

MOUNTAIN SKY CONFERENCE

Session Rules

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. The Mountain Sky Conference Session Rules will guide both the preparation for and the activity during a regular or called session of the annual conference.
2. References to *The Book of Discipline* in the Mountain Sky Conference Session Rules and the Guiding Policies and Procedures are to the current *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* unless otherwise clear from the context that the subject matter refers to an earlier version.
3. The latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall be the guiding resource in all cases where *The Book of Discipline* or other conference rules do not apply.
4. Holy conferencing, discernment, or consensus models of conversation and decision-making may be used in Hearing Groups and Plenary Sessions in the Mountain Sky Conference.
5. It will always be in order to request a time of prayer or to set a specific time of conversation between various persons or groups related to a topic being discussed.
 - a. The Bishop or Presiding Officer or any member of the annual conference may initiate this request.
 - b. The Bishop or Presiding Officer will determine how the request will be fulfilled.
6. Conference Session Rules will be presented for adoption with a 2/3 vote in the opening plenary session of the annual conference.
 - a. Special Rules for the annual conference session may also be adopted with a 2/3 vote.
 - b. Conference Session Rules and Special Rules may be suspended with a 2/3 vote. A motion to suspend the rules is considered with a presentation but without debate.
 - c. Once adopted, Conference Session Rules remain in effect until modified or suspended in an annual conference session.
7. Members requesting time to make a presentation on a particular issue or concern will present their request in writing and wait to be recognized by the Bishop or Presiding Officer.
 - a. Presentations may not include demonstrations of support.
 - b. Presentations advocating for a particular candidate or a specific point of view are not in order once a balloting process has begun.
 - c. Presentations will be limited to three minutes in length, but may request a time of prayer.
8. The Bishop may appoint a person or persons to serve as Conference Parliamentarian.
9. Childcare which conforms to Mountain Sky Conference Guiding Policies and Procedures and meets the standards of the state in which the annual conference sessions and are held shall be provided for all sessions of the Mountain Sky Conference.

B. DEBATE AND VOTING GUIDELINES

1. Members wishing to make a motion or amendment during the annual conference session will submit their motion or amendment in writing.

2. The person making the motion will be given no more than three minutes to present the rationale for the motion prior to debate and an additional three minutes to conclude the debate prior to a vote.
3. Debate on any motion is limited to three speeches for; three against; three minutes each. The Bishop or Presiding Officer has discretion to extend the time or number of speeches, and may request alternating speeches between clergy and laity and those for and against.
4. Majority (more than half), 1/3 (at least 1/3), 2/3 (at least 2/3), and 80% (at least 80%) votes are determined by those members present and voting on a particular question.
 - a. The Bishop or Presiding Officer may ask for abstentions during the voting process, but these do not count in the calculations.
 - b. Votes will be conducted with electronic devices or voting cards with the basic requirement for approval being a majority unless otherwise specified.
5. Petitions speaking to organizations beyond the Mountain Sky Conference and petitions to the General Conference require an 80% vote for adoption.

C. CONFERENCE PROCESS TEAM

1. The Mountain Sky Conference will elect five (5) persons representing the diversity of the annual conference to serve on the Conference Process Team. The Director of Connectional Ministries may appoint persons to fill open positions on the Conference Process Team between sessions of the annual conference.
2. The Conference Process Team is responsible for:
 - a. Designing the petition form, establishing deadlines, and setting specific guidelines for the legislative process.
 - b. Reviewing, receiving, and coordinating petitions according to the established guidelines.
 - c. Editing and refining petitions as necessary to conform to the established guidelines in consultation with persons responsible for the petition.
 - d. Determining the legislative process for each petition.
 - e. Establishing processes and procedures for petitions and issues presented in Hearing Groups.
 - f. Adopting additional rules as needed for regular and called sessions of the annual conference.
3. The Conference Process Team will work cooperatively with persons responsible for petitions and appropriate persons and committees in the Mountain Sky Conference.

D. PETITIONS

1. All proposals for action by the Mountain Sky Conference will be initiated by petition and will be presented in one of two forms:
 - a. Binding Action requesting a specific action by the annual conference. This form uses declarative language such as “shall” or “expects” and assumes that action will be taken by the appropriate conference group.
 - b. Non-Binding Resolution presenting a position either theological, social, political, or otherwise. This form uses aspirational language such as “recommends” or “urges” and is not considered to be binding or enforceable.

2. The petition form will include a section for Action, Rationale, and Evaluation. Only the Action of a petition may be debated and amended. The Rationale and Evaluation are presented for information as a resource for conversation.
3. The Conference Council on Finance and Administration will review all petitions for financial impact to the annual conference and will provide written comments which will become part of the petition as presented. These comments are not debatable and will not be construed as either acceptance or rejection of the petition.
4. All petitions must have a Petition Advocate who will be the contact person before and during the annual conference session and is responsible for overseeing the presentation of the petition in Hearing Groups and in Plenary Sessions. Petition Advocates may designate other persons to make presentations in support of the petition. Petition Advocates must be members of the annual conference.
5. Petitions to a regular session of the annual conference must be submitted electronically on the appropriate forms by noon on April 10.
 - a. Timely filed petitions that meet the established guidelines and are received by the Conference Process Team will receive a hearing and appropriate action in the upcoming annual conference session.
 - b. Late filed petitions or petitions not received by the Conference Process Team may be heard in the upcoming annual conference session with a 2/3 vote of the members of the annual conference.
 - c. Late filed petitions not considered in the upcoming annual conference session will be placed under care of the Conference Process Team for consideration in the next annual conference.
 - d. The Conference Process Team may change the petition deadline or set other deadlines as necessary in consultation with the appropriate persons and committees in the Mountain Sky Conference.
6. Petitions addressing the same issue, either from similar or divergent points of view, may be considered at the same annual conference. The Conference Process Team may:
 - a. Combine petitions to promote good conversation or clarity of intent.
 - b. Designate one petition as a “Main Motion” and other petitions as “Amendments.”
 - c. Develop special parliamentary procedures to consider the petitions.
7. All timely filed petitions received by the Conference Process Team will be posted online prior to the start of the annual conference session.
 - a. Changes may be made to petitions posted online until two weeks before the start of the annual conference session and will be numbered in a consecutive fashion.
 - b. Changes requested less than two weeks before the start of the annual conference session may be made only in consultation with the Conference Process Team.

E. HEARING GROUPS

1. The Conference Process Team will schedule hearings for timely-filed, received petitions or issues of interest to the entire annual conference.
 - a. The Conference Process Team may define the amount of time, the process, and the guidelines and procedures to be used for scheduled hearings.

- b. Timely-filed, received petitions and issues of interest to the entire annual conference may be heard in one or all Hearing Groups, in a Plenary Session, or in a special process defined by the Conference Process Team.
 - c. In unavoidable or unusual circumstances, the Conference Process Team may recommend scheduled hearings be moved to a later time and place or referred the Mountain Sky Conference Roundtable following the adjournment of the annual conference session.
2. Members of the annual conference will be randomly assigned to a Hearing Group during the registration process. Members may attend any Hearing Group, but will have voice and vote only in the Hearing Group to which they are assigned.
3. Petitions assigned to a single Hearing Group may be debated and amended. Petitions receiving an 80% vote either affirmative or negative in a Hearing Group will be reported on a Consent Calendar presented in a Plenary Session. Appropriate action on all other petitions will be completed in a Plenary Session.
4. A Hearing Group may recommend a motion to Refer for any petition assigned to it. Once a motion to Refer is adopted in a Hearing Group, all debate on the petition ends pending consideration of the petition in a Plenary Session.
5. Petitions assigned to multiple Hearing Groups may be debated, but not amended. Appropriate action for these petitions will be completed in a Plenary Session. Hearing Groups may recommend amendments that will be considered after the petition is presented in a Plenary Session.
6. The Consent Calendar will be presented in a Plenary Session without debate and will be adopted with a 2/3 vote.
 - a. Members will be notified of a vote on a Consent Calendar prior to the vote.
 - b. Members of the annual conference may move to lift a petition from a Consent Calendar with a 1/3 vote. The motion to lift a petition must be presented in writing and will considered without presentation or debate.