

Bylaws Q&A:

**How will these new bylaws affect my local church's bylaws?**

They won't. The local church creates its own bylaws, separate from the Conference.

**How will these new bylaws affect my Association's bylaws?**

They won't – BUT your Association leadership will be asked to nominate several people: in the fall of 2022, Associations will nominate members to serve on the Board, plus someone to serve on the Personnel Committee and someone to serve on the Finance Committee. How your Association selects those two people is up to them. Ideally, these two people are not also serving on the Conference Board of Directors – the hope is to include more voices in decision-making positions.

**What's up with changing the name of the executive body – Conference Council vs. Board of Directors?**

Most Conferences, and the General Synod of the UCC, have a Board of Directors; this change is in line with common practices across the UCC. The language of "Board" indicates a particular relationship between the governing bodies of the Conference and the staff of the Conference, and each has an important part to play in leadership of the Conference. One retired Conference Minister recently reflected on their former Conference's switch from language of Council to language of Board: "I found that the Board members took their responsibility more seriously, and they were a more effective body of leaders, even though their actual duties hadn't changed."

**But we're a Church! Shouldn't we use language that reflects that we're a Church?**

Yes, we are a Church. But the Conference is not a local congregation. We have a different role and mission in the ecclesiastical structure than a local congregation does, and we need to use language and practices appropriate to our unique role in the structure of the UCC as a whole. While it's appropriate for a local congregation to use the language of "Council" or "Consistory" or other common names, the language of "Board of Directors" is more accurate for the Conference's operations as a faith-based non-profit corporation whose purpose is to support and resource local congregations.

**Why is the size of the Board decreasing?**

There are many people who are passionate about one particular aspect of Conference leadership, but not necessarily about the big picture of Conference life as a whole – filling 24 spots on a Board with people who want to look at the big picture is hard to do, and burnout and high turnover among leaders are common when passions don't match the tasks at hand. Decreasing Board size means that the people who are truly passionate about the big picture can have a place to serve, and those people who want to focus on one or two aspects of Conference life can direct their energies there instead. This is better for the life of the Conference as a whole, and for the individuals who are called to serve in these roles, at the same time.

### **What's up with the diversity requirements?**

We want to be a Conference whose decision-making bodies reflect the current reality of our makeup AND reflect the vision for the Church that we know God is calling us to become. We still have work to do in this area. Diversity requirements help us to do that work more effectively, and to hold one another accountable to that vision. Our local churches are diverse in many ways (gender, race, age, sexuality, economic status, education level, etc.), and it is important that our Conference leadership is fully in touch with these varieties of diversity. The best way to do that is to make sure that those diverse identities are intentionally present among our elected leaders. We pray for a world where such requirements are not needed because diverse identities are present naturally, but until that prayer is fully realized we all need to commit together to make it real in our spaces with intention.

### **What's up with creating "Working Groups" instead of listing a whole bunch of committees in the bylaws?**

Listing committees in the bylaws is a quick way to ensure that we're going to fall out of step with our bylaws sooner rather than later! The needs of the Conference change over time, and that includes needing to create a committee/task force/other body, or to discontinue their work – and not listing specific committees in the bylaws means the Board is able to be more responsive to needs as they arise. Rather than spending energy and effort trying to fill slots on committees because they are listed in the bylaws, the Board—and the people of the Conference—are freed up to spend energy and effort empowering passions and ministries that are relevant in the present. This new structure will give us the flexibility to carry out our Core Ministries as needed from moment to moment in the ever-changing life of the Church while living into our Unifying Call.

### **Why are you listing the two committees you are listing, then?**

Personnel and Finance, the two committees that are listed in the bylaws, will always be critical to the proper functioning and work of the Conference. It is right and responsible that they be listed, so that the members of the Conference and the Conference staff can be reassured that their essential functions will be completed, and so that there is accountability to the larger Conference body if those functions are not completed. It is important that there is clarity about how those committees are formed and what their responsibilities are (and are not).

### **Why are these committees so small?**

Both committees are small on purpose, for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness. One of the realities we currently face is that a large committee is prevented from doing its work if only a handful of its members show up, and even scheduling meetings becomes difficult. Both Personnel and Finance have responsibilities that are critical to the functioning of the Conference and must not be so large that they cannot complete their work effectively. It is important to note that neither committee is precluded from reaching out to invite more participation or resourcing as needed. For example, you may have noticed that there is an Assistant Treasurer office, but the Assistant Treasurer is not a named member of the Finance Committee. That person may (and likely will) participate in the Finance Committee meetings,

but it is not a requirement that they do so, and the functioning of the committee is not impacted if they are not able to participate.

### **Why are we changing the quorum?**

Two main reasons: first, we have not met quorum requirements for the last two Conference Meetings, and therefore have not been able to do the business we need to do. Some of the lack of participation may be due to the online format, but that is not the only factor – and it's realistic to assume that we will continue the use of online/hybrid meetings in the future. We cannot keep holding meetings where we are unable to pass a budget or perform other essential functions. Second, our quorum formula and requirements are cumbersome and not in line with the practices in other Conferences. Our Transitional Conference Minister recently polled the other CMs and learned that most Conferences have much smaller size requirements and more streamlined ways to calculate the total. The proposed change honors the many ways we have historically included delegates from across the Conference, while also incorporating current wisdom and best practices from our sibling Conferences.

### **Why do we care about what other Conferences are doing?**

Because we are not alone in the ministry that we do! If we can learn from one another, share wisdom, and align practices where it makes sense to do so, then we can be more effective in our ministry. Finding out what other Conferences do helps us not have to reinvent the wheel.

### **How is this bylaws change going to work?**

Over the course of the next year, the Board of Directors will reorganize itself into the Core Ministries as described in the new bylaws. Each of the Core Ministries will begin to operate, as will the Personnel and Finance Committees. We have drafted an operational Transition document to help guide this work, which we're happy to share!