

Constitution and Bylaws

of the

Western District Conference

Revised July 18, 1995

Amendments to Article I and III
Approved October 23, 1999

Revised July 6, 2002
Revised June 1, 2006
Revised July 28, 2007
Revised July 30, 2011
Revised July 5, 2014
Revised July 30, 2016
Revised August 5, 2017
Revised August 3, 2024

49 the congregation and description of present activities, a membership covenant or
50 statement of faith and constitution adopted by the group, and other helpful documents
51 such as an annual report and a list of charter members. Congregations are encouraged to
52 have at least ten members before seeking membership. The Executive Board will make a
53 recommendation to the Delegate Assembly. The vote for acceptance into the Western
54 District Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority of all delegate votes cast.

- 55 2. Associate Membership. This level of membership is intended to recognize a relationship
56 with a congregation whose primary affiliation is with another area conference. Members
57 of associate member congregations may not be WDC delegates or be elected or appointed
58 to conference office or WDC commissions. They may be appointed to committees and
59 task forces.
- 60 3. Church Plant/Emerging Congregation. New congregations, certified as such by the WDC
61 Executive Board, may participate fully in the life of WDC. A church plant/emerging
62 congregation may have one delegate at Delegate Assemblies. A church plant/emerging
63 congregation becomes a member congregation by following the process outlined in
64 section A.1., above.
- 65 4. Dual Affiliation – In the interest of cooperative ministries, congregations may hold
66 membership in more than one area conference.

67 ***Section B. Expectations***

68 Congregations affiliated with the Western District Conference should be familiar and in
69 agreement with the Common Faith and Mission of the Western District Conference. Every
70 congregation is expected to support WDC ministries, respect its resolutions and decisions, send
71 delegates to its Delegate Assemblies, promote the welfare of WDC with members serving on its
72 commissions, committees, task forces and other positions, and support the area conference with
73 financial gifts. Member congregations are expected to select pastors who are in harmony with
74 the Common Faith and Mission of WDC and who are eligible to be credentialed by WDC.

75 ***Section C. Withdrawal***

76 The process of a congregation requesting withdrawal from the Western District Conference
77 should be in the spirit of Christian love and, if possible, with efforts of restoration and
78 reconciliation guided by the Western District Conference Executive Board in dialogue with the
79 particular congregation. A congregation is released from Western District Conference when a
80 two-thirds majority of all delegates vote favoring such action after a written notice of the
81 proposed action has been printed in official conference publications and/or mailed to all member
82 congregations not less than sixty days prior to voting sessions. Upon leaving WDC, a
83 congregation forfeits all claims to WDC property and privileges.

84 **Article IV. Amendments**

85 These articles may be amended by two-thirds of the votes cast at a regular or special Delegate
86 Assembly of the Western District Conference, provided that a written notice of proposed
87 amendments has been printed in official conference publications and/or mailed to all member
88 congregations not less than sixty days prior to the voting session.

95 **BYLAWS OF WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE**

96
97 **(How We Are Organized)**
98

99 The basic structure of the Western District Conference is a regional grouping of congregations
100 with a delegate body representing congregations at delegate assemblies. An executive board,
101 four commissions, committees, task forces as needed and a conference minister oversee the
102 ministry of the conference.
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105 **Bylaw 1. Delegate Assembly**
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107 ***Section A. Meetings***

108 The Western District Conference shall convene annually at a place and time designated by the
109 Executive Board. Special Delegate Assemblies may be called by the Executive Board.
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111 ***Section B. Quorum***

112 Representation by a majority of the congregations belonging to the conference shall constitute a
113 quorum at either regular or special Delegate Assemblies. Representation is not limited to
114 delegates physically present at a Delegate Assembly, but is extended to those present via linking
115 technology such as video, telephone and internet.
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117 ***Section C. Delegates, Voting, and Floor Privileges,***

- 118 1. Delegates. Congregational representation at Delegate Assembly shall be by delegates
119 selected and certified by their congregation.
120 2. Voting. Each congregation is entitled to one vote at Delegate Assembly for every thirty
121 members or any fraction thereof. No congregation may cast more votes at Delegate
122 Assembly than it is entitled to on the basis of its membership. The right to vote is
123 restricted to delegates, who may carry more than one vote. A congregation's votes
124 cannot be carried by delegates of another congregation.
125 3. Floor Privileges. Floor privileges are granted to all WDC delegates. At the moderator's
126 discretion, floor privileges may be extended to other persons attending Delegate
127 Assembly.
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129 ***Section D. Gifts Discernment Committee, Nominations, Elections and Appointments***

- 130 1. A Gifts Discernment Committee of six members shall be elected by the Delegate
131 Assembly. The Executive Board shall nominate persons for election to the committee.
132 Two committee members shall be elected each year at the annual Delegate Assembly.
133 The Gifts Discernment Committee shall nominate no fewer than one or more than two
134 persons for each elective office to be filled. Nominations, elections and appointments
135 should be made with sensitivity and balance with regard to the makeup of the conference.
136 The Gifts Discernment Committee shall present the slate of nominees at the Delegate
137 Assembly.
138 2. Nominations may be made from the floor. Persons nominated from the floor need to be
139 notified in advance and give permission for their nomination.
140 3. Elections. To be elected, a person must have a majority of the total number of votes cast
141 for his/her position. Any person elected to a conference position must be a member of a
142 WDC congregation.

- 143 4. Appointments. For vacated positions needing to be filled between Delegate Assemblies,
144 the Executive Board, upon recommendation of the Gifts Discernment Committee, shall
145 make appointments who will serve the remainder of the term. Persons appointed to
146 complete a vacated term are eligible to be elected to two full terms.

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148 ***Section E. Conference Year***

149 The conference year shall begin with the close of the annual session and extend through the
150 annual session the following year. All elected positions shall be governed by the conference year.
151 The fiscal year begins October 1 and extends through September 30 of the following year.

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154 **Bylaw 2. Conference Leadership and Structure**

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156 ***Section A. Conference Officers***

157 The officers of the conference shall be a moderator, a moderator-elect, and a secretary.

158 1. Duties

- 159 a. The moderator shall assume leadership normally associated with this office and
160 shall preside at Delegate Assembly, Executive Board, Executive Committee and the
161 Reference Council. When possible and advisable, the moderator shall officially
162 represent the conference to the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) of Mennonite
163 Church USA. The moderator shall be available to counsel with the conference
164 minister to determine the agenda for all Executive Board, Executive Committee and
165 Reference Council meetings.
- 166 b. The moderator-elect shall be available for various assignments for which he/she is
167 responsible to the moderator. In the absence of the moderator, the moderator-elect
168 shall exercise all the rights and duties of the moderator.
- 169 c. The secretary shall be responsible for all minutes of the conference sessions, the
170 Executive Board, the Executive Committee and the Reference Council. The
171 secretary shall attend to such correspondence as may be determined by the
172 moderator.

173 2. Elections and terms of office

- 174 a. The moderator shall come into this office after having served as moderator-elect.
175 The moderator's term of office is for two years or through the completion of two
176 annual sessions of the conference. Under normal circumstances, serving as
177 moderator-elect and then moderator, involves four years of service as a Western
178 District Conference officer.
- 179 b. The moderator-elect shall be elected by the delegate body of the annual sessions of
180 the conference, and he/she shall serve in this capacity for a two-year term. The
181 moderator-elect shall accede to the office of moderator after two years or in the
182 event that the moderator is no longer able to serve. In the latter case, the moderator-
183 elect shall complete the term as moderator as well as fulfill the term for which
184 he/she has been chosen. Should the moderator-elect accede to the office of
185 moderator early during the term, the Executive Board shall appoint a person to
186 fulfill the remainder of the moderator-elect term until the next Delegate Assembly.
- 187 c. The secretary shall be elected by the delegate body at the annual sessions of the
188 conference, and he/she shall serve in this capacity for a two-year term, with
189 eligibility for a maximum of two consecutive two-year terms.

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Section B. Executive Board

The Executive Board is the overall visioning, direction-setting, prioritizing and policy-making board of the Western District Conference. The Executive Board acts on behalf of the delegates between Delegate Assemblies. The Executive Board creates structures and organization that employ the spiritual gifts of the conference in its witness to Jesus Christ. The Executive Board shall be composed of nine to twelve members – the three elected conference officers, six elected at-large members and up to three additional members appointed as needed by the Executive Board to bring desired balance or expertise to the board. Board members may participate via linking technology such as video, telephone and internet. A quorum is a majority of elected members present.

1. Duties:

- a. Provide leadership and spiritual oversight in articulating and monitoring the vision and priorities of Western District Conference.
- b. Promote communication among WDC leadership persons and groups in specific ways, such as: exchange of minutes, regular reporting to the board, staff presence at commission meetings, regular meetings of the four commission chairpersons and appointing board members to connect with a specific commission.
- c. Approve the WDC Policy Manual. Create new policies as needed and periodically review and update the policies.
- d. Appoint a conference minister as the primary administrative officer of WDC. Guide, assist and support the conference minister in the oversight of the mission, ministries and staff. With the conference minister, determine desired staffing levels and positions to carry out WDC priorities.
- e. Conduct, or provide for a limited annual review of the conference minister and a major review every three to five years.
- f. Activate a search committee when the position of conference minister becomes vacant, and act upon the recommendation of such committee for a replacement.
- g. Call special meetings of the commissions, Reference Council or the delegate body when pressing needs make such meetings advisable.
- h. Facilitate Reference Council meetings by bringing issues to the Reference Council for discussion and counsel.
- i. Upon recommendation of the Gifts Discernment Committee, fill vacancies on commissions and committees as they occur between Delegate Assemblies.
- j. Nominate candidates for the Gifts Discernment Committee.
- k. Act on Task Force applications.
- l. Receive an annual budget recommendation from the Stewardship Commission, and after review and modification (if needed), submit the budget to the Delegate Assembly for action.
- m. Be responsible for the Delegate Assembly, including the program, the credentials of delegates, resolutions, and recommending the annual budget.
- n. Between Delegate Assemblies, be responsible for approving any necessary deviations from the delegate-approved budget, with input and consideration from appropriate WDC staff, commissions, committees, or task forces.
- o. Determine the nature and scope of partnership arrangements with other area conferences of Mennonite Church USA and other institutions and agencies.
- p. Appoint area conference delegates to MC USA assembly sessions.

239 q. Appoint three persons to the Constituency Leaders Council (Conference Minister,
240 Conference Moderator and another representative). The representative is appointed
241 for one term of two years and may be renewed once.

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243 2. Elections and terms of office

244 a. The Executive Board members, elected and appointed, except for conference
245 officers, shall serve three-year terms, with the possibility of one additional three-
246 year term. Elections or appointments shall be staggered to optimize continuity of
247 leadership.

248

249 ***Section C. Executive Committee***

250 This committee shall consist of the three elected officers plus the conference minister ex officio.
251 It shall meet as needed to transact such business and offer counsel as may be required for the
252 orderly and timely conduct of WDC agenda. The Executive Committee shall make decisions
253 concerning projects and assignments authorized by the Executive Board, but in all cases these
254 will be reported to the full Executive Board at its next meeting.

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256 ***Section D. Commissions (Ministerial Leadership, Resource, Church Planting, Stewardship)***

257 Four commissions shall be responsible for providing leadership and resources to carry out the
258 priorities and ministries of the Western District Conference – Ministerial Leadership, Resource,
259 Church Planting, and Stewardship. Each commission shall have six elected members.

260 1. Election. Two members shall be elected at each Delegate Assembly for a three-year term
261 with their terms beginning at the close of the Delegate Assembly. Members may serve
262 two consecutive terms on the same commission. No person may hold concurrent
263 membership in two commissions except in an ex-officio capacity.

264 2. Organization. Immediately following the Delegate Assembly all commissions shall elect
265 a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. They shall report the results to the WDC
266 office.

267 3. Meetings. Each commission shall meet regularly during the year, including attendance at
268 the Reference Council meetings. A quorum is a majority of elected members present.
269 Commission members may participate via linking technology such as video, telephone
270 and internet.

271 4. Task Force Applications. Commissions shall process Task Force applications or the
272 ongoing viability of an existing Task Force as they relate to the mission and priorities of
273 the area conference before making a recommendation to the Executive Board for action.

274 5. Budget. Each commission shall develop and propose an annual budget to the
275 Stewardship Commission. The Stewardship Commission compiles and discerns
276 commission budget proposals and recommends an annual WDC budget to the Executive
277 Board. The Executive Board recommends the WDC annual budget to the Delegate
278 Assembly for action.

279 6. Policies. Commissions shall review, update and recommend changes in policy and
280 procedures to the Executive Board for action.

281 7. Reporting. Commissions shall report to the Executive Board through regular sharing of
282 minutes and other channels as arranged by the Executive Board. Commissions shall
283 give an annual written report regarding their activities and future plans.

284 8. Non-Elected Persons at Meetings. Commissions may invite the attendance of non-
285 elected persons at their meetings, but non-elected persons may not bring motions or vote
286 in commission decisions.

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Section E. Committees

Committees represent more permanent structures for certain WDC ministries. The Executive Committee, Gifts Discernment Committee, Youth Ministry Committee, Staff Relations Committee and Historical Committee are standing committees in relationship to the Executive Board and four commissions.

1. Executive Committee. See Bylaw 2. Section C.
2. Gifts Discernment Committee. See Bylaw 1. Section D.
3. Youth Ministry Committee. See Bylaw 3. Section B. 1.d.
4. Staff Relations Committee. See Bylaw 3. Section D. 1.e.
5. Historical Committee. See Bylaw 3. Section B. 1.f.

Section F. Task Forces

In response to special needs or interests, task forces may be created through an application process for the purpose of performing special duties and assignments. *(See Appendix A for the application form.)* Applications for the creation of a task force shall be processed initially by a commission before being forwarded to the Executive Board for action. Funding for a task force is a responsibility of the commission to which the task force is accountable. The Executive Board also may create task forces by the application process. Task force assignments expire after three years unless renewed by the Executive Board. Task force members may participate via linking technology such as video, telephone and internet.

Section G. Reference Council

Reference Council serves as a council of WDC leaders, discerning and advising the Executive Board, the Delegate Assembly and the Western District Conference on issues confronting each of them relative to faith and life. Reference Council is not a decision-making body but rather serves to engage and promote dialogue, to foster just and loving relationships, to voice collective aspirations and concerns, and to provide opportunity for communication between and among Executive Board, commissions, committees, task forces, WDC staff, and others with ties to Western District Conference.

The Reference Council shall be composed of the Executive Board, all members of all commissions, committees and task forces, WDC staff, WDC delegates to Mennonite Church USA assemblies, WDC persons elected and appointed to institutional relationships including MC USA committees, boards and agencies. The Reference Council shall meet prior to and in conjunction with the annual Delegate Assembly, and at one other time between annual Delegate Assemblies. Reference Council may be convened in special session by the Executive Board.

Bylaw 3. Commissions

Section A. – Ministerial Leadership Commission

The Ministerial Leadership Commission helps congregations find and sustain pastoral leadership and serves the unique needs of pastors, youth ministers and church planters through encouragement, support, accountability and credentialing. The Ministerial Leadership Commission resources congregational elders and deacons as part of the ministry team with pastors.

1. Duties

- 335 a. Credential by commissioning, licensing and ordaining candidates for ministry.
- 336 b. Serve as a consultative body to the conference minister in ministerial placement.
- 337 c. Support personal and spiritual growth for pastoral leadership through counsel,
- 338 personal evaluation, continuing education, and professional assistance.
- 339 d. Support a code of ministerial ethics in keeping with Mennonite Church USA
- 340 documents.
- 341 e. Function in a consultative role for the resolution of tensions between pastors and
- 342 congregations.
- 343 f. Give attention to ministerial salary issues and assist congregations in developing
- 344 adequate salary levels for their pastors using MC USA guidelines.
- 345 g. Resource ministry teams that include pastors and deacons through workshops,
- 346 retreats, and other appropriate events.
- 347 h. Encourage and promote a congregational and WDC culture of calling persons to
- 348 leadership in the church.
- 349 i. Relate to the Mennonite Church USA Office of Congregational and Ministerial
- 350 Leadership as needed.

351

352 ***Section B: Resource Commission***

353 The Resource Commission empowers Western District Conference congregations as they
 354 witness to Jesus Christ in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, connect with God’s mission in the
 355 world and provide faith formation resources for all ages. The Resource Commission encourages
 356 use of the Conference Resource Library and supports and promotes training events for
 357 congregations and their leaders. The Resource Commission has a broad agenda that requires
 358 careful allocation of resources and discernment according to WDC priorities.

359 1. Duties

- 360 a. Give leadership to the vision, usage and policies of the Conference Resource Library.
- 361 b. Resource congregations or special groups in a variety of ways.
- 362 c. Encourage and resource faith formation in congregations
- 363 d. Appoint and oversee a Youth Ministry Committee (number and term length to be
- 364 determined by the Resource Commission) to envision and implement area conference
- 365 youth ministries which engage congregations in reaching, resourcing, and reviving
- 366 youth for an everlasting relationship with Christ.
- 367 e. Provide resources in the areas of worship, music, evangelism, outreach, peace and
- 368 justice, ethnic relationships, special needs and other issues affecting congregations
- 369 and communities.
- 370 f. Appoint an Historical Committee (number and term length to be determined by the
- 371 Resource Commission) to develop policies about items of historical and cultural
- 372 interest including the collection, preservation, and availability of official records and
- 373 materials pertaining to the Western District Conference and its congregations via a
- 374 relationship with Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College as the official
- 375 depository of this material.

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377 ***Section C: Church Planting Commission***

378 The Church Planting Commission provides leadership and resources for church planting
 379 initiatives and fosters relationships with emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite groups. The Church
 380 Planting Commission helps emerging groups and their leaders connect with the congregations,
 381 resources, staff, and structure of Western District Conference.

382 1. Duties

- 383 a. Seek out and encourage Anabaptist/Mennonite emerging groups such as church
- 384 plants, fellowships, and churches seeking affiliation with the Mennonite church.
- 385 b. Encourage existing Western District Conference congregations to be alert to
- 386 God's activity in their locations that may signal an emerging group. Invite
- 387 congregations to understand that creating new congregations is an essential and
- 388 natural activity of every healthy church.
- 389 c. Offer practical resources to emerging groups.
- 390 d. Discover and assess potential church planting leaders.
- 391 e. Provide ongoing support, training, coaching and accountability for church
- 392 planters.
- 393 f. Develop effective patterns and appropriate policies for the fruitful development of
- 394 new churches.
- 395 g. Generate and allocate funding for church planting activities.
- 396 h. Establish networks of support among emerging groups and connect them with
- 397 established congregations.
- 398 i. Network with Western District church planting staff and resources of Mennonite
- 399 Church USA.
- 400

401 ***Section D: Stewardship Commission***

402 The Stewardship Commission gives oversight to the Western District Conference legal,
 403 financial, personnel and property matters and promotes and encourages participation in the
 404 ministries of the conference through communication, prayer, volunteerism and financial support
 405 with an emphasis on firstfruits giving.

406 1. Duties:

- 407 a. Encourage and receive donations, fees and bequests of real and personal property on
- 408 behalf of the Western District Conference. Insure an orderly process of accounting
- 409 for and reporting of WDC income, expenditures, accounts and investments.
- 410 b. Administer the Revolving Fund, make loans from the fund in accordance with such
- 411 guidelines as the Stewardship Commission may provide.
- 412 c. Lead the process of developing an annual WDC budget and present the budget to the
- 413 Executive Board for its approval and submission to the Delegate Assembly.
- 414 d. Develop and implement fund-raising initiatives and strategies.
- 415 e. Appoint a three member Staff Relations Committee (three year staggered terms with a
- 416 two term limit) to oversee personnel matters and policies in consultation with the
- 417 conference minister.
- 418 f. Oversee the management, maintenance and policies of 2500 Place and other WDC-
- 419 owned property. The Stewardship Commission may delegate certain management,
- 420 maintenance and policy functions to other WDC entities.
- 421 g. Promote participation in Western District Conference by communicating the
- 422 ministries of WDC, developing and maintaining networks of prayer support,
- 423 connecting with congregations through a network of representatives and area
- 424 meetings as needed.
- 425 h. As directed by the Executive Board, represent WDC in all legal matters as the
- 426 administrative arm of WDC. Execute all necessary legal documents and insure the
- 427 safekeeping of important documents, papers and electronic files.
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430 **Bylaw 4. Staff**

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Section A. Conference Minister

The conference minister shall be appointed by and is responsible to the Executive Board; he/she serves as the primary administrative officer and head of staff for the Western District Conference. The conference minister (or designee) serves as the official representative to other institutional relationships. The qualifications for the appointment, the memo of understanding, and the evaluation of the conference minister shall be determined by the Executive Board as set forth in the Policy Manual of the Western District Conference. The conference minister (or designee) shall be an ex officio member of any WDC commissions, committees and task forces and shall attend the meetings of the Reference Council, the Executive Board, and the Executive Committee.

Section B. Other Conference Staff

Other conference staff may be appointed by the Executive Board upon recommendation of the conference minister. The qualifications for appointment, the memo of understanding, and the evaluation of each staff member will be determined by the Staff Relations Committee, under the supervision of the conference minister, as set forth in the Policy Manual of the conference.

Bylaw 5. Institutional Relationships

The Western District Conference relates to many organizations that are independent but have official ties to the conference and its ministries. Western District Conference elects or provides for the appointment of members to these organizations at their request or per by-law requirements. Such appointments shall be made by the Executive Board. Western District Conference also values partnerships with other organizations that do not require WDC appointments or elections. All these organizations are invited to relate to Western District Conference as needed through participation at Reference Council, Delegate Assembly, annual reports, and cooperative projects of mutual interest and benefit.

Bylaw 6. Rules of Order

In all matters not covered by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Western District Conference, the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order is a helpful guide. Conference leadership may use other means such as spiritual discernment or combining worship and work to process agenda.

Bylaw 7. Amendments

Bylaws may be amended by a majority of the votes cast at a regular or special session of the Delegate Assembly, provided that a written notice of proposed amendments be printed in official WDC publications and/or mailed to all member congregations not less than sixty days prior to voting session.

Revised July 18, 1995

479 Amendments to articles II and III approved October 23, 1999
480
481 Revised July 6, 2002
482
483 (Delegate Draft – June 1, 2006)
484
485 (Revised July 28, 2007)
486
487 Delegate Draft presented for delegate action, Summer Assembly, July, 2011
488
489 Draft presented for delegate action, Annual Assembly, July 5, 2014
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491 Revised July 30, 2016 upon delegate action at the WDC Annual Assembly
492
493 Revised August 5, 2017 upon delegate action at the WDC Annual Assembly
494
495 Revised August 3, 2024 upon delegate action at the WDC Annual Assembly

Appendix A

Task Force Application

1. Task Force Name _____

2. Accountable to: (circle one)

Executive Board Ministerial Leadership Commission Resource Commission Church Planting Commission Stewardship Commission

3. List All Members: (Name, Address, Phone, Email)

4. Purpose/task of task force:

5. Budget (if any) request (please list; provide narrative):

6. Beginning date of Task Force:

7. Signature of Task Force representative:

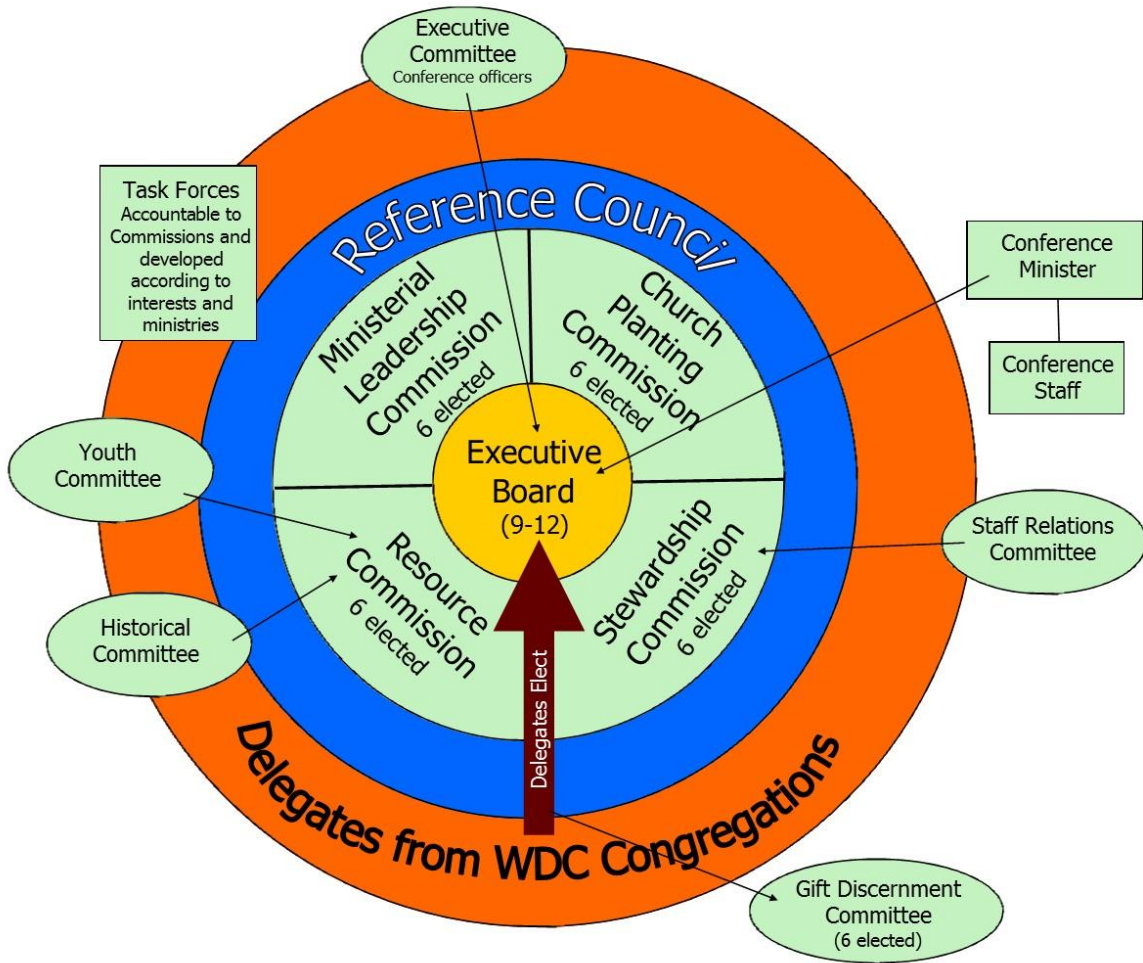
_____ Date: _____

Signature of Commission Chairperson:

_____ Date: _____

Please send application to Western District Conference, Conference Minister, Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117 or email to wdc@mennowdc.org. The Executive Board will take action on the application.

Western District Conference Structure



May 2014