



Policy For The One Board Model Of Local Church Governance Western Pacific Conference

Adopted pursuant to the Book of Doctrines and Discipline, ¶ 442.4

I. Purpose

The role of the local church, as set out in ¶ 408 of the Book of Doctrines and Discipline (“BDD”), is to help people come to and grow in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, to nurture believers, to minister to the community around it, and to take part in the wider mission of the church. Governance structures exist to serve that role, not the other way around.

For a new church plant, or a smaller congregation without enough active, willing, and qualified members to staff a full slate of separate committees, dividing leadership across several boards can spread people thin and slow down ministry rather than strengthen it. The one-board model addresses this by consolidating governance into a single board, so that a small number of leaders can give real attention to the mission described in ¶ 408 instead of spending most of their limited time and energy simply keeping committees staffed.

II. Authority for This Policy

The BDD permits a congregation to use an alternate system of governance in place of separate Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, and Trustees committees, so long as individuals are named to carry out the functions those committees would otherwise perform (¶ 442.4). Acting under that provision, the Western Pacific Conference establishes and approves the one-board model described in this policy as an authorized alternate system of governance available to local churches of the conference.

III. Definitions

Traditional Model

The governance structure described generally in BDD ¶ 439–¶ 444, in which a local church maintains a church council alongside separate standing committees, ordinarily including Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, Trustees, and Nominations and Leadership Development, each with its own distinct membership.

One-Board Model

An alternate system of governance, authorized under ¶ 442.4, in which a single governing board performs the functions that would otherwise be divided among the church council and the Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, and Trustees committees.

IV. When the One-Board Model Is Appropriate

The one-board model is best suited to:

Newly planted or newly organized churches that have not yet developed a broad base of trained lay leadership; and

Established churches whose active membership is not large enough to responsibly fill the full range of committee positions contemplated by the Traditional Model.

The one-board model is a tool for seasons of limited capacity. It is not meant to become a substitute for broad congregational collaboration. A church using this model should still actively invite input from the wider congregation, delegate specific projects to short-term ministry teams, and involve members beyond the board itself wherever possible.

As a congregation grows, it should periodically reassess whether the one-board model still fits. As a general guideline, a church averaging more than 100 people in worship attendance should be working toward the Traditional Model described in ¶ 439 – ¶ 444, and shall begin the transition once it has enough trained and willing leaders to staff separate committees.

V. Election, Term, and Composition of the Board

Election (¶ 440)

Board members are elected by the charge or church conference by simple majority vote and must be professing members of the Global Methodist Church in the local church they will serve.

Term of Service

A term of three years is recommended for board members, though this is not required. Local churches may adopt a different term length as fits their circumstances.

Broad Representation

In filling board positions, special attention should be given to including men and women; youth and young adults; adults under sixty-five as well as those over sixty-five; persons with disabilities; and persons of various racial, ethnic, or tribal identities, so that the board reflects the full range of the congregation it serves, not any one group within it.

VI. Required Board Positions (§ 442)

At a minimum, the one-board model must include the following:

Lay Leader — represents the laity of the church, meets regularly with the pastor, and helps interpret annual conference and general church actions to the congregation.

Lay Member(s) of the Annual Conference — represents the church at annual conference sessions and reports back to the board. This role may be filled by another board member, such as the lay leader.

Chairperson — a role above and beyond ordinary board membership; sets the meeting agenda with the pastor, leads meetings, and coordinates the board's work.

Pastor-Parish Relations function — one or more persons named to carry out the responsibilities ordinarily assigned to a Pastor-Parish (or Staff-Parish) Relations Committee.

Finance function — one or more persons named to carry out the responsibilities ordinarily assigned to a Finance Committee.

Trustees function — one or more persons named to carry out the responsibilities ordinarily assigned to a Board of Trustees.

This structure follows the authorization in § 442.4 for congregations with an alternate system of governance to name individuals to fulfill the Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, and Trustees functions in place of separate committees. Section VII below addresses the Pastor-Parish Relations function in more detail, since it carries its own thresholds and confidentiality requirements.

VII. The Pastor-Parish Relations Function (§ 445)

The Pastor-Parish (or Staff-Parish) Relations function carries additional sensitivity, since it involves the pastor's and staff's personnel matters. This policy sets the following thresholds for how that function is carried out:

Churches under 50 in worship attendance: the Church Council itself may carry out the Pastor-Parish Relations function directly, without a separate committee. § 445.1 allows the responsibilities of a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to be assigned to a different group, and the board fills that role here.

Churches over 50 in worship attendance: the church should endeavor to establish a separate Pastor-Parish Relations Committee under § 445, even while continuing to use the one-board model for the rest of its governance.

Churches over 100 in average worship attendance: the church should have established a separate Pastor-Parish Relations Committee by this point. If a church does not believe this is best for its mission, it shall discuss it with its Presiding Elder.

If a one-board church establishes a separate Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, only the chairperson of that committee also serves on the Church Council board, not the full committee membership. This keeps the board itself within the size contemplated by the one-board model, while the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee continues to meet and carry out its responsibilities under ¶ 445, including its own quarterly meetings and closed sessions.

Whenever the board, acting as the Pastor-Parish Relations function, or a separate Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, takes up matters related to the pastor's or staff's personnel, that portion of the meeting must be closed to all but the members considering the matter, and everything shared in that session is confidential (¶ 445.6). See Section X below on open meetings generally.

VIII. Board Size (¶ 443.5)

The charge conference determines the size of the board. Membership, including clergy, must be no fewer than eight persons. For a one-board model, it is recommended that the board not exceed twelve members, so that it remains small enough to function efficiently while still being broadly representative.

Beyond the required positions above, additional persons may serve as at-large board members, or in other elected positions as the charge conference determines is appropriate.

IX. Clergy Membership

Appointed clergy serve as members of the board with voice and vote. A certified lay minister serving under appointment by the district superintendent or bishop likewise serves as a member with voice and vote.

X. Meetings, Open Meetings, and Quorum

Regular Meetings (¶ 443.3)

The board must meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call additional special meetings as needed.

Open Meetings (¶ 438.3)

All meetings of the board are open to all professing members of the church. A portion of a meeting may be closed only when the board is addressing personnel, legal, or contractual matters, and only if a majority of the board votes to close that portion of the meeting.

Any portion of a meeting addressing Pastor-Parish Relations matters must be closed, whether it is the board acting in that capacity or a separate Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and everything shared in that session is confidential (¶ 445.6).

In a one board model, the Church Council (and Pastor Parish Committee if one exists) shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor. Furthermore, the pastor shall be present at each meeting, except where he or she voluntarily excuses themselves. The committee may meet with the Presiding Elder without the appointed clergy, however, the clergy member will be notified prior to such meeting and the Presiding Elder will consult with the pastor immediately following the meeting. For clarification, with a One Board Model, no meetings of the Church Council are to happen without the knowledge of the pastor, and without the pastor or Presiding Elder present unless they voluntarily excuse themselves.

Quorum (§ 443.6)

Quorum consists of the members present and voting at any duly announced meeting.

XI. Ongoing Collaboration

Adopting the one-board model does not reduce a church's responsibility to collaborate broadly. The Church Council is encouraged to invite input from the full congregation, form ad hoc or short-term ministry teams for specific projects, and keep the door open for members outside the board to serve in meaningful ways. The one-board model is meant to concentrate formal governance, not to concentrate ministry itself.

XII. Adoption and Review

This policy is adopted by the Western Pacific Conference as an authorized alternate system of governance under § 442.4 of the Book of Doctrines and Discipline. Local churches wishing to adopt or discontinue the one-board model should do so through action of their church or charge conference, in consultation with its appointed clergy and the Presiding Elder.