

CHARTER of the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE of The Wesleyan Church

As Revised by the International Conference, January 28, 2012

6500. **Preamble.** There shall be an International Conference of The Wesleyan Church for the purpose of promoting worldwide holiness evangelism in keeping with the mission of The Wesleyan Church, coordinating the activities of The Wesleyan Church worldwide, addressing global concerns, promoting closer fellowship and mutual understanding, and providing a means for joint planning and cooperative action among all units and general conferences of The Wesleyan Church. The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church shall consist of those bodies which have originated in or which have joined with The Wesleyan Church and that adhere to the Essentials of The Wesleyan Church and other provisions of its Charter. Provision may also be made for associate members to be received which have not originated in or joined with The Wesleyan Church, but which are in harmony with The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church.

6502. **Organization and Governance.** The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church shall function through its quadrennial sessions composed of representatives from each General Conference, each Established National/Regional Conference and mission units functioning under a General Conference missions department. The number of representatives from each unit shall be determined according to the number of members, with due regard to the principle of lay representation. In the interim of International Conference sessions, it shall function through the International Board. The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church shall be organized and governed in accord with its Charter.

6504. **Article 1. Name.** The name of this organization shall be The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church.

6505. **Article 2. Purpose.** The International Conference shall give spiritual and ecclesiastical oversight to The Wesleyan Church worldwide by:

- (1) Providing a forum for the development of a global vision, strategy, and coordination of Wesleyan ministries around the world.
- (2) Speaking to the global issues affecting the International Church, including evangelism, education and compassion ministries.
- (3) Maintaining compliance to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church.
- (4) Providing time for celebration, worship, and world recognition of the advancement and challenges of the International Church.
- (5) Granting approval for an Established National/Regional Conference to move to full General Conference status.
- (6) Granting approval for mission units or National/Regional Church Conferences to advance to Established National/Regional Conference status.

6510. **Article 3. Membership.**

A. Membership Categories

- (1) The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church shall make provision for full members and associate members.
- (2) Full Members. Full members shall be as follows:
 - (a) They shall consist of those bodies which have originated in or which have joined The Wesleyan Church which adhere to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church and subscribe to the Charter and other provisions of The International Conference.

(b) A church body which has not originated in but wishes to join The Wesleyan Church, if it is deemed by The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church to qualify for full standing as a General Conference and if it agrees to adhere to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church, may be received by majority vote of The International Conference.

(c) A church body which has not originated in but wishes to join The Wesleyan Church, if it is deemed by The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church not to qualify for General Conference status, may be directed by The International Conference or the International Board to join a member General Conference.

(3) Associate Members. Associate members shall consist of church bodies of comparable General Conference status which have not originated in or joined The Wesleyan Church. An associate member shall be in harmony with The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church, shall subscribe to other provisions of The International Conference and shall be received by majority vote of The International Conference. Associate members shall have a voice but no vote at the International Conference.

(4) Full and associate members shall meet the financial obligations of membership as determined by The International Conference. Failure to pay membership assessment will put membership status on probation. Members who are on probation will receive no assistance on expenses for The International Conference but will have a voice and no vote.

B. Membership Status

6515. There shall be three ranks of membership: General Conferences, Established National/Regional Conferences, and mission units.

(1) A General Conference is a body that has full authority over the Church in its assigned territory, in keeping with the provisions of The International Conference. A General Conference has the right to manage its own internal governance, including revising its Discipline, as long as it does not violate The Essentials.

(2) An Established National/Regional Conference is a body which has originated in or joined one of the General Conferences of The Wesleyan Church and which has been authorized by its General Conference and approved by The International Conference to have a defined autonomy on the grounds that the following requirements have been satisfied:

(a) An effective church organization on the local, district, and/or national/regional levels.

(b) Effective programs for the nurture and training of members, new converts, children, young people, and lay workers.

(c) An effective program for ministerial training.

(d) Evidence of responsible stewardship of life and possessions, including the proper management of funds and the provision for the support of its own pastors, workers, and officers.

(e) A defined and operational program of evangelism, church planting, and cross-cultural mission outreach.

(f) The existence of a functioning property-holding body, or more than one such body if required by local laws.

(g) Agreement to adhere to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church.

(h) A Discipline as approved by the founding General Conference.

(i) An Established National/Regional Conference has “defined autonomy,” the right to manage its own internal governance which includes revising its Discipline, with the exception of Membership Requirements, as long as it does not violate The Essentials. An Established National/Regional Conference remains in relationship with the General Conference that founded it, the General Superintendent of the founding conference has a continuing role as mentor/coach and participation in the National/Regional Conference. Proposed changes in the Membership Requirements of an Established National/Regional Conference must be approved by the International Board. An Established National/Regional Conference may be advanced to the status of a General Conference by The

International Conference, upon authorization from the originating/initiating General Conference.

(3) Mission units shall be bodies such as national or regional multi-district conferences, established districts, provisional districts, or pioneer districts functioning under a missions department of a General Conference. Church governance and policy is administered through the Discipline provisions of said General Conference.

6516. **Criteria for Advancement to Established National/Regional Conference Status.** In addition to the recommendation of the supervising General Conference to the International Board, the following is a checklist of documentation that must accompany any application for advancement of a mission unit or other body to Established National/Regional Conference status. It is to be understood that these criteria will be used for a comprehensive review and composite evaluation of each application. Therefore, it is the overall strength that is being assessed rather than a rigid focus on each criterion. An applicant may request an exception on a specific requirement for cause.

(1) Effective church organization on local, district and/or national/regional levels demonstrated by:

- (a) An organized district or national structure
- (b) A minimum of 40 fully organized or established local churches (not counting preaching points or missions)
- (c) A minimum of 2,000 full members
- (d) Sufficient number of ordained ministers to support district and/or national/regional levels of administration
- (e) A process for collection of local church statistical data

(2) Effective program of discipleship and membership training demonstrated by:

- (a) Curricula for discipleship, lay leadership and membership training systems that reflect commitment to Wesleyan-Arminian theology
- (b) Active delivery systems for discipleship, lay leadership and membership training

(3) Effective program of ministerial education demonstrated by:

- (a) An approved curriculum or standards for ministerial education leading to ordination and reflecting commitment to Wesleyan-Arminian theology
- (b) A delivery system for ministerial education, such as a Bible school, theological institute, college, university or seminary; a program of ministerial education conducted in cooperation with another denomination or consortium; a non-residential ministerial training program; a properly supervised correspondence or Internet-based training program

(4) Evidence of responsible stewardship demonstrated by:

- (a) A self-supporting system for financing the district and/or national/regional administration
- (b) Properly approved annual budgets for district and/or national/regional administration
- (c) Annually audited financial reports for district and/or national/regional conferences

(5) Defined and operational programs of evangelism, church planting, and cross-cultural mission outreach demonstrated by:

- (a) An operational cross-cultural outreach strategy (if feasible)
- (b) A process for annual reporting of conversions and baptisms
- (c) An on-going strategy and track record of church planting

(6) Functioning property-holding body(ies) per local laws demonstrated by:

- (a) Directory information providing the legal name(s) of each such body
- (b) A copy of by-laws or official registration(s) identifying each such body

(7) Adherence to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church, demonstrated by a covenant of adherence to The Essentials signed by all the members of the highest governing board of the national/regional entity

(8) A *Discipline* approved by the supervising General Conference

6517. Criteria for Advancement to General Conference Status. An Established National/Regional Conference may appeal to the International Conference to be advanced to General Conference status, provided the following conditions have been met and a checklist of documentation accompany any application for such advancement. It is understood that these criteria will be used for a comprehensive review and composite evaluation of each application. Therefore, it is the overall strength that is being assessed rather than a rigid focus on each criterion. An applicant may request an exception on a specific requirement for cause.

1. Effective church organization on local, district and general levels demonstrated by:
 - a) An organized district and general conference structure.
 - b) A minimum of 200 fully organized or established churches (not counting preaching points or missions).
 - c) A minimum of 15,000 full members.
 - d) Sufficient number of ordained ministers to support district and general conference levels of administration.
2. Effective program of discipleship, membership training, and leadership development demonstrated by:
 - a) Curricula for discipleship, lay leadership, membership-training systems that reflect commitment to Wesleyan-Arminian theology.
 - b) Active delivery systems for discipleship, lay leadership and membership training.
3. Effective program of ministerial education demonstrated by:
 - a) An accredited Bible or liberal arts college.
 - b) An approved curriculum and standards for ministerial education leading to ordination and reflecting commitment to Wesleyan-Arminian theology.
4. Evidence of responsible stewardship demonstrated by:
 - a) A self-supporting system for financing each of the districts and the general conference administration.
 - b) Properly approved annual budgets for each district and the general conference administration.
 - c) A general conference budget committee.
 - d) Annual externally audited financial reports for the districts and for the general conference.
5. Defined and operational programs of evangelism, church planting, education, spiritual formation, cross-cultural mission outreach demonstrated by:
 - a) An operational cross-cultural outreach strategy.
 - b) A ministry in other countries beyond the nation or region defined by the general conference.
 - c) A process for annual reporting of conversions and baptisms.
 - d) An on-going strategy and record of accomplishment of church planting.
6. Functioning property holding body(ies) per local, area, and national laws, demonstrated by:
 - a) Directory information providing the legal name(s) of each such body.
 - b) A copy of by-laws or official registration(s) identifying each such body.
7. Adherence to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church, demonstrated by a covenant of adherence to The Essentials signed by all the members of the governing body of the general conference.
8. A *Discipline* that has been approved by the originating General Conference with required subsequent approvals by the International Conference.

THE ESSENTIALS

6520. Article 4. The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church.

(1) **Statement of Definition and Purpose.** The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church consist of an historic statement of faith and practice. Each general conference of The Wesleyan Church must subscribe to the Essentials. While each general conference is free to express its beliefs and practices in the terms most meaningful to its immediate mission and culture, it shall not in its constitution, articles of religion, or discipline contravene or contradict any provision of the Essentials.

(2) Statement of Faith.

Articles of Religion

1. Faith in the Holy Trinity

6530. We believe in the one living and true God, both holy and loving, eternal, unlimited in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things. Within this unity there are three persons of one essential nature, power and eternity — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Gen. 1:1; 17:1; Ex. 3:13-15; 33:20; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:28-29; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; John 1:1-2; 4:24; 16:13; 17:3; Acts 5:3-4; 17:24-25; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Eph. 2:18; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:16-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20

2. The Father

6540. We believe the Father is the Source of all that exists, whether of matter or spirit. With the Son and the Holy Spirit, He made man, male and female, in His image. By intention He relates to people as Father, thereby forever declaring His goodwill toward them. In love, He both seeks and receives penitent sinners.

Ps. 68:5; Isa. 64:8; Matt. 7:11; John 3:17; Rom. 8:15; 1 Peter 1:17.

3. The Son of God

6550. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, truly God and truly man. He died on the cross and was buried, to be a sacrifice both for original sin and for all human transgressions, and to reconcile us to God. Christ rose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and there intercedes for us at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all humanity at the last day.

Ps. 16:8-10; Matt. 1:21, 23; 11:27; 16:28; 27:62-66; 28:5-9, 16-17; Mark 10:45; 15; 16:6-7; Luke 1:27, 31, 35; 24:4-8, 23; John 1:1, 14, 18; 3:16-17; 20:26-29; 21; Acts 1:2-3; 2:24-31; 4:12; 10:40; Rom. 5:10, 18; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 14; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; 4:4-5; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb 2:17; 7:27; 9:14, 28; 10:12; 13:20; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:14.

4. The Holy Spirit

6560. We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is of the same essential nature, majesty, and glory, as the Father and the Son, truly and eternally God. He is the Administrator of grace to all, and is particularly the effective Agent in conviction for sin, in regeneration, in sanctification, and in glorification. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding, and enabling the believer.

Job 33:4; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13-15; Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6.

5. The Sufficiency and Full Authority of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

6570. We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments constitute the Holy Scriptures. They are the inspired and infallibly written Word of God, fully inerrant in their original manuscripts and superior to all human authority, and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine. We believe that they contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man or woman that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Both in the Old and New Testaments life is offered ultimately through Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and humanity. The New Testament teaches Christians how to fulfill the moral principles of the Old Testament, calling for loving obedience to God made possible by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

The canonical books of the Old Testament are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The canonical books of the New Testament are:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

Ps. 19:7; Matt. 5:17-19; 22:37-40; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:46; 17:17; Acts 17:2, 11; Rom. 1:2; 15:4, 8; 16:26; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 1:8; Eph. 2:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12; 10:1; 11:39; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:3-7; Rev. 22:18-19.

6. God's Purpose for Humanity

6580. We believe that the two great commandments which require us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, summarize the divine law as it is revealed in the Scriptures. They are the perfect measure and norm of human duty, both for the ordering and directing of families and nations, and all other social bodies, and for individual acts, by which we are required to acknowledge God as our only Supreme Ruler, and all persons as created by Him, equal in all natural rights. Therefore all persons should so order all their individual, social and political acts as to give to God entire and absolute obedience, and to assure to all the enjoyment of every natural right, as well as to promote the fulfillment of each in the possession and exercise of such rights.

Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 1:16-17; Job 31:13-14; Jer. 21:12; 22:3; Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:44-48; 7:12; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:27-29, 35; John 13:34-35; Acts 10:34-35; 17:26; Rom. 12:9; 13:1, 7-8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:10; Titus 3:1; James 2:8; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 2:5; 4:12-13; 2 John 6.

7. Marriage and the Family

6590. We believe that every person is created in the image of God, that human sexuality reflects that image in terms of intimate love, communication, fellowship, subordination of the self to the larger whole, and fulfillment. God's Word makes use of the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people and for revealing the truth that that relationship is of one God with one people. Therefore God's plan for human sexuality is that it is to be expressed only in a monogamous lifelong relationship between one man and one woman within the framework of marriage. This is the only relationship which is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over every other human relationship.

Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 20, 23-24; Isa. 54:4-8; 62:5b; Jer. 3:14; Ezek. 16:3ff.; Hosea 2; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:9; John 2:1-2, 11; 1 Cor. 9:5; Eph. 5:23-32; 1 Tim. 5:14; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 19:7-8.

8. Personal Choice

6600. We believe that humanity's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between right and wrong. Thus individuals were made morally responsible for their choices. But since the fall of Adam, people are unable in their own strength to do the right. This is due to original sin, which is not simply the following of Adam's example, but rather the corruption of the nature of each mortal, and is reproduced naturally in Adam's descendants. Because of it, humans are very far gone from original righteousness, and by nature are continually inclined to evil. They cannot of themselves even call upon God or exercise faith for salvation. But through Jesus Christ the prevenient grace of God makes possible what humans in self effort cannot do. It is bestowed freely upon all, enabling all who will to turn and be saved.

Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 20:40; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Luke 16:15; John 7:17; Rom. 3:10-12; 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 2:5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 11:6; Rev. 22:17.

9. The Atonement

6610. We believe that Christ's offering of himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other ground of salvation from sin but that alone. This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. It is unconditionally effective in the salvation of those mentally incompetent from birth, of those converted persons who have become mentally incompetent, and of children under the age of accountability. But it is effective for the salvation of those who reach the age of accountability only when they repent and exercise faith in Christ.

Isa. 52:13-53:12; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16; Acts 3:18; 4:12; Rom. 3:20, 24-26; 5:8-11, 13, 18-20; 7:7; 8:34; 1 Cor. 6:11; 15:22; Gal. 2:16; 3:2-3; Eph. 1:7; 2:13, 16; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 7:23-27; 9:11-15, 24-28; 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

10. Repentance and Faith

6620. We believe that for men and women to appropriate what God's prevenient grace has made possible, they must voluntarily respond in repentance and faith. The ability comes from God, but the act is the individual's.

Repentance is prompted by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of past sins, proper restitution for wrongdoings, and a resolution to reform the life. Repentance is the precondition for saving faith, and without it saving faith is impossible. Faith, in turn, is the only condition of salvation. It begins in the agreement of the mind and the consent of the will to the truth of the gospel, but issues in a complete reliance by the whole person in the saving ability of Jesus Christ and a complete trusting of oneself to Him as Savior and Lord. Saving faith is expressed in a public acknowledgment of His Lordship and an identification with His church.

Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3; 24:47; John 3:16; 17:20; 20:31; Acts 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 16:31; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 1:16; 2:4; 10:8-10, 17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8; 4:4-6; Phil. 3:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 11:6; 12:2; 1 Peter 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9.

11. Justification, Regeneration and Adoption

6630. We believe that when one repents of personal sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, that at the same moment that person is justified, regenerated, adopted into the family of God, and assured of personal salvation through the witness of the Spirit.

We believe that we are accounted righteous before God only on the basis of the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, being justified by faith alone, and not on the basis of our own works.

We believe that regeneration is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the pardoned sinner becomes a child of God. This new life is received through faith in Jesus Christ, and by it the regenerate are delivered from the power of sin which reigns over all the unregenerate, so that they love God and through grace serve Him with the will and affections of the heart, receiving the Spirit of Adoption.

Justification: Hab. 2:4; Acts 13:38-39; 15:11; 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 3:28; 4:2-5; 5:1-2; Gal. 3:6-14; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:9; Heb. 10:38.

Regeneration: John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-8; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:5, 10, 19; 4:24; Col. 3:10; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:1.

Adoption: Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5, 7; Eph. 1:5.

Witness of the Spirit: Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 2:3; 3:14, 18-19.

12. Good Works

6640. We believe that although good works cannot save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the fruit of faith and follow after regeneration. Therefore they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and by them a living faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Matt. 5:16; 7:16-20; John 15:8; Rom 3:20; 4:2, 4, 6; Gal. 2:16; 5:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:14; 3:5; James 2:18, 22; 1 Peter 2:9, 12.

13. Sin After Regeneration

6650. We believe that after we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to fall into sin, for in this life there is no such height or strength of holiness from which it is impossible to fall. But by the grace of God one who has fallen into sin may by true repentance and faith find forgiveness and restoration.

Mal. 3:7; Matt. 18:21-22; John 15:4-6; 1 Tim. 4:1, 16; Heb. 10:35-39; 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 24-25.

14. Sanctification: Initial, Progressive, Entire

6655. We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all the heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when believers present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers that person for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.

Gen. 17:1; Deut. 30:6; Ps. 130:8; Isa. 6:1-6; Ezek. 36:25-29; Matt. 5:8, 48; Luke 1:74-75; 3:16-17; 24:49; John 17:1-26; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; 26:18; Rom. 8:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:13, 24; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 3:10, 12-13; 4:3, 7-8; 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 10:14; 12:14; 13:12; James 3:17-18; 4:8; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 1:7, 9; 3:8-9; 4:17-18; Jude 24.

15. The Gifts of the Spirit

6670. We believe that the Gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself, and He is to be desired more than the gifts of the Spirit which He in His wise counsel bestows upon individual members of the Church to enable them properly to fulfill their function as members of the body of Christ. The gifts of the Spirit, although not always identifiable with natural abilities, function through them for the edification of the whole church. These gifts are to be exercised in love under the administration of the Lord of the church, not through human volition. The relative value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their usefulness in the church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them.

Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:38-39; 8:19-20; 10:45; 11:17; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-14:40; Eph. 4:7-8, 11-16; Heb. 2:4; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 4:8-11.

16. The Church

6680. We believe that the Christian church is the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, who is the founder and only Head of the church. The church includes both those believers who have gone to be with the Lord and those who remain on the earth, having renounced the world, the flesh and the devil, and

having dedicated themselves to the work which Christ committed unto His church until He comes. The church on earth is to preach the pure Word of God, properly administer the sacraments according to Christ's instructions, and live in obedience to all that Christ commands. A local church is a body of believers formally organized on gospel principles, meeting regularly for the purposes of evangelism, nurture, fellowship and worship. The Wesleyan Church is a denomination consisting of those members within district conferences and local churches who, as members of the body of Christ, hold the faith set forth in these Articles of Religion and acknowledge the ecclesiastical authority of its governing bodies.

Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 2:41-47; 9:31; 11:22; 12:5; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:28; 16:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:9-10, 21; 5:22-33; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 12:23; James 5:14.

17. The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

6690. We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the church commanded by Christ and ordained as a means of grace when received through faith. They are tokens of our profession of Christian faith and signs of God's gracious ministry toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen and confirm our faith.

We believe that water baptism is a sacrament of the church, commanded by our Lord and administered to believers. It is a symbol of the new covenant of grace and signifies acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ. By means of this sacrament, believers declare their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Matt. 3:13-17; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 3:5, 22, 26; 4:1-2; Acts 2:38-39, 41; 8:12-17, 36-38; 9:18; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Rom 2:28-29; 4:11; 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-29; Col. 2:11-12; Titus 3:5.

6700. We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and of our hope in His victorious return, as well as a sign of the love that Christians have for each other. To such as receive it humbly, with a proper spirit and by faith, the Lord's Supper is made a means through which God communicates grace to the heart.

Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:48-58; 1 Cor. 5:7-8; 10:3-4, 16-17; 11:23-29.

18. The Second Coming of Christ

6705. We believe that the certainty of the personal and imminent return of Christ inspires holy living and zeal for the evangelization of the world. At His return He will fulfill all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over evil.

Job 19:25-27; Isa. 11:1-12; Zech. 14:1-11; Matt. 24:1-51; 25; 26:64; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 17:22-37; 21:5-36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11, 23; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2:1-12; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 9:27-28; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 3:1-14; 1 John 3:2-3; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16; 22:6-7, 12, 20.

19. The Resurrection of the Dead

6710. We believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead of all people —of the just unto the resurrection of life, and of the unjust unto the resurrection of damnation. The resurrection of the righteous dead will occur at Christ's Second Coming, and the resurrection of the wicked will occur at a later time. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection of those who are in Christ. The raised body will be a spiritual body, but the person will be whole and identifiable.

Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:30-32; 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 14:14; 24:1-53; John 5:28-29; 11:21-27; 20:1—21:25; Acts 1:3; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:1-11; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-13.

20. The Judgment of All Persons

6715. We believe that the Scriptures reveal God as the Judge of all and the acts of His judgment are based on His omniscience and eternal justice. His administration of judgment will culminate in the final meeting of all persons before His throne of great majesty and power, where records will be examined and final rewards and punishments will be administered.

Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 10:15; 25:31-46; Luke 11:31-32; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27; 2 Peter 3:7; Rev. 20:11-13.

21. Destiny

6720. We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that there is a conscious personal existence after death. The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices and not from any arbitrary decree of God. Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ, but hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect this great salvation.

Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:34-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 13:3; John 8:21-23; 14:2-3; 2 Cor. 5:6, 8, 10; Heb. 2:1-3; 9:27-28; 10:26-31; Rev. 20:14-15; 21:1-22:5, 14-15.

6725. (3) Statement of Practice.

(a) Identification with the church. To be identified with an organized church is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all who are saved from their sins, and are seeking completeness in Christ Jesus. From the church's beginnings in the New Testament age, it has been understood that such identification involves the putting off of the old patterns of conduct and the putting on of the mind of Christ, and a unity of witness and worship.

(b) Biblical principles. In maintaining the Christian concept of a transformed life, The Wesleyan Church intends to relate timeless biblical principles to the conditions of contemporary society in such a way as to respect the integrity of the individual believer, yet maintain the purity of the church and the effectiveness of its witness. This is done in the conviction that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. While variations in culture may require variations in which the transformed life is evident or demonstrated, each general conference of The Wesleyan Church will be expected to adopt guidelines for its members providing for such evidence and demonstration in conformity with biblical principles.

(c) Worship and language. The Wesleyan Church believes in the miraculous use of languages and the interpretation of languages in its biblical and historical setting. But it is contrary to the Word of God to teach that speaking in an unknown tongue or the gift of tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or of that entire sanctification which the baptism accomplishes; therefore, only a language readily understood by the congregation is to be used in public worship. The Wesleyan Church believes that the use of an ecstatic prayer language has no clear scriptural sanction, or any pattern of established historical usage in the Church; therefore, the use of such a prayer language shall not be promoted among us.

6730. (4) **Statement of Relationship.** The unity of The Wesleyan Church worldwide shall be recognized and maintained in the following:

(a) The right of a member or minister to transfer from one unit (General Conference, Established National/Regional Conference, regional/national church) to any other such unit of The Wesleyan Church worldwide, with the understanding that consideration must be given to differences in requirements for licensing and ordination of ministers as provided for in the various disciplines of units worldwide.

(b) The right of a member or minister to election to office in any unit (as defined in Article 4:4a) of The Wesleyan Church worldwide provided that the qualifications of said office are met, with the understanding that the right to hold such office shall be subject to the transfer of church membership to the unit within which the election occurs and subject to *The Discipline* governing that unit.

(c) The right of any member body which has not reached the status of a fully established general conference to participate with full or partial powers through its duly elected representatives in the respective general conference to which it relates.

(This concludes The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church)

6735. **Article 5. International Conference.** The International Conference shall be comprised of delegates from Wesleyan General Conferences and Established National/Regional Conferences on a ratio of one ministerial and one lay representative for every 7,000 covenant/full members or major portion thereof, up to a maximum of 20 delegates from any General Conference. Established National/Regional Conferences not at the above numerical levels of organization shall be represented at the International Conference by the minister holding the highest Established National/Regional Church office and one lay member provided that all membership and financial obligations have been met. Mission units under the supervision of a Wesleyan General Conference that have not yet attained Established National/Regional Conference status with more than 2,000 covenant/full members shall have one ministerial and one lay representative with votes. Mission units with less than 2,000 but more than 200 full members shall have one ministerial or lay delegate with a vote. Mission units under any General Conference which have less than 200 members may be represented at the International Conference by one national ministerial or lay representative with voice but no vote. Associate members shall have one representative at the International Conference with voice but no vote. Members of the International Board are voting members of the International Conference.

6740. **Article 6. Officers.**

(1) The officers of the International Conference shall be the chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. Members of the International Board of General Superintendents shall serve as chair and vice-chair of the International Conference. The General Director of Global Partners shall serve as treasurer of the International Conference. The chair, vice-chair and secretary shall be elected by the International Conference from among its own members. The officers shall take office at the adjournment of the International Conference session electing them and shall continue in office until the adjournment of the next regular session or until their successors are elected.

(2) The person elected to the office of chair shall not serve successive terms.

(3) A vacancy in any office shall be filled by the International Board.

(4) An executive secretary may be authorized by the International Board, which shall outline his/her duties.

(5) The International Conference may create and fill other offices as needed.

(6) The International Board shall be responsible for overseeing the budget for the International Conference and for planning all necessary details for convening and conducting the International Conference, including meeting notices, meeting site selection, travel instructions for representatives and other logistics of the meeting.

6743. **Article 7. Meetings and Agenda.** The International Conference shall meet quadrennially. If practicable, it shall be held in conjunction with a meeting of one of the General Conferences. It shall be the responsibility of the International Board of the International Conference to arrange for its meeting, considering the cost of travel, entertainment and the general interests of the International Wesleyan Church and its associate members. The International Board shall establish the agenda for the International Conference.

6745. **Article 8. Powers and Duties.** With full respect for the authority of the member General Conferences and Established National/Regional Conferences, the powers and duties of the International Conference shall be:

- (1) To promote evangelism ministries around the world.
- (2) To stimulate the deeper spiritual life of Wesleyans worldwide.
- (3) To promote Wesleyan doctrines as set forth in The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church.
- (4) To encourage development of each member body in support, government, and propagation.
- (5) To conduct a study of world trends and opportunities with a view to release position statements and securing united Wesleyan action.
- (6) To further mutual understanding of cultural, economic, political, and linguistic factors affecting the progress of the gospel.
- (7) To receive reports from member conferences and other bodies, to evaluate the same and to make recommendations to the appropriate bodies.
- (8) To receive from member General Conferences proposed amendments to the Essentials and direct the process for General Conferences to vote on proposed changes and report the results to the member conferences (cf. 6765:1). Established National/Regional Conferences and mission units may only submit recommended amendments to The Essentials through their initiating/supervising General Conference, which must also endorse the proposal.
- (9) To review member bodies to maintain compliance with The Essentials.
- (10) To approve advancement to General Conference status of an Established National/Regional Conference upon authorization of its initiating/supervising General Conference or to revoke by a two-thirds vote the status of an Established National/Regional Conference that no longer meets the agreed requirements and to refer it back to its initiating/supervising General Conference as a mission unit.
- (11) To approve advancement of a mission unit to an Established National/Regional Conference status upon authorization of its initiating/supervising General Conference.
- (12) To consider the special needs common to member bodies, to study and develop position statements on issues of global, moral and social concerns, and make recommendations regarding the same to the appropriate bodies through their respective General Conference officers.
- (13) To receive and to process new applications for membership.
- (14) To organize area fellowships where geographic situation, mutual interest, and need for spiritual counsel and encouragement make it advisable.

6746. **Resolutions and Voting.** All legislative proposals intended for consideration by the International Conference, including proposed amendments to the International Charter, shall be designated as “resolutions.” Resolutions may be submitted by any General Conference, the General Board (or equivalent chief governing body) of a member General Conference, an Established National/Regional Conference, the chief governing body of a mission unit entitled to voting representation at the International Conference, the International Board, the International Board of General Superintendents, or any three members of the International Conference. Unless otherwise required by the International Charter, a majority of those members present and voting at the International Conference shall be sufficient to adopt any resolution or other motion.

6750. **Article 9. International Board of The Wesleyan Church.**

(1) **Meetings and Agenda.** The International Board shall meet in an organizing meeting immediately following the International Conference and then again just prior to the next International Conference. The chair of the International Conference shall be the chair of the International Board. In case of emergency, exigency or special circumstances, the chair shall have authority to call additional meetings of the International Board in consultation with the International Board of General Superintendents. The International Board may meet by means of telephone or video conferencing,

internet conferencing or other technologically-enabled means. The chair shall establish the agenda for all meetings of the International Board.

(2) **Membership.** Membership of the International Board shall be comprised of seven persons, consisting of one general superintendent from each General Conference (one of whom shall be elected as chair and another as vice-chair of the International Board and the International Conference), a treasurer (who shall be the General Director of Global Partners), a secretary, and two members-at-large to be elected by the International Conference from among any of its members who do not reside in the North American, Philippines, or the Caribbean General Conference.

(3) **Purpose.** The purpose of the International Board shall be to fulfill the interim functions, duties, and powers of the International Conference.

(4) **Quorum and Voting.** Unless otherwise required by the International Charter, a majority vote of all eligible members of the International Board shall be sufficient to approve any motion.

(5) **Duties and Powers.** -The International Board shall have full authority to act on behalf of the International ~~Board~~ **Conference** in the interim of its sessions. It shall fulfill special assignments and transact any and all business referred to it by the International Conference, exercising all the normal duties and powers of the International Conference, except that the International Board may not conduct any business requiring more than a majority vote of the International Conference nor amend any Standing Rules of the International Conference. The International Board shall set the agenda for the International Conference. It may meet in person or by means of telephone or video conferencing, internet conferencing or other technologically-enabled means. The International Board shall meet at the call of the chair and the agenda shall be set by the chair.

6755. **Article 10. Finance.** The General Conferences and Established National/Regional Conferences shall assume financial responsibility for sending delegates to the International Conference. Travel expenses for all General Conference, Established National/Regional Conference and mission unit representatives to the International Conference are to be paid by the individual bodies. Hotel and meal costs on-site for all International Conference representatives are to be paid by the International Conference. The cost of travel, lodging and meals for International Board members attending International Board meetings will be paid by the International Conference.

6760. **Article 11. International Board of General Superintendents.** The International Board of General Superintendents shall be comprised of all the General Superintendents of those world units which have achieved General Conference status. The International Board of General Superintendents shall meet at least once per quadrennium, select their own chair, and have provision for additional meetings should the International Board of General Superintendents deem necessary. The International Board of General Superintendents may meet by means of telephone or video conferencing, internet conferencing or other technologically-enabled means. The chair of the International Board of General Superintendents shall prepare the agenda for its meetings. The purpose of the International Board of General Superintendents is for communication, fellowship, and deepening relationships between senior leaders of the International Church as it relates to the Wesleyan strategy for worldwide evangelism and discipleship.

6763. **Article 12. International Board of Appeals.** The International Board of General Superintendents shall serve as the International Board of Appeals. Its duties shall be:

(1) To hear and determine any appeals from actions of any fully established General Conference as to its adherence to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church. If the International Board of Appeals shall find a General Conference in violation of The Essentials, that General Conference shall be expected to rescind the violating action. If it does not, the International Board of Appeals shall report its findings and the response to the International Board which shall have authority to expel the erring General Conference. At the discretion of the International Board of General Superintendents, it may provide for the reorganization of the loyal elements of The Wesleyan Church within the area of that General

Conference and for the declaration that the other ministers and members are withdrawn from The Wesleyan Church.

(2) To review the adherence of associate members to the conditions of associate membership and to recommend to the International Board the termination of their membership if violation of these conditions persist.

(3) To adjudicate any problem that may arise between General Conferences involving boundaries or other matters of comity.

(4) The International Board of Appeals shall meet on a regular basis in conjunction with meetings of the International Board of General Superintendents. A special meeting may be called by the chair. The International Board of Appeals may meet by means of telephone or video conferencing, internet conferencing or other technologically-enabled means.

6765. Article 13. Amendments.

(1) Amendments to The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church in Article 4 must be approved by a two-thirds aggregate vote of all General Conferences who are members of the International Conference (cf. 6745:8).

(2) The Charter of the International Conference, other than The Essentials in Article 4, may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at any meeting of the International Conference.

(3) All amendments are subject to review by the International Board of Appeals.

(4) The International Board of Appeals shall supervise the referendum voting on amendments.

6770. Article 14. We Speak with One Voice. The Essentials of The Wesleyan Church in Article 4 constitute the central beliefs and core values of the International Conference and must be embraced, supported and, when necessary, defended by all of its members. However, there is a colorful tapestry of cultural, historic and geographic distinctions among members of the International Conference in terms of administrative structures, behavioral expectations and unique customs. Such diversity is a blessing to be celebrated, and confidence should be preserved in the maturity and capacity of each autonomous general conference (cf. 6515:1) and each established national/regional conference (in keeping with its “defined autonomy” as provided in 6515:2) to determine matters related to its own cultural practices, preferences and customs. Each session of the International Conference may consider specific matters that emerge from time to time as critical issues that transcend culture, customs or preferences, and on which all members of the International Conference must stand together, so as to speak with one voice in regard to such issues. The following statements represent the collective conscience of the International Conference of The Wesleyan Church on such issues and may be amended by a two-thirds vote of all delegates present and voting at any session of the International Conference. Any member body of the International Conference is authorized to propose amendments or additions to these statements, which shall be presented to the International Conference if recommended by the International Board.

(1) **We Speak with One Voice on _____.** *(Space reserved.)*