financial Secretary. Two signatures are required on all checks

- x. Church Administrator verifies accuracy of payroll as prepared by the payroll service on biweekly basis

B. Child Development Ministry

- i. CDM will convert to cashless payments by October 1, 2024
- ii. Checks are received and recorded into CDM software by Director, Asst. Director or authorized personnel. A receipt is printed and given to payor.
- iii. Checks are scanned to bank by Financial Secretary, copied and MICR numbers redacted with indelible marker. Copied checks are held secure place for ninety days and then destroyed
- iv. Invoices are submitted to and approved by Church Administrator. Checks are processed by Financial Secretary. Two Signatures are required on all checks.
- v. Asst. Director monitors the biometric time clock that is connected to payroll service (Accuchex). Asst Director verifies accuracy of payrolls provided biweekly by payroll serviced attests to its accuracy in a communication with Church Administrator.

¶ **343. OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM COMMITTEES.** The church council may recommend such other committees it deems advisable, whose members are to be elected by the charge conference, including but not limited to: communications committee, discipleship committee, records and history committee, missions committee, memorial gifts committee, and ministries that address the unique needs and interests of both women and men.

ARTICLE 5 LAY AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

¶ 401. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH.⁴

1. The church's ministry is derived from the ministry of Christ, who bids all people to receive salvation and follow Him as disciples in the way of love. This summons to ministry is to the whole people of God, or Laity (*laos*) who are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession," charged to "declare the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness and into His wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9) Baptism initiates this call to ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

2. All Laity and Clergy may serve in various offices. Offices of ministry refer to what followers of Christ do for the general building up of the body of Christ. Offices include, but are not limited to, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, administrators, miracle workers, healers, and helpers (Eph. 4:11-13, and 1 Cor. 12:28). The Holy Spirit works in and through a call to ministry and the subsequent discernment and affirmation of that call by the church.

¶ **402. ORDERS OF MINISTRY.** Clergy are those who have been called out from among God's people for particular service to His church. A calling from God may take many expressions and come at any age in the life of an individual. Scripture bears witness to both the young (1 Samuel 3) and those who are older (Genesis 12 and Exodus 3) being summoned by God into His work, as well as men and women, and those whose encounters with God were sudden and dramatic and those whose call may have been more gradual, naturally unfolding over a period of many years. In addition to those specifically charged with preaching and teaching (I Peter 5:1-4), the early church also set apart seven disciples who were "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" to distribute food to the widows among them (Acts 6:1-6). Individuals such as Stephen, Phoebe, and Timothy, served in various ways to benefit the people of God. Ordination is the action by which the church sets apart those who have been so elected to a particular order of ministry for the good of the whole

b. _____

⁴ Paragraphs 401-411 are taken from the Book of Doctrines and Disciplines of the Global Methodist Church to serve as a guide for our pulpit committee if the church needs to call a minister.

church. Ordination is conferred by the laying on of hands by a bishop and others among the people of God in conference.

Some are called to carry on the historic work of the *presbyteros* or elder in the life of the Church to the ministry of Word, Service, Sacrament, and Order. Those called to the ministry of elder bear authority and responsibility to proclaim God's Word fearlessly, to teach God's people faithfully, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church so that it may be both faithful and fruitful. Elders retain their calling as Laity to witness and service in the world, as well as their call to word, service, compassion, and justice among the people of God.

¶ 403-408. BASIC QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE ORDAINED: (see addendum for ¶ 403-408)

¶ 409. LEAVES OF ABSENCE:

1. *Sabbatical Leave.* Clergy who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years may be granted sabbatical leave for a program of study, travel, or renewal. Sabbatical leaves of three months or less may be granted by the pastor-parish relations committee, with the approval of the church council. Compensation for the clergy during a sabbatical of three months or less shall be continued by the local church. Longer sabbaticals shall be the responsibility of the individuals involved, though the support of congregations and others is encouraged.

2. *Maternity and Paternity Leave.* Any clergy member (including both spouses in a clergy couple) may request maternity or paternity leave for up to three months at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption or fostering. Such leave shall be granted by the pastor-parish relations committee. During the leave, the clergyperson's status will remain unchanged, and the health and benefit plans will remain in force. Compensation shall be provided by the salary-paying unit for no less than two months of leave, and additional ordained elders shall provide for the pastoral needs of the congregation, as appropriate.

¶ 410. SENIOR STATUS. Following the scriptural pattern, there is no retirement for clergy or laity from the work of God's Kingdom. However, clergy persons serving in appointments may choose senior status with the approval of Church Council. There is no mandatory age for such status.

¶ 411. CALLING A PASTOR⁵: Upon the resignation, death, or dismissal of a pastor, the church shall seek a candidate who subscribes to the statement of faith and bylaw provisions of the church and whose life aligns with the qualifications of a pastor as described in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The church shall abide by the following guidelines for calling a pastor:

1. The church council shall work in conjunction with SPRC to establish a pastoral selection committee to consist of 11 members elected by a majority vote of the church council. Special care should be given to include on the pastoral selection committee a diversity of church members including men and women, at least one adult under the age of 35 and special care should be taken to include equal representation from the Contemporary and Traditional Worship Services. The pastoral selection committee shall interview potential candidates and will only consider those who completely subscribe to the statement of faith and who have read these bylaws.

2. The process for selecting a pastoral candidate shall include, at a minimum, the following: a background check, a credit check, three reference checks, and the filling out of a detailed application that explains the potential candidate's philosophy of ministry as well as the candidate's educational transcripts and positions on issues of doctrinal significance see paragraphs 101-108 and 401-407.

b. _____

⁵ This paragraph is recommended by the National Center for Life and Liberty (NCLL), with whom our Lay Advisory Committee and Church Council partnered to lead us through the legal requirements of the disaffiliation process.

3. The pastoral selection committee receives applications and resumes, conducts interviews, and selects the top 2-3 candidates to preach on separate Sunday mornings at regularly scheduled services. Church members who are interested in giving feedback are invited to attend a question and answer session with each candidate. The pastoral selection committee receives feedback from church members, and then recommends the top candidate to the congregation at a church conference where all members of the church are eligible to vote. A simple majority vote of those in attendance at the church conference is needed in order to hire the new pastor.
4. Notice from the pulpit must be given 2 consecutive Sundays prior to a formal candidate's preaching service(s), and 2 consecutive Sundays prior to the church membership vote.

ARTICLE 6⁶
EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

- A. Purpose: The church believes that the home and church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. To help fulfill this responsibility of imparting biblical truth and furthering the Great Commission, this church shall establish and maintain an educational program (either a Sunday School and/or a weekday educational program) for the purposes of winning souls to Christ and teaching Bible doctrine, Godly worship, and biblical Christian living. To this end, the church shall engage in educational ministries.
- B. Church Participation: All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by the church shall be primarily for the benefit of the members of the church; however, the pastor and church council, on behalf of the church, may permit non-church members to participate in church educational programs or courses of instruction if they deem it in the best interests of the church.
- C. Agreement with Statement of Faith: All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of the church and shall be taught and presented in full agreement with the statement of faith of the church and the Word of God. The church shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer for its educational programs who fails to adhere to or who expresses disagreement with the statement of faith or who adopts or lives a lifestyle inconsistent with the beliefs and practices of the statement of the faith, whether in or out of the classroom.

ARTICLE 7
COLUMBARIUM

A. POLICIES AND OPERATION RULES

The columbarium of First Methodist Church of Myrtle Beach (“Church”) is located on the premises of the Church for the inurnment of the cremated remains of eligible deceased persons. It will include a Memorial Wall dedicated to the memory of eligible persons whose remains are buried or scattered elsewhere.

The following Policy and Operating Rules (“Policy”) is established to assure that the procedures for inurnment and memorializing are carried out in an orderly and reverent manner, and to describe and explain the services provided by the Church in connection with these activities.

1. DESCRIPTION: The Columbarium shall consist of niches. Uniform in height and width, for the inurnment of the ashes of cremated humans. Each niche shall be covered with a granite plate, uniform in size, which shall be engraved with the name and dates of birth and death of the deceased person. The Memorial Wall will have plaques of uniform size to memorialize other

- b. _____

⁶ Recommended by the NCLL

deceased persons. The Memorial will show names and dates of birth and death of the deceased only.

2. **ELIGIBILITY:** The Columbarium shall be restricted to the inurnment of (a) member(s) of First Methodist Church of Myrtle Beach, (b) spouses of members, (c) children or step-children of members, (d) parents or step-parents of members, (e) current or past ministers of the Church, and (f) other persons with strong ties to the Church if approved by the Trustee Committee after a written request. Plaques on the Memorial Wall must meet the same criteria.
3. **PURCHASE OF NICHES OR PLAQUES:** Niches within the columbarium may be purchased only of members of this church and / or their immediate families or persons of close ties as outlined above. Designation of the person to be inurned may be changed by a request in writing from the purchaser at any time prior to death. An unused niche may be surrendered by the purchase for refund, only upon written notification to the Church. The formula for a refund of an unused niche is 5% per year for each year since purchase, not to exceed 50% of the original cost. Plaques on the Memorial Wall with inscription of names of eligible deceased persons as outlines above will be recognized upon donation to the Columbarium Fund of the Church according to the donation schedule prescribed by the Committee. Placement of the memorial plaques shall be made by the Committee. The legal title of all niches and plaques shall at all times remain with the Church. No ownership in the Columbarium and its property is involved. Each columbarium niche will be assigned a specific number. Specific niches for the inurnment of cremated remains may be purchased by eligible persons upon payment of designated fees and execution of required documents at the time of purchase. The schedule of current required fees and payments is at the end of this document. The Committee has the authority to change these fees.
Any niche not previously purchased may be selected by the purchaser. Purchase may not be transferred to another person without prior written permission of the Committee. There is a contract form for the purchase of the niches. (see CONTRACT FOR PURCHASE AND PERPETUAL CARE).
4. **MANAGEMENT:** The Church will receive all payments and disburse all expenditures in a separate account to be known as the “Columbarium Fund” apart from and entirely separate from the general church budget. Distributions can be made from the Columbarium fund into the Church’s general fund, or any other designated fund, upon the decision of the Church Council, as long as the Columbarium fund retains a minimum balance necessary for the appropriate maintenance and expansion of the Columbarium (minimum amount determined by committee). Appropriate annual audits and reviews will be performed in accordance with the Church’s regular accounting procedures.
The Columbarium niche will be appropriately sealed. The Church will monitor, maintain and secure the Columbarium and the contents of each niche as it does its other property. The Church assumes responsibility for the ashes or urns in the Columbarium. The ashes and urns are not covered by the Church’s insurance.
5. **ADDRESSES:** It shall be the responsibility of the purchaser to keep the Church advised at all times of the current mailing addresses of themselves, the person for whom the niche is purchased, and of the next of kin of the designee.
6. **INURNMENT:** Memorial services for the inurnment of cremated remains will be designed by the senior pastor in consultation with the family of the deceased. No ashes will be inurned in the niche without a Christian service. Only one individual can be inurned in a niche. Only an ordained clergy person approved by the senior pastor may conduct the inurnment ceremony.
 - a. Urns: The urn containing the cremated remains of the person to be inurned in the Columbarium shall be provided by the deceased’s family or legal representative, and the provider shall be responsible for the cost of the urn. The interior dimensions of the niches

are 11 7/8 inches high by 11 7/8 inches wide and 11 7/8 inches deep. The urns selected for use must be of proper size to fit in the niche.

b. Costs: The cost of cremation is not covered by any fee paid to the Church pursuant to these operating rules. The Church will not offer cremation services. No expenses other than those prescribed herein are covered by the prescribed fees.

c. Niche Covers: Engraving of niche covers will be of uniform size and style as prescribed by the Church. The Church will provide for such engraving as a part of the fee prescribed in the attached purchase price and payments. Each niche cover will be inscribed only with the name, date of birth and date of death of the deceased. No other inscriptions will be permitted. No flowers, flags, decorations or other memorabilia will be permitted on the niches or walls inside the Columbarium, except at the time of inurnment.

7. MEMORIAL WALL: Each plaque on the Memorial Wall will have the inscription "In Memory OF" followed by the name only of the deceased person and the date of birth and date of death. The placement and location of plaques will be made by the Committee.

The use, management and maintenance of the Columbarium shall be supervised by a permanent committee of the church. Membership shall consist of 9 members elected by the church council, each serving a staggered three-year term plus a member of the Trustees. The Church Administrator shall serve as an ex-officio member without vote. Members of the committee shall elect the chairperson of the Columbarium Committee in the same manner as the Trustees elect a chairperson per these Bylaws.

The Committee will have the authority to amend, change or modify the Policy, which shall govern all activities and services relating to the Columbarium, by simple majority vote as long as a quorum is present, with the additional approval of the Church Council.

8. PURCHASE PRICE AND PAYMENTS (Subject to change at the discretion of the Church Council)
- a. Purchase of a Columbarium niche : \$2,200
 - b. Donation for a plaque of the Memorial Wall: \$500
 - c. Arrangements for the purchase of niches and donations to the Columbarium Fund will be made through the Church Office.

The Previous Article 8 Designated Contributions was moved to the section about the Finance Committee upon recommendation of the NCLL and our Church Council

ARTICLE 8⁷

8 CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

A. Purpose: The purpose of this conflict-of-interest policy is to protect the church's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the church or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state or federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Definitions

1. Interested Person: Any director, officer, or member of a committee with governing church council-delegated powers who has a direct or indirect financial interest.
2. Financial interest: A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:

b. _____

⁷ Recommended by the NCLL

⁸ Recommended by the NCLL

- a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the church has a transaction or arrangement;
 - b. A compensation arrangement with the church or with any individual or entity with which the church has a transaction or arrangement; or
 - c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the church is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.
 - d. A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. A person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the church council of directors decides that a conflict of interest exists.
3. Compensation: Direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

B. Procedures

1. Duty to Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the church council and, if applicable, members of committees with governing church council-delegated powers considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.
2. Determining whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, including any presentations by and discussion with the interested person, he or she shall leave the church council or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest involving the transaction or arrangement is discussed and voted upon. The remaining church council shall decide, by a majority vote, if a conflict of interest exists.
3. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest
 - a. The chair of the church council shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
 - b. After exercising due diligence, the church council shall determine whether the church can obtain, with reasonable efforts, a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
 - c. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the church council shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested council members whether the transaction or arrangement is in the best interests of the church, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.
4. Violations of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy
 - a. If the church council or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
 - b. If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the church council determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.
5. Records of Proceedings
 - a. The minutes of the church council shall contain the names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the church council or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.
 - b. The minutes of the church council also shall contain the names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content

of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

6. Compensation
 - a. A voting member of the church council or any committee who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the church for services rendered may not vote on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.
 - b. A voting member of the church council or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the church, either individually or collectively, are not prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.
7. Annual Statements: Each member of a committee with governing church council-delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy; has read and understands the policy; has agreed to comply with the policy; and understands the organization is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption, it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.
8. Periodic Reviews: To ensure the organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:
 - a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information, and the result of arm's-length bargaining.
 - b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the church's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes, and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit, or an excess benefit transaction.
9. Use of Outside Experts: When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for above, the organization may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the church council of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

ARTICLE 9⁹

BINDING CHRISTIAN ARBITRATION

- A. Submission To Arbitration: Members of the church must agree to submit to binding Christian arbitration any legal matters within the church that cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bring any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.
- B. Arbitration Procedures: The procedures for arbitration shall be as adopted by the church council. If the church council has not adopted procedures, the church will use arbitration procedures provided by the National Center for Life and Liberty or other legal entity approved by Church Council. This arbitration provision is ecclesiastical and faith-based in nature and is intended to operate under the rules and guidelines of this local church. It is not intended to operate under any state or federal guidelines for arbitration.

b. _____
⁹ Recommended by the NCLL

ARTICLE 10¹⁰
TAX-EXEMPTION PROVISIONS

- A. Private Inurement: No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article I hereof.
- B. Political involvement: No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. To the extent prohibited by law, the church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. The pastor(s), in consultation with the lay leader(s), reserve the right to address moral issues in our society and beyond that address the will of God.
- C. Dissolution: Upon the dissolution of the church, no part of the organization's earnings or assets may inure to the benefit of any of its members; and the church council shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the church council shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to tax-exempt organizations that agree with the church's statement of faith.
- D. Nondiscrimination Policy: The church shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin; however, as a religious institution it reserves the right to deny or terminate employment or to deny or terminate any other status of persons whose lifestyle, words, actions or otherwise do not align with the church's statement of faith, standard of conduct or other policies of the church. This policy statement is not intended to waive the ministerial exception or any other exception or exemption to federal, state, or local antidiscrimination laws or regulations.
- E. Limitation of Activities: Notwithstanding any other provision of these bylaws, the church shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes stated in Article I.

ARTICLE 11¹¹
AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be revised or amended by a majority vote of the eligible members present and voting at a duly called church conference, provided that said revision or amendment is announced from the pulpit for at least two consecutive Sundays, and at least fourteen days before the vote is taken. Proposed amendments or changes must be made available to voting members for review at least one week prior to the meeting at which the vote to amend the bylaws will be taken. Amendments become effective immediately upon a majority vote approving the same.

These initial bylaws were recommended by church council and adopted by a majority vote of the church members present and voting at a duly called church conference on _____ (date).

b. _____

¹⁰ Recommended by the NCLL

¹¹ Recommended by the NCLL

Date

Church Council Chair

Date

Lay Leader

Date

Senior Pastor

Addendum
THE MINISTRY OF THE ORDAINED¹²

¶ 403. BASIC QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ORDAINED. Those to be ordained must meet the following qualifications:

- 1. Have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.
2. Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness consistent with the General Rules, including responsible self-control by exhibiting personal habits that are conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all relationships, fidelity in a Christian marriage between one man and one woman, chastity in singleness, social responsibility, and the knowledge and love of God.
3. Have a call by God and the people of God to devote themselves to the work of ministry.
4. Be able to effectively communicate the Christian faith.
5. Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the church.
6. Accept the authority of Scripture; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history and polity; possess the skills essential for the practice of ministry, and lead in making disciples of Jesus Christ.
7. Be accountable to the church, accept its doctrinal standards, discipline, and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to the ministry of oversight, and live in covenant with its ordained ministers.

¶ 404. ENTRANCE INTO ORDAINED MINISTRY.

- 1. Persons who hear a call to ordained ministry should meet with their local pastor and Staff-Parrish Relations Committee to inquire about candidacy. They must have held membership in a local Methodist church (or its predecessor) for at least one year and have a secondary school diploma or equivalent. Upon recommendation by two-thirds secret ballot of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee or equivalent, the person is presented to the Church Council for a vote by simple majority on whether to approve them for candidacy.

b. _____

¹² Paragraphs 403-411 are taken straight from the Book of Doctrines and Disciplines of the Global Methodist Church to serve as a guide for our pulpit committee if the church needs to call a minister.

2. Candidacy Discernment. After local church approval, the candidate shall spend a minimum of six months under the supervision of the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee in discernment, which must include a supervised internship or employment in a ministry setting. During this time, the candidate shall:

- a. Engage in discernment, including but not limited to, completion of a guidebook, mentoring, and participation in a small group with other candidates;
- b. Undergo a psychological evaluation, and background and credit check; and
- c. Upon completion of the minimum of six months of discernment, the candidate shall write a formal statement detailing his or her call to ordained ministry and submit it to the annual conference board of ministry.

3. The Staff-Parrish Relations Committee, or subgroup thereof, shall interview the candidate and the Church Council shall then vote on whether to certify the candidate by majority vote.

4. A certified candidate must undergo a period of spiritual formation under the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee until such time as the person is ordained a deacon.

¶ 405. EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION.

1. In order better to prepare leaders, the church requires candidates for ordination as deacons and elders to fulfill basic educational requirements as part of the ordination process. These educational requirements include the courses defined in 3.a. and 3.b. below: Ten courses (thirty credit hours) for those pursuing deacons orders, and ten additional courses (thirty credit hours) for those seeking elders orders defined in 4.a. below. Recognizing that educational opportunities vary based on geography and life circumstance, the Church will accept courses, singly or in combination, from any of the following degree programs, so long as the required courses are successfully completed for the level of ordination being pursued: an approved alternative educational pathway, a bachelor's degree program in ministry (for persons residing other than in the United States and Western Europe), a joint Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Divinity program, a program for a Master of Arts or equivalent degree in the practice of ministry, or a Master of Divinity degree program.

2. Recommended Educational Institutions. A list of schools for ministry education will be maintained by the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee. Candidates for ordination are strongly encouraged to choose from its list of recommended educational institutions, to complete educational requirements for ordination; however, candidates may complete their educational requirements at any accredited educational institution, including institutions not on the Staff-Parrish Relations recommended list. The Staff-Parrish Relations Committee must approve courses to fulfill the educational requirement for Methodist Theology and Denominational History and Polity. The Staff-Parrish Relations Committee will recommend competencies and courses for ministerial training, as well as establish standards for and supervise approved alternative educational pathways in conjunction with the Church Council.

3. Deacons Educational Requirements. A total of ten courses (30 credit hours) are required for those ordained as deacons.

- a. Courses in the following five areas are required for all persons seeking ordination as a deacon:
 1. Introduction to the Old Testament
 2. Introduction to the New Testament
 3. Christian Leadership/Conflict Resolution
 4. Methodist Theology
 5. Denominational History and Polity

In addition, those pastoring a church, or planning to pursue elder's orders shall be required to complete a course in Basics of Preaching.

b. Once a deacon has been ordained, a minimum of five further (four for those going on to ordination as an elder) courses will be required. Deacons may choose from courses in the following areas:

- Pastoral Care*
- Worship and Sacraments*

Apologetics*
 Evangelism and Missions*
 The Gospel Vision for Justice
 Christian Education & Discipleship
 Ministering to Children
 Models of Youth Ministry
 Church Finance and Administration
 Ministry in Intercultural Contexts
 Additional courses in Bible or theology

* required for deacons pastoring a local church/ planning to pursue elder's orders

These courses will be determined in consultation with the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee in consideration of the deacon's ministry setting. Failure to complete these additional courses within seven years will result in the deacon being placed on inactive status until the courses are completed.

4. Elders Educational Requirements. For deacons who wish to pursue elder's orders, a minimum of ten additional courses (beyond the ten already taken for ordination as deacon) will be required.

a. In addition to all courses required for the office of deacon, courses in the following six courses will be required prior to ordination as an elder.

History of Christianity through the Reformation
 History of Christianity, Reformation to the present
 Church Finance and Administration (if not already taken)
 Systematic Theology
 One elective course in Old Testament
 One elective course in New Testament

b. Following ordination as an elder, courses in additional four areas will be required to complete the educational requirements. These courses may be chosen from among the following areas:

A Theology Elective
 Mission and Church Renewal
 Media and Modern Applications
 Advanced Preaching
 Spiritual Formation
 Philosophy of Religion

c. Failure to complete these additional courses within seven years will result in the elder being placed on inactive status until the courses are completed.

5. The Staff-Parrish Relations Committee will determine whether courses at a given institution meet the requirements listed in this paragraph. Each Staff-Parrish Relations Committee shall certify that the courses taken by a person correspond sufficiently to these areas.

¶ 406. HISTORIC QUESTIONS.

In addition to whatever other questions may be asked, persons seeking ordination as deacon shall be evaluated during their interview by the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee or equivalent based upon their answers related to the following historic questions first asked about those desiring to be "traveling preachers":

"(1) Do they know God as pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?"

(2) Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?"

(3) Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service?"

As long as these marks occur in them, we believe that they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit."

Prior to ordination as elder, candidates shall provide the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee with written answers to the following questions historically asked by bishops since the time of John Wesley:

- (1) *Have you faith in Christ?*
- (2) *Are you going on to perfection?*
- (3) *Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?*
- (4) *Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?*
- (5) *Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to God's work?*
- (6) *Do you know the General Rules of our Church?*
- (7) *Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?*
- (8) *Have you studied the doctrines of the Methodist Church?*
- (9) *After full examination do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?*
- (10) *Will you preach and maintain them?*
- (11) *Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity?*
- (12) *Do you approve our church government and polity?*
- (13) *Will you support and maintain them?*
- (14) *Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?*
- (15) *Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?*
- (16) *Will you visit from house to house?*
- (17) *Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?*
- (18) *Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?*
- (19) *Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?*
- (20) *Will you observe the following directions?*
 - (a) *Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.*
 - (b) *Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.*

¶ 407. **ORDINATION AS A DEACON:** Within First Methodist Church, certified candidates must first be ordained as deacons and, after ordination as deacons, may be ordained as elders.

1. Ordination Questions. Upon completion of the educational requirements of ¶ 405 passing a deacon's level knowledge examination in doctrine, history, discipline, and Bible, a candidate for ordination as deacon shall be interviewed by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee or equivalent. During such interview, the candidate shall be asked the following questions:

- (a) *What is your personal experience of God?*
- (b) *What is your understanding of evil?*
- (c) *What is your understanding of grace?*
- (d) *How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and in the Church?*
- (e) *What is your understanding of the Kingdom of God?*
- (f) *What significance do you believe that the resurrection holds?*
- (g) *What is your understanding of the nature and authority of Scripture?*
- (h) *What is your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church?*
- (i) *What gifts and graces do you bring to the work of ministry?*
- (j) *What is the meaning of ordination?*
- (k) *What is the role and significance of the sacraments?*
- (l) *Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity and will you support and maintain it?*
- (m) *For the sake of the church's witness, are you willing to dedicate yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, exercising self-control in your personal habits, integrity in all of your relationships and if married, fidelity in your covenant with your spouse, or if single, chastity in your personal conduct?*

In evaluating candidates who attend an educational institution not on the First Methodist Church

recommended list, the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee will evaluate whether the candidate's courses and preparation meets the standards of First Methodist Church.

The Staff-Parrish Relations Committee shall evaluate whether the candidate evidences a sufficient foundation in and commitment to the doctrine, ethical principles, and discipline of the Methodist Church.

2. The Church Council will interview the candidate for readiness for ordination as a deacon. After being interviewed and recommended by the Church Council by a two-thirds vote and approved by a two-thirds vote of a called Church Conference, a certified candidate shall be ordained as deacon by the presiding elder through the laying on of hands.
3. Deacons may be appointed to serve as part of a ministry team in a local church (including as a pastor) or another ministry setting. Deacons may continue to serve as a deacon indefinitely under appointment and are encouraged to continue their education in regard to whatever ministry specialty they are called to pursue.
4. Deacons shall meet minimum educational requirements at the time of ordination as determined by First Methodist Church's Bylaws. Following ordination, deacons must fulfill the additional educational requirements established for deacons within seven (7) years. Deacons who do not complete all educational requirements within the allotted time shall be classified as inactive until such educational requirements are completed.
5. Deacons considering a call to ordination as an elder, or in whom the gifts and graces for the ministry of elder are recognized by a presiding elder, may be appointed to the office of pastor in a local church. If such an appointment is more than a temporary assignment, a deacon who accepts such an appointment must declare candidacy for ordination as an elder and begin the process toward such ordination following the completion of all educational requirements as a deacon.

¶ 408. ORDINATION AS ELDER.

1. Deacons who desire to be ordained as an elder shall declare their candidacy for such ordination to the annual conference board of ministry or equivalent. They shall be eligible for ordination as elder once they:

- a. Prove themselves faithful, mature, and effective over a period of a minimum of two years' service as a deacon;
- b. Complete the educational requirements for ordination as an elder.
- c. Pass an advanced level examination in doctrine, history, discipline and Bible;
- d. Be interviewed and recommended by a two-thirds vote of the Church Council or equivalent for ordination as an elder. In evaluating candidates who attend an educational institution not on the Church's recommended list, the Staff-Parrish Relations Committee will evaluate whether the candidate's courses and preparation meets the standards of First Methodist Church. The Church Council shall evaluate whether the candidate evidences a sufficient foundation in and commitment to the doctrine, ethical principles, and discipline of the Methodist Church; and
- e. Be approved by two-thirds vote by a called Church Conference.

2. The additional educational requirements must be completed within seven (7) years of ordination as elder. Persons who do not complete such requirements in a timely manner shall be ineligible thereafter to serve in the office of pastor of a local church but may continue to serve in other capacities as a deacon.