

The following Resolution is presented in a spirit of goodwill to fulfill the business tabled at the Missouri Mid-South Conference Annual Gathering on Saturday, October 19, 2024.

**RESOLUTION TO RATIFY  
CONFERENCE MINISTER SEARCH AND CALL PROCESS  
FOR THE MISSOURI MID-SOUTH CONFERENCE  
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**WHEREAS** the Bylaws of the Missouri Mid-South Conference give to the Board of Directors (formerly the Conference Council) the responsibility to “engage the services of an interim to fill the vacancy” of a Conference Minister or Associate Conference Minister position, leaving to the Conference Council/Board of Directors the discretion to determine the specific parameters of the “interim” Conference Minister role during any given vacancy of the position, in response to the needs of the Conference; and

**WHEREAS** the highest covenantal responsibility of the Board of Directors, and of any committees or subcommittees it shall deem necessary to create and empower according to the bylaws, and of all those employed or contracted or consulted by the Conference, is to seek the welfare of the Conference as a whole and endeavor to act in the best interests of the Conference in all matters, responding to the needs of the Conference as such needs arise; and

**WHEREAS** in 2021 the scope of the vacant position of Conference Minister originally responded to the need for sabbatical coverage, which is not explicitly described in the Conference bylaws separately from any other “interim” vacancy of the position; and

**WHEREAS** the Personnel Committee in 2021 interviewed four candidates for the Sabbatical Conference Minister position, determining that Rev. Mary Nelson was the most qualified and suitable candidate, and the Conference Council agreed with the Personnel Committee’s recommendation to hire Rev. Nelson as Sabbatical Conference Minister, and subsequently entered into a call agreement with her to that end; and

**WHEREAS** the nature of the vacancy in the position of Conference Minister changed after this call agreement for a Sabbatical Conference Minister position was executed, resulting in a substantial expansion of the scope of the vacant position and redevelopment of the call agreement accordingly as a Transitional Conference Minister position, also not explicitly described in the bylaws separately from any other “interim” vacancy; and

**WHEREAS** the Conference Council determined that the Personnel Committee’s initial search for a Sabbatical Conference Minister was appropriate for and sufficient to the needs of the Conference in the expanded scope of the vacancy as a Transitional Conference Minister position, and that Rev. Nelson was still the most qualified and suitable candidate to fulfill this expanded scope; and

**WHEREAS** these events occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, at a time when vaccination was not available to the general public, all travel was restricted, regular use of electronic video meeting software was normalized, and the ability to create long-term plans or contracts/commitments was severely limited; and

**WHEREAS** the resources provided by the national setting staff for Conference Minister search and call included a variety of options for parameters that may be set forth in the call agreement, and the Conference Council determined that it was in the best interest of the Conference to allow for flexibility of parameters of the call agreement, in recognition that the needs of the Conference were actively evolving, and employed the recommended language for “Designated-Term Ministers” according to the national setting’s Call Agreement Workbook (2016) to establish the call agreement between the Conference Council and the Transitional Conference Minister, and employed the language stating that the Transitional Conference Minister may be eligible for candidacy for the eventual settled position; and

**WHEREAS** the resources provided by the national setting staff for search and call also recommended that “designated-term ministers” be regarded as internal candidates if eligible for consideration for the settled position, conferring on the Conference Council/Board of Directors the ability to grant the minister preferential candidacy (colloquially known as the “first right of refusal”), thus impacting the scope or charge of a future search committee or other committee engaging in any part of the search and call process, and the Conference Council and Transitional Conference Minister agreed to follow this recommended practice if they eventually discerned a shared sense of call regarding candidacy for the settled Conference Minister position; and

**WHEREAS** a duly-called Conference Annual Gathering on April 24, 2021 failed to maintain a quorum and the business of the meeting did not proceed as planned, including adoption of proposed new bylaws, and Rev. Nelson’s call agreement had been written in alignment with the proposed bylaws, so when Rev. Nelson began working as Transitional Conference Minister on May 1, 2021, her call agreement did not align with the existing bylaws, and the Conference Council and Rev. Nelson agreed that the spirit of their call agreement with Rev. Nelson was valid and that it was in the best interest of the Conference to retain Rev. Nelson as Transitional Conference Minister in spite of the temporary misalignment, and Conference members were immediately notified of the misalignment, and the proposed bylaws were eventually adopted on November 6, 2021, bringing the two documents into alignment (and changing the Conference Council to a Board of Directors); and

**WHEREAS** the Board of Directors extended the contract with the Transitional Conference Minister twice during her tenure, in July 2022 and July 2023, in order to respond to the emerging needs of the Conference, and the Conference members were notified of these extensions immediately via publication on the Conference website and in the Conference newsletter, as well as reporting to the Conference Annual Gathering; and

**WHEREAS** in October 2022 the national setting staff person for Conference Minister search and call support attended the Conference Annual Gathering, participating in a panel discussion of current challenges, trends, and conditions in the landscape of Conference search and call, and making himself available for conversation with all CAG participants, offering a

thorough understanding of the best practices for Conference search process, including the increasing prevalence of remote work and “designated-term” agreements with preferred candidacy, and Conference members had the opportunity to make suggestions and ask questions at that time; and

**WHEREAS** in July 2023 the Board of Directors voted to form a Search Committee, in accordance with the Bylaws of the Conference; and

**WHEREAS** the Board of Directors, upon reaching out to the national setting staff for Conference search and call support, was advised to adopt a two-step search process, consisting of a six-person Discernment Committee tasked with establishing a Conference Minister job description, and then later a Search Committee only in the event that the Transitional Conference Minister and/or the Board determined that they did not discern that it was in the best interest of the Conference for the Transitional Conference Minister to be granted preferred candidacy, and the Board agreed with this recommended modification and notified the Conference promptly in written and verbal reports to the Conference Annual Gathering before and on October 14, 2023, providing the members with information about this revised plan and reasons for it, as well as the Discernment Committee’s makeup, responsibilities, and an expected timeline, and members of the Conference had the opportunity to make suggestions and ask questions at that time; and

**WHEREAS** the Discernment Committee held a series of publicly-announced listening sessions throughout Summer 2024, where participants had the opportunity to identify and discuss the Conference’s needs regarding Conference staff leadership and relationship, and a variety of participants from across the Conference did engage in these listening sessions and provide their opinions and input, which the Discernment Committee reported to the Board of Directors and used to inform their creation of the job description for the settled Conference Minister position; and

**WHEREAS** the Board of Directors carefully evaluated the Discernment Committee’s work in Summer 2024, including the Committee’s findings and the job description they created, and concluded that it was in the best interest of the Missouri Mid-South Conference to recommend Rev. Nelson as their preferred candidate for the position of the settled Conference Minister;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:**

1. Ratification of Board Actions

The actions taken by the Conference Council/Board of Directors in developing and implementing a modified search process for the Conference Minister position; final approval of Conference Minister job description; and presentation of Rev. Nelson as preferred candidate, are hereby ratified.

2. Ratification of Actions of the Discernment Committee

The actions and discernment of the Discernment Committee, leading to their recommendation of the job description for the settled Conference Minister, are hereby ratified.

3. Eligibility of Transitional Conference Minister

The Transitional Conference Minister is hereby confirmed as eligible for election to the position of settled Conference Minister, thereby discontinuing the immediate need for a full Search Committee in order to honor the contractual relationship with Rev. Nelson.

4. Ratification of Related Actions

All other actions taken by the Conference Council/Board of Directors and the Discernment Committee in support of this modified search and call process are hereby ratified.

This resolution [was/was not] adopted by a vote of the Missouri Mid-South Conference Delegates at a duly called Special Meeting on January 11, 2025.

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Board Chair

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Board Secretary