

# Report of the Committee on Reference, April 24, 2024

The Committee on Reference convened at 7:00 A.M. on Wednesday April 24, 2024. The following actions were taken:

- Approved a request from the Alaska Annual Conference to withdraw petition #21076
- Reversed a decision made by the committee on 04-22-2024 to accept a late submission piece of legislation from the California-Pacific Conference. Upon further review by the petitions secretary, the petition did not meet the criteria for valid legislation. The committee upheld the decision of the Petitions Secretary to deem the late submission legislation as

invalid.

- Approved a request from the General Commission on Archives and History to withdraw petitions #20335 and #20334
- Approved a request from Melissa Drake, member of the Advance Legislative Research Panel, to move petition #20980 from General Administration to Conferences

The Committee adjourned at 7:43 A.M. The Committee will reconvene at 7:00 A.M. on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

Submitted by Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn, Chair

## GCORR Equity Monitoring Report No. 3

“Learning from others, especially people we do not know, is often difficult. We find it easier to give than to receive, to teach than to learn. This changes, however, as we enter the lives of others and come to know them well enough to see their strengths and weaknesses, their needs, and the wealth they have to offer.” Joetta Handrich Schlabach, **Extending the Table: A World Community Cookbook**

Around the world, much is learned in the experience of preparing or sharing a meal with a group of others. When that group is characterized by multiple cultures, languages, ethnic, and tribal identities, the richness of the experience expands. Yet, for those who are used to setting the table, determining the content of the meal, inviting the guests, and setting the rules of etiquette for the gathering, it can be challenging to accept a requested change at their table or to sit comfortably at a table set by someone else.

We were reminded by the official parliamentarian

that the “purpose of our rules is to make certain that no one’s rights are violated.” The rules are in essence the etiquette for our global gathering. How leaders utilize the rules can greatly impact the equity of the process and the outcomes of the General Conference. As we acknowledge the extensive efforts and planning that make this gathering possible, there were areas of concern that delegates and participants communicated to us:

- While diversity was visible within Tuesday’s worship, it did not fully reveal the worldwide nature of the UMC at this seminal moment in our history. There were people among us who felt unrepresented, isolated, and unseen.
- An authentic land acknowledgement and official welcome from the historic Indigenous leadership of this land, either the Lumbee Nation or the Catawba Nation, was absent from the opening of

General Conference and viewed as disrespectful by some indigenous members. What acknowledgements need to take place in these settings?

- We received information that a lower percentage of Central Conference delegates that were able to attend General Conference 2024 is even lower than in 2016.

The body of delegates quickly acted on some of these concerns, which may indicate the willingness to learn from one another. A motion was made to amend the Rules by adding a new rule requiring that an Indigenous Person be invited to offer an authentic acknowledgment of land ownership. Following the adoption of the rules another motion was made that in part implored delegates from the United States to practice intentional listening so that voices from Central Conference Delegates would be given equitable opportunities to influence and impact process and content.

On Wednesday, morning we heard from our Youth and Young Adult representatives, Senesie Rogers and Alejandra Salemi. Mr. Rogers commented on the Wesley Quadrilateral as “an applicable art that can help us understand our inclinations towards our various cultural heritages.” Ms. Salemi urged us, when dividing up our assets, to “live outside the boxes of Conference Halls, Zoom Meetings, and Plans” and to seek “the magic of the Holy Spirit...shaking hands, eye to eye, and being in human connection together.”

As we prepare to today, we invite you to consider these questions:

1. What outcomes and expectations are desired from the proposed legislation you will be considering?
2. What factors and forces contribute to the outcomes and expectations?

## GCSRW Report April 25

Bishop Laurel Merrill was the first presider this morning. The presiding committee seems to be intentionally celebrating the diversity of our episcopal leaders. We acknowledge how the Episcopal Address, offered by Bishop L. Jonathan Holsten, invited us to allow God to “free us for joyful obedience!” He called us to reflect on the age-old questions:

Who are we?

Who we say we are?

Who we want to be?

By the power of the Holy Spirit there is hope for us to be better than we are today.

The General Commission on the Status of Women was highlighted as part of the video presentation. A reminder to the church of how impactful our message of challenging the church to full inclusion of women lay and clergy is to the worldwide church. It supports GCSRW resource, "Welcoming the Women Pastor, District Superintendent and

Bishop." We celebrate the gender diversity in the video as well as the opening presenters.

Our hope is that we will prayerfully respond to the Young People's Address. As Alejandra Salemi stated, "the children are watching . . . Are we living as those God wants us to be? The young people have claimed the church as its own! Let's start listening more and compromising with those we are in community with." We cherish Salemi's reminder to "Be still... and know that I am God." During the week, her words will echo in our minds to "Be quiet, be patient, shut up at times, and know that God is with us." The pressure is on—what we do today will impact generations to come! Salemi crystallized our calling as connectional people: "If you don't have enough hope, I have enough for both of us." Senesie T. A. Rogers led us to imagine passing the casket trolley. To some, the casket trolley was a symbol of death, but in death we are reminded of God's resurrection hope! Once we have been accepted in the household of faith, we