

# ELECTION

## A. The 2022 SEJ COE Pre-Election Process

The Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy (2016-2020) has adopted the following process to precede the **2022** 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 “Principles for the Election of Bishops” 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. Each delegation will review the document, give assent to abide by it, and submit a signed copy on behalf of the delegation.
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 an annual or missionary conference of the jurisdiction, by the delegation from an annual or missionary conference of the jurisdiction, or by another group in the life of The United Methodist Church, with this action to be communicated in writing to the secretary of the jurisdictional conference no later than July 1, 2022.
  - b. The elder shall, by signing the document “Principles Agreement for The Election of Bishops,” express his or her 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 “Principles Agreement for The Election of Bishops,” express the intention of the group to abide by the provisions contained in that document.
3. Each nominee and nominating body shall be permitted to distribute one biographical statement (Rule 17), submitted to the SEJ secretary and posted on the SEJ website and printed in the Advance DCA. Each nominee may have two general mailings (brochures, cards, or emails). Each nominee and nominating body may also develop a website. **Delegate contact information should not be shared with anyone else for any other reason.**
4. Nominees will be presented to the delegations through a video recording that should not be longer than 10 minutes. Each annual conference communicator will be asked to help produce the video for quality and consistency.
5. Interviews of nominees by individual delegations (or delegations in combination, as seems best), will be held at Lake Junaluska on Tuesday, November 1.

Although it refers, not to the pre-election process, but to the election itself, the following item has also been adopted:

6. Any eligible elder, who is not a nominee in this process and who receives 10 or more votes on any ballot, will be permitted to address the conference for no more than 10 minutes and, as provided in Rule 17, submit a biographical statement to the SEJ secretary for publication.

## **B. Pre-election Process Regarding Social Media, Invitations and Questionnaires**

The Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy (2016-2020) has adopted the following guidelines to standardize the pre-election process for candidates and eliminate confusion related to (1) Use of Social Media, (2) Annual Conference Delegation and caucus invitations, and (3) Surveys and Questionnaires requested by caucus groups.

1. **Social media** (including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and You Tube posts and email): We urge all episcopal nominees, as well as those who support the nominees, to abide by the Pre-Election Guidelines found in the SEJ COE Handbook ELECTION, Section A. Which reads: *Each nominee and nominating body shall be permitted to distribute one biographical statement (Rule 17), submitted to the SEJ secretary and posted on the SEJ website and printed in the Advance DCA. Each nominee may have two general mailings (brochures, cards, or emails). Each nominee and nominating body may also develop a website.*

The use of social media should also be consistent with the “Principles Agreement for the Election of Bishops” found in the SEJ COE Handbook ELECTION, Section A. The use of social media should not violate the spirit of our election principles agreement and should not be used to add to the body of materials outlined above and deemed sufficient for the discernment process for episcopal elections. Social media advertising and targeting are not permitted.

2. **Annual Conference Delegation, Interest Group or Caucus Group invitations:** We urge all groups, official and unofficial, within the SEJ to refrain from extending an invitation to any episcopal nominee for the purposes of meeting, addressing, or interviewing. Moreover, we urge all episcopal nominees to respectfully decline all invitations to meet with groups, official or unofficial, throughout the time of the person’s nomination or endorsement until meeting for the beginning of the 2022 SEJ Conference. With no prior General Conference session, With no prior General Conference session, a virtual conversation with candidates may be held. A single one-hour conversation will be arranged with each nominee, which will be recorded for later viewing by all delegates. The primary agenda will be questions and answers.
3. **Surveys and questionnaires by individuals or groups:** We urge all groups and individuals, official and unofficial, to refrain from submitting questions or questionnaires to nominees for episcopal election. Furthermore, we urge all nominees to respectfully refuse to address, based on our covenant agreement guidelines, submitted questions or questionnaires, whether presented in printed or electronic form. A questionnaire will be developed by the SEJ COE Elections Process Committee. This questionnaire will be sent to every nominee. Responses to the questionnaire will be submitted to the SEJ Conference Secretary and posted on the SEJ website.

## Principles Agreement for the Election of Bishops

The 2016-2020 Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Episcopacy believes that the election of bishops is primarily a spiritual undertaking. We intend, therefore, that episcopal elections in the Southeastern 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
- Each delegate is free to vote as he or she is led by the Spirit.

We strongly encourage all persons involved in the election process to join us in agreement that

- No delegate shall engage in exchanging (swapping) votes.
- No one shall communicate information concerning any numbers of proposed votes from his/her 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*.
- No lists of preferred nominees shall be distributed to delegates.

Such an understanding of our election process dates back at least to the 1996 jurisdictional conference, when delegation leaders first adopted a statement similar to this. It is crucial that all persons in the jurisdiction read, understand, and subscribe to it. 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 2022 Southeastern 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 it as well.

--Adopted January 21, 2019

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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**  
**(a copy should be signed by both the episcopal nominee and a representative of the nominating body)**  
**(Send to: SEJ COE Election Process, SEJ Secretary, 319 Sunny Springs Ln, Knoxville, TN 37922)**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ 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 2016-2020 Southeastern 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 Southeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy asks that every delegation from the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference prayerfully examine potential Episcopal nominees with the following criteria. At the 2022 Southeastern 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. (Increase in worship attendance, 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.)