

Western Pacific Conference of the Global Methodist Church

Policy: Definition and Chartering of New Faith Communities



Definition and Role of New Faith Communities

A new faith community is a worshiping body under the Lordship of Jesus Christ that is not yet chartered. It is recognized as a valid and vibrant part of the mission of the Global Methodist Church. The 2024 Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as BDD) emphasizes that every community of faith is called to participate in the mission of making disciples and spreading scriptural holiness across the world. These communities serve as vital expressions of the church's presence and ministry.

While not yet chartered, a new faith community is granted voice but no vote at the Annual Conference or any specially called conference. However, if a connected clergy member is leading or part of the new faith community, that clergy member retains the rights and responsibilities granted by the BDD.

Requirements for Chartering

A community seeking to be chartered as a local church must meet the following criteria, reflecting both the historic marks of the church and the standards outlined in the BDD:

1. Weekly Worship

The church gathers regularly for weekly worship, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

- **Foundation:**
 - The BDD highlights regular worship as essential to embodying the church's mission to make disciples and to glorify God
 - Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 2:42, Matthew 8L20, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19-21, Acts 20:7

2. Sacraments

The sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are celebrated on a regular basis as a means of grace.

- **Foundation:**

- The BDD affirms that the sacraments are instituted by Christ and are central to the worship life of the church.
- Churches are reminded that sacramental ministry requires an ordained or authorized leader. The church is expected to either have clergy appointed or work with the Conference Superintendent to ensure an ordained clergy is available for the sacraments.
- Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 22:19-20

3. Connectional Identity

The church is connectional, defined by the following practices:

- Active participation in Conference and Global Church ministries and events.
- Regular financial contributions to connectional giving.
- Collaboration with other churches in the Conference and Global Church on ministry initiatives.

- **Foundation:**

- The BDD emphasizes that local churches are part of the connectional system, sharing resources and responsibilities.
- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

4. Missional Engagement

The church actively participates in God's mission to make disciples, spread the gospel, and transform the world through service and compassion. Evidence includes:

- Regular involvement in missions and outreach.
- An expectation to develop and maintain a plan for multiplication, such as planting new faith communities or supporting other churches who are planting new faith communities within three years of chartering.

- **Foundation:**

- The BDD calls for churches to be engaged in mission both locally and globally.
- Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20.

5. Discipleship

The church must demonstrate an intentional and ongoing commitment to making disciples of Jesus Christ. This means the church is not only gathering people for worship, but is also forming them in the faith so that they grow in holiness, obedience, and Christian witness. Evidence includes:

- A clear and active process for helping people grow from initial faith to mature discipleship.
- Regular opportunities for Bible study, prayer, spiritual formation, and accountability.
- A demonstrated expectation that disciples will continue to grow in grace, serve others, share their faith, and participate in the life of the church.
- Leadership development that identifies, equips, and encourages new leaders for ministry.
- A discipleship pathway or plan appropriate to the size and context of the congregation.
- **Foundation:**
 - The BDD makes clear that the mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the world.
 - Wesleyan Christianity understands discipleship as ongoing growth in grace through worship, Scripture, prayer, fellowship, the sacraments, and faithful Christian living.
 - Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:42-47, Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:11-13, 2 Timothy 2:2

6. Legal and Administrative Requirements

The following organizational standards are Conference-specific policies designed to ensure responsible governance and protection of the church community:

1. Incorporation

The church must be incorporated under the laws of the state in which it resides.

- **Foundation:** The BDD requires incorporation for each unit in the GMC. (BDD ¶1005, ¶1012).

2. Church Bank Account

The church must have its own bank account in the church's name. Fund accounting using accounting software is required and financials are to be shared with any member of the church or Presiding Elder if requested. Proper handling procedures of funds must be in place and followed.

- The BDD financial accountability (BDD ¶1012).

3. Governing Board

The church must have a governing board consisting of at least six members if using the one-board model.

- **Foundation:** The BDD outlines governance structures and emphasizes lay leadership in church administration (BDD ¶1012, ¶437, ¶438, ¶443).

4. Liability and Property Insurance

The church must carry liability insurance of at least \$300,000/\$1,000,000 and sufficient property insurance to cover worship equipment and other assets. The Western Pacific Conference must be listed as an additional insured.

- **Foundation:** The BDD stresses proper stewardship and financial accountability for local churches and the requirement of insurance. (BDD ¶1012).

5. Pastoral Leadership Compensation

The church must provide regular compensation to its leader (stipend or salary).

- Exceptions require approval from the Conference Superintendent upon recommendation of the Cabinet and New Faith Communities leadership.
- **Foundation:** The BDD states that those serving in ministry should be compensated fairly and in alignment with their role (BDD ¶439.11).

6. Clergy and Lay Leadership

A chartered church is required to have either a Certified Lay Minister or a clergy member appointed to the church.

- **Foundation:**

- The BDD acknowledges both lay and clergy leadership but emphasizes the importance of ordained clergy for sacramental ministry (BDD ¶501.2).
- ¶409 required a clergy person or a qualified lay person appointed to a charge. For the purposes of this policy, a qualified lay person is one who is an active Certified Lay Minister in the Western Pacific Conference.

A non-chartered church that meets all of the above criteria who desires to be chartered, may request by using the “Local Church Request to Charter Form.” A Charge Conference is required with a majority of members voting in favor of chartering. The request will go to the Cabinet for approval and the Annual Conference for ratification.