

## OUR U.M. STANDARDS – EDUCATIONAL PIECE 2024

**Intent:** To help Indiana annual conference members understand the three different standards by which we operate as the Indiana United Methodist Church.

### Three Standards

There are three basic standards by which we as the Indiana Conference must operate. Two (The Book of Discipline and Judicial Rulings) are beyond our direct local Indiana control and one (our Indiana Rules Document) is drafted and adopted by us. Here is a brief explanation of each standard:

#### 1) The Book of Discipline

The Book of Discipline is our primary authority for how we operate and function in ministry together. It is “written” and clauses within it are determined by each General Conference every 4 years (during a normal cycle) and thus our Indiana delegates have vote in its final form. As United Methodists, The Book of Discipline is our direction on how to operate our local churches, and conferences. The Book of Discipline applies to all United Methodists and Conferences. We cannot violate its tenets (with any rule, motion, or resolution), although where it does not touch on a particular issue our Indiana Rules Document may act as a supplement.

#### 2) The Indiana Conference Rules Document

The Indiana Conference Rules Document is drafted/proposed by our INUMC Rules & Structure Committee (which is a group of diverse persons who meet numerous times throughout the year to update and consider issues related to our rules and structure). These rules only apply in Indiana and typically address matters that are left (by The Book of Discipline) to the discretion of each conference individually.

So, for example, the Book of Discipline says, “If the lay membership should number less than the clergy members of the annual conference, the annual conference shall, by its own formula, provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize lay and clergy membership of the annual conference” [Section VI par. 32]. This clause allows each annual conference to create its own “rules” to determine the formula for equalizing members (so long as those rules don’t violate any other parts of The Book of Discipline).

The Rules & Structure Committee only proposes a set of rules and structure which is ultimately determined by the vote of the annual conference members each year in June (it is one of the first actions taken at each annual conference session). This is your document.

#### 3) Judicial Rulings from the Judicial Council

Thirdly, our denomination has a Judicial Council, which acts as a legal body for the United Methodist Church. The Judicial Council helps with interpretation and consistency in applying The Book of Discipline throughout our various conferences across the nation. It passes rulings on whether-or-not various local conference rules, motions, resolutions are or are not in line with the Book of Discipline.

1 Over many decades there has developed a standing body of “rulings” by the Judicial Council  
2 which conferences generally must operate in line with. For example, if the Judicial council has  
3 ruled in the past (or rules in the present day) on a questionable issue of the Book of Discipline,  
4 then their ruling is the official and binding understanding of that issue for all United Methodists.

5  
6 Therefore, United Methodists operate our churches and conferences by *The Book of Discipline*  
7 *as The Discipline is interpreted by the Judicial Council rulings.*

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9 **Conclusion:** The Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church operates and does ministry as a  
10 collective body within these three standards. The hope is that these three standards create an even/consistent  
11 and transparent “playing field” for all persons within the United Methodist Church to do ministry together.

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13 Rev. Paul Wagner

14 INUMC Connectional Ministries Associate

15 & Convener of the Rules & Structure Committee 2024