

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy

Introduction

We recognize that the challenges facing the church at the current time cause questions to arise surrounding the nomination of episcopal candidates. This includes possible changes to the numbers of bishops in the jurisdiction. We would encourage the delegations and annual conferences to continue their processes of identifying and lifting up candidates for the episcopacy. However, as we draw closer to jurisdictional conference, we know that decisions will be made, beyond our control as a jurisdiction, that may impact our discernment process around the number of elections, if any, and assignments. As those decisions are made, we will continue to communicate with you as we recognize that we are on this journey together. NEJ Committee on Episcopacy

A. The Pre-Election Process

The Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy (2017-2020) has adopted the following process to precede the 2020 episcopal election in the jurisdiction. This process will be conducted by an Election Process Team to be appointed by the chairperson of the committee:

1. The document “2020.NEJ Election Process” has been approved by the committee and will be distributed to all delegates (through the delegation leaders) and to other persons and groups expressing interest in the process.
2. Three criteria must be met in order for an eligible elder to participate in the official pre-election process:
 - a. The elder shall have been officially nominated by a group below according to the rules of the NEJ which include:
 - Nominations to the episcopacy by an Annual Conference.
 - Nominations made by national racial and ethnic caucuses, as listed in the current edition of the *Book of Discipline*, or by their NEJ-related caucuses.
 - If a nomination is brought forward by a group or caucus, other than as noted above, a group of not more than six (6) persons comprised of three (3) current bishops (selected by the College of Bishops) and three (3) members of the Vision Table (selected by the Vision Table) shall decide whether to allow the nomination to be brought to the Jurisdictional Conference. The President of the College of Bishops shall select the chairperson of this group.
 - The official biographical information of nominees shall be presented to the delegates of the jurisdictional conference two weeks prior to the Conference. The official biographical form, which will be available by May, will be returned to the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee by June 24 and the committee will submit them in writing to the secretary of the jurisdictional conference no later than June 26, 2020.
 - b. The elder shall, by signing the document “Agreement of Principles for The Election of Bishops,” express their intention to abide by the provisions contained in that

document.

- c. The nominating body shall, as witnessed by the signature of its chairperson or other designated officer on the document “Agreement of Principles for The Election of Bishops,” express the intention of the group to abide by the provisions contained in that document.

Adopted by NEJ COE: 28 January 2020

B. Agreement of Principles for the Election of Bishops

The 2017-2020 Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy believes that the election of bishops is primarily a spiritual undertaking. We intend, therefore, that episcopal elections in the Northeastern Jurisdiction be held in an atmosphere in which:

- Delegates allow the Holy Spirit to work.
- Bishops are elected on the basis of their gifts in relation to the needs of the church.
- Delegates are free to vote individually as the Holy Spirit leads them.

We strongly encourage all persons involved in the election process to join us in agreement concerning the following:

- No delegate shall engage in exchanging (swapping) votes.
- No one shall communicate information concerning any numbers of proposed votes from their delegation or group for a particular nominee.
- No attempt shall be made to coerce any delegate to support a particular nominee.
- No effort shall be made within a delegation to ascertain numbers of votes for a particular nominee by straw vote or otherwise.
- No bishop shall be involved in the nomination and election process, other than as a spiritual leader and/or presiding officer of the jurisdictional conference in accordance with *The Book of Discipline*.

While annual conferences and other participating groups rightly nominate elders deemed to be called to the life and work of a bishop, our election process must never be primarily a political matter. Spiritual leaders are called by God and, at best, affirmed by our process.

We call upon all persons to respect the feelings of those who offer themselves for the episcopal office, to avoid statements and criticisms that are mean-spirited and hurtful, to seek out the truth if negative comments surface, and to share only information which is known to be true.

We recognize that the approach described in this document cannot be legislated. It is a matter of the soul and heart. It is integral to the covenant life we are called to live together in Christ. Our calling is not to elect the nominee of our own conference or group. Our calling is to elect those whom God has equipped and is calling to the ministry of general superintendent. This, by God’s grace, we intend to do.

Copies of this document shall be provided to all delegates to the 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference (through the delegation leaders) and to other participants in the election process. In Christian conscience, we call upon all—delegates, elders nominated for election, bishops of the church, members of caucuses, and others—to commit themselves to this document as well.

Adopted by NEJ COE: 28 January 2020

**Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church
Nominee or Nomination Signature and Acknowledgement Form**

Instructions: In compliance with the Rules of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, nominees or their Conference Secretary shall provide a description of the Conference nomination and election process.

When being used by a nominee or a representative of a nominating body to indicate intention to abide by the provisions of this document:

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE OR REPRESENTATIVE OF NOMINATING BODY
(Send to: NEJ COE: Sharon Gregory at conferencelayleader@wpaumc.org)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Check One: Nominee
 Representative of this nominating body

C. A Guideline for Discerning an Episcopal Nominee from our Annual Conference

This form “A Guideline for Discerning an Episcopal Nominee from our Annual Conference” is to be sent to the Annual Conference secretaries and the 2017-2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy to give to the newly elected delegation heads.

In light of the need for apostolic leadership for the United Methodist Church and in the spirit of the call for the renewal of the United Methodist Church from all corners of our church, the Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy requests that every delegation from the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference prayerfully examine potential Episcopal nominees with the following criteria. At the 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference each nominee will be asked to give tangible evidence of:

1. A life and ministry rooted in Wesleyan theology, spirituality and practice.
2. A proven record of pastoral fruitfulness. (Disciples made, discipleship processes implemented, professions of faith, small groups, etc.)
3. A demonstrated spiritual gift of leadership. (Give examples of ministry context where spiritual leaders were enlisted, equipped, and released for a Kingdom task.)
4. A demonstrated willingness to be held accountable for results and an ability to hold others accountable, with grace, for their results. (Staff or volunteers)
5. A track record of doing the “right thing” in difficult situations.
6. An exposure to the Annual, Jurisdictional and General Conference. (Cabinet experience, service on a committee, board or agency, etc.)
7. An experience in the global United Methodist Church communion. (Short-term mission teams, UMVIM, UMCOR, etc.)