

Accountability Covenant

This accountability covenant was used by the Commission on a Way Forward to guide their work together. It is offered here in hope that it will similarly guide the delegates and other participants of the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference.

What are the covenantal practices that are so essential to our work together that we must perform them with excellence in order to fulfill our mission?

We covenant to pray for one another, for The United Methodist Church, for the mission of Christ, and for a way forward together.

We covenant to attend all meetings unless unexpected urgencies prevent us, to prepare adequately for meetings by reading assigned books or papers, to stay engaged and focused, to participate actively in learning experiences and conversations, and to follow through with any assignments or projects that we agree to accept. We will offer our best and highest to the work we share as servants of Christ and leaders of the Church.

We covenant to treat one another with respect, to assume the best in others, to represent one another in the best possible light, to speak the truth with love, and to practice and expect trustworthiness. We will each do our part to offer grace, to create an atmosphere of hospitality, and to moderate our anxiety through mutual encouragement, good humor, and with genuine love for one another.

We covenant to listen actively to others; to seek first to understand rather than to be understood; to ask for clarity or help from others; to remain attentive to cultural, language, and contextual diversity; to be patient with one another; and to foster hopefulness and mutual encouragement.

We covenant to maintain strict confidentiality, and so we will avoid inappropriate sharing of personal information, stories, or perspectives of others without their consent.

What are the behaviors that are so harmful that failure to avoid them will cause us to fail?

We covenant to avoid harmful speech toward or about others, during our meetings and outside our meetings. We will refrain from blaming others, misrepresenting others, making judgments about others, or using derogatory speech about others.

We covenant to avoid the practices of interrupting others, ignoring others, discounting others, speaking for others, or exhibiting dominating or domineering behavior. We shall practice self-monitoring, gently holding one another accountable for divisive or hurtful behaviors.

We covenant to avoid dividing into factions, politicizing our processes, and retreating into camps and silos based on ideology or regional affinities, and so we will intentionally seek to cultivate deeper relationships with those we do not know rather than merely spend time with those we already know.

We covenant to restrain ourselves from distracting behaviors during our meeting sessions so that we may remain attentive to one another and to our work, and so we will refrain from checking e-mails, reading online news, and otherwise letting ourselves become distracted for outside obligations.

We covenant to abide by the agreed-upon protocols for sharing news, information, or photos on social media.

Additional Commitment:

We will use Matthew 18 as a model for how to work with each other.

Reports and Legislation Information

2019 Special Session of the General Conference Budget Report

The original plan to fund the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference included a reduction of days at the 2020 General Conference, allowing a portion of the 2020 General Conference budget to provide partial funding for the 2019 Special Session. The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) would fund the remainder of the Special Session. However, after reviewing the changes to the *Book of Discipline* enacted by the 2016 General Conference (specifically ¶¶101 and 507.10-11), the Commission on the General Conference decided not to reduce the number of days in 2020.

Paragraph 101 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline* states that “The Commission on the General Conference is directed to set aside adequate time in the first three days of the 2020 General Conference for plenary consideration and action on *Part VI, General Administration and Organization*, submitted by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters.” Paragraph 507.10-11 states that “All petitions that have been approved by a legislative committee shall receive a vote by the plenary session at that year’s General Conference,” and “All petitions that have been submitted to the General Conference shall receive a vote of a legislative committee.”

In light of these new disciplinary requirements, the Commission on the General Conference found that a shortened 2020 General Conference would be unrealistic.

GCFA’s board of directors approved up to \$3 million in funding to go toward the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference. United Methodist Communication’s (UMCom) leadership approved funds to pay for the production-related needs of the General Conference, leading to an estimated savings of \$300,000 in the General Conference budget. In addition, the UMCom board of directors approved a grant of \$450,000 to cover communication-related needs outside the scope of their responsibility that would normally come from the General Conference budget. Collaboration with other ministry partners resulted in an additional income of \$154,000.

Significant efforts were made to implement cost saving measures to fund the 2019 General Conference within budget. Joint contracts for major vendors were done together for both the 2019 and 2020 General Conferences, including translation, decorator, and voting systems. Housing will be done by direct payment to the hotels for delegates, which will eliminate approximately 10% in Missouri state taxes.

The full budget for the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference is presented on page 17.

2019 Special Session Budget

Income

GCFA Approved Funding ¹	\$2,986,000
United Methodist Communications' Grant ²	450,000
Ministry Partners	154,000
Other Income	25,000
Total Income	\$3,605,000

Expenses

General Conference Commissions & Committees – Commission on the General Conference, Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision,	27,000
General Conference Staff Offices – Business Manager, Secretary, and Treasurer	57,000
Operations – convention center and equipment rental, publishing and distribution of ADCA and DCA, worship and music, labor	816,000
Language Services – Translation and Interpretation	500,000
Delegate Expenses – Travel and Per Diem Allowance	2,205,000
Total Expenses	\$3,605,000

Surplus / (Deficit) \$0

¹ The General Council on Finance and Administration's funding is up to \$3,000,000. Any changes in other incomes or expenses will directly affect this amount, but the amount will not exceed \$3,000,000.

² United Methodist Communications also provided funding for the production costs (approximately \$300,000) in addition to the \$450,000 grant.