

**SESSION RULES FOR THE 2022 HYBRID  
MOUNTAIN SKY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**PROPOSED 6/7/2022**

The 2022 annual conference session of the Mountain Sky Conference of The United Methodist Church is scheduled pursuant to notice and call for Thursday through Saturday, June 16-18, 2022; and Saturday through Sunday, October 21-22, 2022.

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and developments in our larger denomination, the conference session will be split over two weekends. The first session will occur in Helena, MT. It will be conducted in a hybrid manner and consist of the Laity Session, Clergy Session, brief plenary gatherings, and assorted worship services (Memorial Service and Ordination). Episcopal Nominations will also begin during this gathering. Participants for this session will be on site and online through a digital platform.

The second session will occur during October. This gathering will be online only and consider legislative matters and episcopal elections.

The following guidelines apply to the 2022 annual conference session:

**A. General Rules.**

1. These Session Rules will guide both the preparation for and the activity during the 2022 session of the annual conference.
2. These Session Rules apply to the 2022 annual conference session notwithstanding any prior session rule.
3. References to the *Discipline* in these Session Rules and the Guiding Policies and Procedures are to the current *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* ("*Discipline*") unless otherwise clear from the context that the subject matter refers to an earlier version.
4. The latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall be the guiding resource in all cases where the *Discipline*, these rules or other conference rules do not apply.
5. The coordinator for the digital conference is GNTV Media Ministry ("GNTV") in cooperation with Conference support persons. Together they have developed and published instructions for registration, debate, voting and other process. All conference attendees, whether onsite or online, are to use GNTV's system. Access to

a smartphone or other capable devices is required.

- a. The digital platform for the annual conference session is Zoom Webinar.
  - b. Zoom Webinar uses key terminology: “Panelist” is an individual who is leading, presenting, assisting leadership, or a promoted attendee allowed to speak and be seen by everyone attending the conference. “Attendee” is an individual who is able to see and hear what is happening, but must be given access to speak and be seen by the presiding officer.
6. The most recent version of these instructions published prior to opening plenary session are deemed incorporated into these Session Rules and will be used to govern decisions made during the annual conference session.
  7. These Session Rules will be presented for adoption with a 2/3 vote in the opening plenary session. Special Rules for the annual conference session may also be adopted with a 2/3 vote. 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. Once adopted, these Session Rules remain in effect until modified or suspended in an annual conference session.
  8. These Session Rules may be amended from the floor of the annual conference session. Any such amendment will require a two-thirds vote of the voting body.

The presiding officer for plenary and clergy sessions is the resident bishop or her designee. The presiding officers for the laity session are the two current Conference co-lay leaders.

#### **B. Membership and Setting the Bar.**

1. The bar will be set through the conference registration process.
2. Members authorized to vote will be screened when they register and issued a voter-unique identifier code for use in voting.
3. Only persons using their voter-unique identifier will be permitted to vote.
4. The voter-unique identification issued to each person secures the ballots so that only registered and authorized attendees can vote.
5. The voter-unique identifier will screen according to lay and clergy categories, as otherwise provided in the *Discipline*.
6. The voter-unique identifier relies on the technology of the digital platform process

and will not be independently monitored by human eyes unless a proper challenge is made to the qualifications of a given voter and this challenge is recognized by the presiding officer.

7. All lay and clergy members of the Mountain Sky Annual Conferences have privilege of the floor and may address any issue before the body.
8. Membership and formulas for lay/clergy equalization shall be those in effect for the 2017 sessions of the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Annual Conferences.
9. Roll will be taken by recording the names of persons who have been issued a voter- unique identifier and who vote in the annual conference session."
10. Pastoral absences and excuses for absence shall be emailed to a Conference Co-Secretary and the pastor's district superintendent.
11. Voting privileges belong to all those authorized to vote by the *2016 Discipline* and the Guiding Policies and Procedures.

### **C. Voting and Quorum.**

1. Voting is authorized by the following methods as called for by the presiding officer:
  - a. Voting for specific action. This method will be used generally for votes requiring a majority or super-majority vote. Examples of majority vote actions include approval of the conference budget, the nominations report and annual conference petitions. Examples of super-majority votes are certain clergy classifications and certain parliamentary votes.
  - b. Voting by class or slate of candidates. This method may be used for certain clergy classification votes and for other votes where deemed expedient or proper by the presiding officer.
  - c. Voting by ranked-choice. Qualified voters will be asked to vote for their top choices from the slate of candidates otherwise qualified to stand for election. The candidate receiving the most votes after one ballot shall be deemed elected.
  - d.
2. A majority vote is more than half. A 1/3<sup>rd</sup> vote is at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. A 2/3<sup>rd</sup> vote is at least

2/3<sup>rd</sup>.

3. Petitions to organizations beyond the Mountain Sky Conference and petitions to General Conference require an 80% vote for adoption.
4. For all purposes on any vote otherwise called for during the annual conference session, a member is deemed “present” if the member votes using its/her/his voter-unique identifier to vote.
5. For all purposes, a quorum shall be all members present and able to vote.
6. The digital voting platform is designed to provide an accurate vote count following the close of a vote. A report will be made on each vote taken in as timely a manner as permitted by the limits of the digital platform, technology and human efforts.
7. "All motions and amendments made during the annual conference session must be submitted in writing prior to being recognized on the floor. This shall be done by using the “Get Recognized” on the voting platform. For lengthier motions or amendments (exceeding a short paragraph or 1023 characters), the proponent must first use the “Get Recognized” feature to signal that a motion or amendment is forthcoming, and then use the following GNTV email to transmit the body of the motion or amendment: [ac@gntv.info](mailto:ac@gntv.info)."
8. Reports, presentations and other materials to be distributed to conference attendees shall be submitted to the Conference Director of Communications prior to the annual conference session at [ewarren@mtnskyumc.org](mailto:ewarren@mtnskyumc.org). Deadlines apply for submission of such materials.

#### **D. Debate.**

1. The debate process during the annual conference session will generally follow the GNTV instructions. These instructions include:
  - a. Individuals wishing to speak, whether online or in-person, can only be recognized by using the “Get Recognized” feature to express why they want to be recognized. These expressions are queued for the presiding officer.
  - b. Utilize the “Get Recognize” feature to indicate why you want to speak. For example: Ask a Question; Motion; Amendment; Second; Call the Question; Point of Order; Moment of Personal Privilege; and so forth.
  - c. When asking the presiding officer to be recognized in order to speak, please

include the text of your request in the space provided. For example, for a Motion, Amendment, Question or Point of Order you must include the text of the item you seek to bring before the body for consideration or discussion. This must be done in accordance with Rule C(7) above.

- d. Once recognized by the presiding officer, the attendee should use the “Raise Hand” feature to be identified in the attendee list and their microphone will be enabled by GNTV. The attendee then needs to unmute and begin speaking.
  - e. Please note that the “Chat” feature will be disabled during the annual conference session. Attendees cannot use the “Chat” feature to be recognized or take other action during debate or voting.
2. The presiding officer at any given session shall have the discretion to recognize who speaks to any matter and in what order. A member is not entitled to speak to a matter until recognized by the presiding officer.
  3. The presiding officer may declare a recess in proceedings at any time, subject to the call of this officer, to address technical difficulties with respect to such proceedings.
  4. The presiding officer may order the tabling or postponement of any motion, amendment or other matter on the floor to permit a sidebar discussion. The presiding officer may re-call the tabled matter at the next convenient time.
  5. Members shall speak no more than twice on a given item. Debate on amendments shall be limited to three (3) speakers in favor and three (3) speakers against with a three (3) minute time limitation per speaker. In addition, the presenter of the motion, or person designated by the presenter, shall be entitled to no more than three minutes to close the debate. It shall be the privilege of the presiding officer to request the following procedure for debate: to recognize alternately someone for and someone against the issue, and, when possible, give balance to clergy and lay members. A timer should appear on the speaker’s screen once recognized to speak by the presiding officer.
  6. The presiding officer shall have the discretion to expand debate on any amendment. A motion to expand debate is also in order from the floor with a two-thirds majority required for passage.
  7. Limitation on debate. When the presiding officer determines the agenda to be behind schedule, the presiding officer may declare that debate on motions and amendments shall be limited to 2 speeches for and 2 speeches against, not to exceed 2 minutes per speech. This limitation shall include allowing any member to speak only once on a

given item. If the presiding officer determines the agenda has returned to schedule, the presiding officer may declare the limit on debate to be lifted. At any time when this limitation is in effect, any member of the body may move to suspend the limitation for a particular item or series of items. Such a motion is not debatable and requires a two-thirds majority.

8. Budget. The vote on any proposed conference budget shall be with respect to the bottom line or total budget, and not the line items on the budget.

#### **E. Petitions.**

1. All proposals for action at the 2022 annual conference session will be initiated by petition and presented in one of two forms:
  - a. Binding Action requesting a specific action by the annual conference. This form uses declarative action 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 or 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 Mountain Sky Conference
5. Petitions to a regular session of the annual conference must be submitted electronically on the appropriate forms by noon on September 9.
  - 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. Such petitions may also be referred to the conference roundtable for consideration *ad interim*.
  - 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

## **F. 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. As previously stated, 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.
  - a. Due to the pandemic, Hearing Groups will be held in separate zoom sessions, breakout rooms, and/or other digital formats. All efforts will be made to promote transparency and allow members to have voice and vote.
  - b. Hearing Group voting will adhere to the process outlined in Rule C(4-7).
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. This process is outlined in Rule C(7).



## **G. General Parliamentary Procedures.**

1. The presiding officer shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the body in question. In case of such an appeal, the question is not debatable, except that the presiding officer may state the grounds for the decision and the appellant may state the grounds for the appeal.
2. Only a member with a voter-unique identifier has the right to make a motion and to vote.
3. A Call to Prayer shall always be in order.
4. It shall not be in order for a member immediately after discussing a pending question and before relinquishing the floor, to make a motion, which, if adopted, would limit or stop debate.
5. When a motion is made and seconded or a resolution introduced and seconded, or a report presented or read by the Secretary and then stated by the presiding officer, it shall be deemed in possession of the annual conference.
6. The following motions are not debatable:
  - a. Fix the time to adjourn.
  - b. Adjourn.
  - c. Recess.
  - d. Question of privilege.
  - e. Call for the order of the day.
  - f. Lay on the table.]
  - g. Previous question.
  - h. Limit or extend limit of debate.
  - i. Division of the assembly.
  - j. Suspend the rules.
  - k. Reconsider a non-debatable motion.
  - l. Take from the table.
7. No new motion or resolution shall be entered until the one under consideration has been disposed of, which may be done by adoption or rejection, but one or more of the following motions may be made, and they shall have precedence in the order in which they are given, namely:
  - a. Fix time to adjourn.
  - b. Adjourn.
  - c. Recess.

- d. Lay on the table.
  - e. Order the previous question.
  - f. Postpone to a definite time.
  - g. Commit or refer.
  - h. Amend (by addition, deletion or substitution)
  - i. Postpone indefinitely.
8. A main motion may have only one primary amendment and one secondary amendment at any one time.
9. A motion “to move the previous question” or to “call the question” is used to stop debate and requires a 2/3rds majority to pass.

**END**

Proposed by the Mountain Sky Conference Rules Committee