

Bishop, I rise to request a Declaratory Decision from the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, in accordance with paragraph 2610.2.j of the Book of Discipline. This specifies that I am asking a question about matters pertaining to the work of an annual conference, and regarding judicial proceedings, and therefore it must be requested as a Declaratory Decision and not a question of law.

This request is that the body join in asking a question of the Judicial Council, not try to determine the validity of the question based on details; the Judicial Council will make for itself the determination whether it can take up the question. The Judicial Council is asked to review processes that transpired, not the character, ordination, or conference relationship of any person involved in those processes.

I move that the New England Annual Conference request a Declaratory Decision regarding the NEAC resident Bishop's handling of two complaints received February 2025:

1. Was the process by which these complaints were handled consistent with paragraph 363 of the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline in the following ways:
 - a. Lack of timely and clear written description of the process to be followed at each stage of the complaints, and when the stage changes (363.2);
 - b. Lack of clarity about just resolution process initiated concurrent with the supervisory response, and about criteria required of the parties at each stage (see paragraphs 363.5, 363.6.b, 363.6.d);
 - c. Dismissing the complaints using an evidentiary standard of proving intent and violation of the Discipline; and
 - d. Lack of clarity about if the complaints were dismissed with the consent of the cabinet as required (363.5.f.1)
2. What is the meaning and application of para 363.5, which states that a Bishop's role in the supervisory response process is "pastoral and administrative," and that the Bishop is to determine during this period if the complaint meets the criteria and definition of a complaint (363.2)? Upon what criteria does a Bishop base this determination in order to give due consideration to the validity of a complaint?
3. What is the meaning and application of para. 363.5.f.1, which states that a Bishop may dismiss a complaint with the consent of the cabinet when complaints are against members of the cabinet?
4. If the Judicial Council finds that errors, omissions, or missteps have occurred in the handling of these matters, what remedies exist within our Discipline to rectify such and restore balance to the complaint and just resolution processes in this matter?

DAILY PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 3, 2026

CLERGY SESSION

CALL TO ORDER – Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton called the clergy session to order. Aaron Hyung Kyu Yi provided gathering music. Jinyong Choi and Angela Rotherham, co-chairs, Board of Ordained Ministry, offered words of welcome and invited members to sing together *And Are We Yet Alive*. Jinyong Choi read scripture Hebrews 11:1.

ORIENTATION AND VOTING INSTRUCTIONS – After uplifting words from the bishop, Angela Rotherham offered orientation and voting instructions.

ORGANIZING MOTIONS – Angela Rotherham moved that members of the GNTV staff; Ximena Diaz-Varas, Bishop's Assistant; Deborah Venator, the BOM registrar; and non-UM clergy (serving NEAC UM churches, federated/united churches and yoked parishes) be admitted to the session without voice or vote. The motion was affirmed by the body.

QUESTION 14 – Members of Administrative Review Committee were voted in.

QUESTION 15 – Alecia Reeves-Freeman lifted up the candidates for ministry with a Prayer for the Candidates.

QUESTIONS 16 and 17 – These questions related to status and appointment of local pastors. Attendees were encouraged to submit any discrepancies to the BOM Registrar. The listing was approved with $\frac{3}{4}$ majority.

QUESTION 22 – Names of persons of other Christian denominations who are approved to serve in the New England Annual Conference were approved.

QUESTION 23b – Affiliate members of the New England Annual Conference were approved with $\frac{2}{3}$ votes.

PRAYER – Thom Blackstone offered a Prayer for Servants.

PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP (QUESTIONS 25 & 27) – The following Provisional Elders were moved for approval – Seunghea (Cindie) Chae, Eunji Lee, Shinjae Lee, and Thiago Vieira. They were excused from the meeting, after which they were elected with a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote. They were returned to the Conference room and were appropriately congratulated by our Bishop. Hyunmyung Aiden Seo was approved and received into provisional membership from another Christian denomination.

PRAYER – Adama Brown offered a Prayer for the Commissionees.

CONTINUATION OF PROVISIONAL MEMBERS (QUESTION 26a) – The provisional members listed on Question 26a were approved for continuation.

FULL MEMBERSHIP (QUESTIONS 29 a & 29 b, 30 & 31) – The BOM co-chairs moved those named in Question 29 a & 29 b for full membership, those named in Question 30 for ordination as Deacons, and those named in Question 31 for ordination as Elders. Kristy Besada and Tallessyn Grenfell-Lee were elected as Deacons in full connection by the required $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote. Eungil Cho, Benjamin Daggett, Junsang Lee, and Evan McElreath were elected as Elders in full connection by the required $\frac{3}{4}$ majority

vote. They were all then approved for Ordination with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote. When they were returned to the room, they were congratulated by our Bishop and handed their new voting badges.

PRAYER – Hyuk Seonwoo offered a Prayer for the Ordinands.

TRANSFER FROM OTHER UM CONFERENCES (Question 35) – Joel Hubbard, Jin Jong Lee, and Jerrell Voorhees, Jr. were approved to transfer as Elders in full connection; and Thomas Lank was approved to transfer as a Deacon in full connection.

TRANSFER TO OTHER UM CONFERENCES (QUESTION 38) – Seth Fortier, provisional Elder, was approved to transfer to the Virginia Conference.

DISCONTINUANCE (QUESTION 39.b.) – John Baker-Streevy was approved for voluntary discontinuance as a provisional Elder.

PRAYER – Winnie Eke offered a Prayer for Those in Transition.

PRAYER – Nami Yu offered a Prayer Remembering Our Saints.

REMEMBERING DECEASED – The names of the clergy who died in the past year were read.

Retired Elders: Joe Carpenter, Henry (Hank) Cheney, Elizabeth Davis, John Goodwin, Angus Hagins, Donald Hegeman, Shepard Johnson, Christopher Jones, Kwan Lee, Terence (Terry) McKinley, Carroll Moore, John (Jack) Moss, Thelma Nauth, Leslie (Les) Pettit, Anne Roberts, Henry (Bing) Scherer, Steven Seminero, David Svenson, Reuben Telemaque, Mary Elise Thomas, Richard (Dick) Thompson, Walter Wnek.

Former Provisional Elder: Robert Schrader.

Former Local Pastors: Earl Dionne, Barbara Jean Norton.

QUESTION – A question was raised about whether or not Walter Wnek was deceased and concern expressed that if he was still living, his name should not be included among those remembered at Annual Conference. The BOM registrar agreed to research the matter and confirmed that Walter Wnek is deceased.

BISHOP'S PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE – Bishop Bickerton offered a prayer of remembrance and members were invited to sing together *For All the Saints*.

LEAVES & RETIREMENT (QUESTIONS 44 a1 & a2, 46, 47, & 48) – these questions related to voluntary leaves of absence for various durations, medical leaves, and retirement; all were passed with appropriate $\frac{2}{3}$, majority, and $\frac{3}{4}$ votes.

PRAYER – Richard Ampiah-Bonney offered a Prayer for Those Who Cannot Be with Us.

RETIREEES – the names of pastors who are retiring this year were read.

Retired Elders: Elizabeth Bachelder Smith, Mark Brady, Theodore (Ted) Brandt, Gregory Carpenter, Ernest (Ernie) Farrar, Susan (Sue) Frost, Peter Hey, Seok Hwan Hong, Anne (Anne Marie) Hunter, John Mueller, Steven Murray, Imani-Sheila Newsome-Camara, Alecia Reeves-Freeman, Linda Reynolds, Anne Robertson.

The names of Local Pastors who are retiring this year were read: David Arruda, Evelyn (Evie) Doyon, Judy Jones.

PRAYER – Bishop Bickerton offered a Prayer for Retirees.

LESS THAN FULL TIME SERVICE (QUESTION 74 a1 & 74 a2) – The clergy listed in Question 74 a1 were presented for approval for less than full time service (fewer than 8 years) and passed with $\frac{2}{3}$ vote. The

clergy listed in Question 74 a2 were presented for approval for less than full time service (8 years or more) and passed with $\frac{3}{4}$ vote.

EXTENSION MINISTRY (QUESTION 78c) – Those listed under Question 75c with appointments to extension ministries were approved with a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote.

PRAYER – Gwyneth Arrison offered a Prayer for Those in Less than Full-Time and Extension Ministry.

FULL REPORT – By a majority vote, the body affirmed the full report.

ADDITIONAL REPORTS – Juhee Lee and Effie McAvoy presented the Empathy Project and mosaic cross project organized by the Commission on Religion & Race. Maylis de la Fe made announcements on Order of Deacon. Thom Blackstone presented on Order of Elder. Virg Fryer and Lourey Savick presented on the Commission on the Status & Role of Women.

QUESTION 13 – was answered for each district by respective District Superintendents. Rick McKinley, Dean of the Cabinet, said a prayer for the clergy of the NEAC.

DECLARATORY DECISION REQUEST – Becca Girrell requested the body join in asking for a declaratory decision from the UMC Judicial Council. The following motion was approved.

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MOTION – Bumshik Min shared his challenge, in multiple appointments, of receiving professional expense reimbursements from churches. He asked if clergy colleagues have struggled with the same challenge and moved that the Conference conduct anonymous research among clergy members to determine whether

others have experienced similar issues related to professional expense reimbursement. If we discover that other ministers have faced similar challenges, then this issue should be acknowledged, addressed, and corrected through Conference action. After conversation about who should conduct the survey, the motion was approved and forwarded to the Board of Ordained Ministry to conduct the survey.

ADJOURNMENT – Following closing comments from Bishop Bickerton, Angela Rotherham led a unison closing covenant prayer and Jinyong Choi led the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer in unison. Bishop Bickerton adjourned the clergy session.