

CHARGE CONFERENCE GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE SESSIONS

As required by ¶246.8 of the 2016 Book of Discipline, “Notice of time and place of a regular or special session of the charge conference shall be given at least ten days in advance”.

Notice must be given by two or more ways. We encourage use of as many of these methods as are possible in your local church situation. Two or more of the following methods will work:

- Spoken notice during live streamed or recorded online worship services
- Written notice posted on your website in a prominent location, a bulletin type document, and/or a newsletter
- Email notice sent to all congregation members for whom you have email addresses. If you have a website, the email can also point to a notice and information posted on your website.
- Phone tree applications or plans that allow you to call all congregation members
- Texting applications that allow you to text all congregation members for whom you have cellphone numbers
- Notice by mail. We realize this method has a cost, and could be difficult for many churches right now, but it is an available option if that works for your situation.

Notices to the congregation shall include the purpose of the charge conference, the date & time, and the information that the charge conference will be happening in an online platform using Zoom or some other online conferencing application.

Separately, share the instructions for joining the online meeting with the members of your church council/charge conference body. It is not necessary (or even advisable for security reasons) to share those specific instructions publicly in online notices of the meeting.

So that we can accomplish our United Methodist Church policy of open meetings when a charge conference is in session, even online, the following additional language needs to be included in your notice:

As is always the case, charge conference sessions are open meetings in The United Methodist Church. If you are not a member of our church council / charge conference, but wish to observe this charge conference session, please contact _____ at _____ for the information about how to join the online meeting. However, only elected church council / charge conference members will be able to participate in the meeting and vote.

Holding an Online Charge Conference:

Holding a charge conference via Zoom or another online conferencing application is the preferred method for holding charge conference meetings during this time. We need to follow all state and local guidelines, and make our best efforts to keep everyone safe. Online meetings make it possible to do that while accomplishing our necessary business.

Per the *Book of Discipline*, the only business that can be transacted is that which is in harmony with the purpose(s) stated in the call/notice. The district superintendent or another Elder shall join the meeting to preside. If necessary, the district office will provide a Zoom invitation for you to share with your church council / charge conference members. The members present and voting at a duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum. The membership of the charge conference shall be as defined in ¶246.2 of the *Book of Discipline*.

Attendance should be taken by the charge conference/recording secretary, and voting should be done in such a way as to allow votes to be appropriately recorded and observed. If you are dealing with a matter like voting on a candidate for ministry which requires a written ballot, you can use the Zoom polling feature or arrange for ballots by mail.

Minutes should be taken to record the actions of the charge conference, and any reports, presentations, and “handouts” shared should become a part of the minutes.

The complete minutes of the charge conference session should be included in the Agenda and Minutes form in the “Submittable Forms” section of your church dashboard.