

PROPOSED STANDING RULE CHANGE TO ALLOW FOR VIRTUAL VOTING

To keep members safe from the continuing spread of the coronavirus, the Bishop and the Cabinet have decided that the regular session of the Annual Conference scheduled for Saturday, September 19, will be held by remote communication via a Zoom webinar. The Bishop and some members of the Cabinet and Conference Leadership will be physically present at the Florida United Methodist Center in Lakeland, Florida for the session, but all other members will participate in the session via remote communication and will be provided instructions for participating in the meeting via Zoom at the time of registration. The Zoom webinar method of remote communication will enable every member to speak and vote at the session and hear the proceedings of the session.

The Standing Rules of the Annual Conference currently do not permit members to participate in sessions of the Annual Conference by remote communication, so the first order of business at the September session will be to amend the Standing Rules to add the following new rule. This new rule will be placed in Chapter Two – Organization of the Annual Conference and will be new Section VI. Meeting Participation by Remote Communication. This new rule has been reviewed and approved by the Standing Rules Committee.

The foregoing amendment to the Standing Rules will be adopted if approved by the affirmative vote of both two-thirds of the members of the Annual Conference who are physically present at the meeting and two-thirds of the members of the Annual Conference who are present via remote communication.

Section VI. Meeting Participation by Remote Communication

Par. 210. Meeting Participation by Remote Communication. If the Bishop and a majority of the District Superintendents determine that, as a result of an epidemic, labor strike, civil disturbance, state of emergency, or natural disaster (such as a flood, hurricane, tornado, or tropical storm), it is not feasible to hold a regular or special meeting of the members of the Annual Conference at which the members may vote and participate in person, they may determine that members be allowed to participate in the meeting and vote by remote communication. If members will be allowed to participate in a regular or special meeting of the members of the Annual Conference by remote communication, the Annual Conference shall implement reasonable measures (a) to verify that each person participating remotely in the meeting is entitled to vote or otherwise participate in the meeting and (b) to provide each member who is entitled to vote at the meeting a reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting and to vote on matters submitted to the Annual Conference at the meeting, including an opportunity to communicate, and to read or hear the proceedings of the meeting substantially concurrently with the proceedings of the meeting. A member of the Annual Conference who participates in a regular or special meeting of the members of the Annual Conference by remote communication will be deemed to be present at the meeting, and the Annual Conference shall maintain a record of the vote or other action taken by the member by remote communication. If members will be allowed to participate in a regular or special meeting of the members of the Annual Conference by remote communication, the Bishop in accordance with ¶ 605.2 of the *Discipline* may revise the agenda to focus on essential voting items. The revised agenda shall be submitted to the annual conference for adoption.