



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 CONSEIL JUDICIAIRE DE L'EGLISE METHODISTE UNIE
 RECHTSHOF DER EVANGELISCH-METHODISTISCHEN KIRCHE
 CONSELHO JUDICIAL DA IGREJA METODISTA UNIDA
 CONSEJO DE LA JUDICATURA DE LA IGLESIA METODISTA UNIDA



Petition for Declaratory Decision

This form is to be used by the Secretary of the body authorized to petition the Judicial Council for a ruling in the nature of a declaratory decision as to the constitutionality, meaning, application, or effect of (please check one):

- The Book of Discipline 2016* or any portion thereof (§ 2610.1)
- any act or legislation of a General Conference (§ 2610.1)
- any proposed legislation (§ 2609.2)

Name of body authorized to make a Petition (§ 2610.2): COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
 Date of session: 4/8/24 (month/day/year) Location: ZOOM MEETING

Name of Secretary: BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON
 Address: 110 MARYLAND AVE. NE, SUITE 3 City: WASHINGTON D.C.
 State/Province: _____ ZIP/Postal Code 20002 Country: USA
 Phone: 202-547-6270 Fax: _____ E--mail: jholston@umcsc.org

To be reviewed (indicate paragraph number, title of legislation and/or act where applicable):
 Book of Discipline: 710.4
 Legislation: _____
 Act of General Conference: _____

Signature: _____ Date: 4/10/2024
 Secretary of the Conference/Body (month/day/year)

The following must be attached:

- o Text of the written Petition for Declaratory Decision as originally presented
- o Minutes of proceedings
- o List of names and addresses of interested parties, including eu mail
- o Other relevant materials (e.g. conference rules, resolutions, policies, reports)

➤ Send electronic copy of this form and all materials in PDF and Microsoft Word format to: **secretary@umcjudicialcouncil.org**

➤ Mail thirteen (13) sets of hard copies to:
**UMC Judicial Council, c/o LaNella Smith, Assistant to the J.C. Secretary,
 1215 Shady Lane, Durham, NC 27712**

IN THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**IN RE: PETITION FOR DECLARATORY DECISION
REGARDING PARAGRAPH 710.4 OF THE 2016 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

**PETITION FOR DECLARATORY DECISION REGARDING
PARAGRAPH 710.4 OF THE 2016 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church (“COB”) petitions the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision regarding ¶ 710.4 of The 2016 Book of Discipline, and for reasons, states:

1. The Judicial Council has jurisdiction in this matter pursuant to ¶ 2610.2b.
2. The COB authorized the filing of this petition as indicated by the excerpt of the minutes of the COB’s meeting on April 8, 2024 attached hereto as Exhibit A.
3. The COB requests a declaratory decision on this question: Does ¶ 710.4 permit a voting member of a general agency elected at the 2016 General Conference to be elected serve a second quadrennium beginning at the close of the 2020 General Conference to be held in 2024?
4. Paragraph 710.4 provides as follows:

A voting member of a general agency shall be eligible for membership on that agency for no more than two consecutive four-year terms. The four-year term shall begin at the first organizational meeting of that agency following General Conference. Service of more than one year in fulfilling an unexpired or vacated position shall be considered as a full four-year term. To provide a continuing membership on these agencies, it is recommended that each nominating and electing body give special attention to continuing and effective membership on these agencies. If a general agency is merged with another agency, the years served by members prior to the merger shall be counted as part of the maximum specified above.

A person who has been a voting member of general agencies for four consecutive quadrennia shall be ineligible for election to a general agency in the succeeding quadrennium. The foregoing shall not apply to episcopal members.

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5. Paragraph 710.4 refers to eligibility for election to membership on a general agency. It follows that a person may be eligible to be nominated and elected to membership for two consecutive four-year terms but two terms are not automatic; hence the rationale for an initial and second four-year term to “begin at the first organizational meeting of that agency following General Conference,” which would follow the person’s initial election or re-election to membership in the agency.

6. Based on the foregoing, the COB believes those persons who were elected to general agencies in 2016 have only served one four-year term and are “eligible” to be re-elected for a second four-year term following the 2020 General Conference that will occur in 2024. That does not mean that the “eligible” person should automatically be re-nominated and re-elected. The language of ¶ 710.4 refers to “four-year *terms*” and not to eight years. Since a term is defined in ¶ 710.4 in relation to a General Conference, the COB does not believe “two four-year terms” can be said to be the same as “eight years.”

7. Therefore, since persons elected to membership in general agencies at the General Conference in 2016 have served only one quadrennium even though that quadrennium has covered eight years due to the pandemic and postponement of the 2020 General Conference to 2024, the COB believes the answer to the question above in subparagraph 3(a) is yes. A second four-year term has not commenced since there has not been a regular session of General Conference after their election in 2016. The COB further believes its suggested response to the question is supported by the rationale of Memorandum 1485 relating to the tenure of delegates elected to the postponed 2020 General Conference.

8. The COB reserves the right to submit a brief in support of this petition in accordance with the scheduling order established by the Judicial Council.

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WHEREFORE, the Council of Bishops submits this petition for a declaratory decision as to the question set forth herein regarding ¶ 710.4.



BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON
Secretary, Council of Bishops
of The United Methodist Church

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that this Petition for Declaratory Decisions has been served upon the following interested persons on this 10th day of April 2024 by electronic mail:

Gary Graves
Secretary of the General Conference
ggraves@umcgc.org

Kim Simpson
Chairperson
Commission on the General Conference
kimsimpson1@tx.rr.com
kimsimpson1@tx.rr.com



BISHOP JONATHAN HOLSTON
SECRETARY
COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

**PETITION FOR DECLARATORY DECISION
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2016 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**



Council of

Bishops

(April 9, 2024)

Zoom Meeting

MINUTES

(Relevant Excerpt)

After extended conversation a motion was made by and seconded to approve submission of the petition for declaratory decision regarding Paragraph 710.4.

ACTION ITEM

The Council of Bishops approved that the COB petition the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision regarding Paragraph 710.4.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan Holston".

**Bishop Jonathan Holston
Secretary, Council of Bishops
United Methodist Church**