

Delegation Meeting Summary November 16, 2023

The delegations of the Kentucky Annual Conference and the Central Appalachian Missionary Conference met on Thursday, November 16 at the Conference Office. The delegates and reserves elected in 2019 and the provisional delegates elected last June were in attendance. The group had a full agenda.

After a time of worship, the delegates considered the petition submitted by Rev. Dr. Phil Hill regarding the commitment of the delegates to the United Methodist Church and their intent to represent those who have remained United Methodist. There was plenty of opportunity for each delegate to express their intentions on the matter. Borrowing from John Wesley all agreed to “assume the best about those with whom they might disagree.” There was a good deal of discussion about the need to build trust with the Annual Conferences. Delegates discussed the importance of building trust within the delegation itself.

From that discussion, the group began work on a covenant to serve as a guide for the group as it does its work in the coming months. The United Methodist membership vow provided the framework around which the covenant was developed. The covenant will be posted on the delegation’s page on the conference website.

The delegation also heard from Wespeth about their petitions which, if passed, will over time move clergy pensions to a straight defined contribution plan named Compass. If passed, Compass will be implemented in 2026. The current plan will remain in effect for those retired. The current plan will also apply to those who have yet to retire. When the new plan begins, those serving will enter the new program. Moving forward, they will keep the portion of the credit they earned

under the old plan, while accruing credit under Compass. The new plan is constructed in such a way so to distribute benefits fairly, while assuring sustainability for the church long term.

At the delegation meeting, there was a good deal of conversation around the recent Judicial Council decisions regarding General Conference. The Council affirmed that it was in error in calling for a General Conference sometime between 2026 and 2027. It essentially said that the next General Conference beyond the one held in 2024 will be in 2028.

The Judicial Council also left it to the 2024 General Conference to enact legislation to fill any vacancies delegations might have leading up to the Jurisdictional Conferences in July of 2024. They did leave open “under special circumstances” the possibility of filling any vacancies of General Conference delegations. Regarding the Kentucky Conference delegation, we are petitioning the Commission on General Conference to fill one lay reserve opening we have by certifying Provisional Delegate Tess Welch.

The delegation meeting closed with a discussion about the possibility of the Kentucky Annual Conference and the Central Appalachian Missionary Conference sharing episcopal leadership for the next quadrennium. Things should become clearer on that as the Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on the Episcopacy meets the balance of the conference year. Any decisions about sharing episcopal leadership ultimately will be made at the Jurisdictional Conference in July.