

# Report of the Action Committee

June 20, 2015

## Amendment to the WNY District Standing Rules

### 48. BUDGET ASSESSMENT CAPS

The District Budget shall be computed on only the first ~~\$515,000~~ **\$525,000** of assessable income. This budget cap shall be reviewed annually by the District Board of Administration and any changes be recommended to the ~~Annual~~ District Conference.

*Recommended by the District Board of Administration*

*This represents a 1.9% increase and would take effect for the 2016-17 year if approved.*

## General Conference Memorial #1 - Covenant Membership Commitment Toward Family.

### Article 3. Covenant Membership Commitments

265. Those admitted to Covenant Membership in our churches commit themselves to demonstrate their life in Christ in such ways as: *(this is followed by 12 sub-paragraphs, the Covenant Membership Commitments)*

Toward Family

*(Recommendation would replace current paragraphs 265.5 and 265.6 with a new paragraph)*

**Whereas**, Paragraph 265.6 (added in 2012) appears to somewhat contradict the previous paragraph 265.5 in the following way: 265.5 lists several sexual behaviors that are stated to be “the only biblical grounds for considering divorce” and yet 265.6 adds some other abusive behaviors and then states that these “may justify separation or divorce;”

**Whereas**, Both paragraphs 265.5 and 265.6 deal with a similar topic, a unified statement would harmonize our principles for holy living within the family by rendering our position in one consistent and seamless paragraph;

**Whereas**, Respecting the decisions of our body in the past, the proposed paragraph does not seek to add anything “new” beyond that which is stated in our Articles of Religion (esp. see 222) and by seeking to preserve the language of the current paragraphs, changing and ordering language only where it seems to improve upon that to which we have already agreed;

**Whereas**, It is more edifying and helpful to the understanding of the reader if a statement first seeks to deliver the positive principles of our position on the subject of marriage and family and then explains the cautions and prohibitions, which we derive from those positive principles;

**Whereas**, Out of a practical concern to give guidance to the pastor, who so often counsels and ministers to families in difficulty, a statement is called for that expresses a modesty of language and creates room for pastoral discernment and the leading of

the Holy Spirit in matters of marriage and divorce, while at the same time encouraging him or her to stand confidently on principle;

**Whereas**, The word “justify” in 265.6 unnecessarily and perhaps unintentionally implies an unqualified goodness to “separation or divorce” that is not quite harmonious with Scripture’s toleration of divorce without condoning it;

**Whereas**, We, The Wesleyan Church, seek to root our commitments in Scripture, a statement that utilizes, retains and relies on the language of Scripture provides a more richly textured image of what a good and holy marriage looks like rather than focusing mostly on what a good marriage is not;

**Resolved**, That paragraph 265 be amended by striking 265.5 and 265.6 in their entirety and substituting them with the following paragraph in bold;

***(Current Wording)***

**265.5 To follow the teachings of the Scriptures regarding marriage and divorce. We further affirm that heterosexual monogamy is God’s plan for marriage, and we regard sexual sin of the spouse such as adultery, homosexual behavior, bestiality or incest, as the only biblical grounds for considering divorce, and then only when appropriate counseling has failed to restore the relationship.**

***(Current Wording)***

**265.6 To preserve the sanctity of the home by honoring Christ in every phase of family life and by demonstrating Christ like love and by living peacefully with one another, thereby building up one’s spouse and family members through word and deed, (always avoiding violence, including physical, psychological, emotional, or sexual infidelity or desertion, any of which warrant church discipline for the offender and may justify separation or divorce if true repentance and appropriate counseling cannot bring about reconciliation and encouraging the nurture and education of the children in the Christian faith so as to bring them early to a saving knowledge of Christ.**

**To embody God’s love in and through all of one’s family relationships, including marriage, according to the teachings of Scripture. Marriage is a unique sign of Christ’s union with his Bride, the Church. Therefore, within marriage, each spouse is to look after the interests of the other in mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. Family members must always avoid abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, psychological and emotional), sexual infidelity and desertion. Any of these warrant church discipline for the offender and might be grounds for divorce. Marriages are to demonstrate forgiveness and reconciliation. However, if within the context of godly counsel, true repentance is not present, divorce may be a Christian’s option of last resort. We affirm that marriage between one man and one woman is God’s design. Out of that design comes God’s ideal context for the nurture and discipleship of children in the Christian faith so as to bring them early to the saving knowledge of Christ. Furthermore, sexual relationships outside of marriage or between persons of the same sex are sinful and spiritually destructive.**

## **General Conference Memorial #2 - Exemptions from Assessable Base Income**

### **United Stewardship Fund: Basis**

**Whereas**, In determining each church's base income from which it assesses the United Stewardship Fund, Educational Institution Fund, and District funds, The Wesleyan Church exempts specific ministries and projects directly related to Wesleyan ministries;

**Whereas**, There are other comparable ministries which are not currently exempt from this base assessment;

**Whereas**, Wesleyan Emergency Relief Funds and Hope & Holiness Trust funds are sponsored and handled by The Wesleyan Church and would be comparable to other projects that are currently exempt from assessment;

**Whereas**, World Hope International is a humanitarian organization serving internationally, and is the only such organization doing so under the governance of the Wesleyan Church;

**Whereas**, This relationship with The Wesleyan Church is established in World Hope's Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, therefore giving The Wesleyan Church the prerogative in determining where and how WHI's resources are managed;

**Whereas**, Community Development Grants are valuable external sources of revenue for many urban and rural churches involved in ministry to impoverished communities and grant providers typically designate specifically how such funds are to be used (thus prohibiting their use for the payment of assessments);

**Whereas**, Assessing those funds puts an undue burden on churches that are the recipients of such grants by, in effect, requiring them to pay substantial sums out of their general operating budget;

**Whereas**, The current wording is unclear as to whether funds must be explicitly designated to these specific projects in order to be exempt from assessment,

**Resolved**, That paragraph 2005 be amended by striking 2005.1 in its entirety and substituting it with the following paragraph. New elements are highlighted in bold:

**2005.** The USF-General Fund and the USF-Educational Institutions Fund shall be determined annually by a percentage (2005:2) of the base income of all churches for the previous fiscal year which shall be computed in the following manner (cf. 2005:3):

## **Current Wording**

(1) Base Income. The base income shall be the total income of a local church and all of its departments for the previous fiscal year less money received (cf. 2005:3a):

- (a) By loans (borrowed money).
- (b) From the sale, rental or lease of property.
- (c) From general or district church growth funds.
- (d) By a bequest through a will.
- (e) For Global Partners Division and Wesleyan Native Ministries.
- (f) For the Easter offering to the Church Multiplication and Discipleship Division, the Heart of Ministries offering, and Hephzibah Ministries offerings.
- (g) As investment earnings.
- (h) From day care centers, day schools, retirement homes, nursing homes and such enterprises (cf. 782:35).
- (i) For youth attendance at international or area Wesleyan Youth conventions.
- (j) From designated funds for major building projects as approved by the district board of administration (2005:3b).
- (k) From money raised for district or denominationally approved church plants and sent to the church plant through the district or the Church Multiplication and Discipleship Division.

## **Recommended Substitution**

(1) Base Income. The base income shall be the total income of a local church and all of its departments for the previous fiscal year less money received:

- from loans (borrowed money).
- from the sale, rent or lease of property.
- from general or district grants.
- from a bequest through a will.
- from day care centers, day schools, retirement homes, nursing homes and such enterprises (cf. 782:35).
- from investment earnings.
- from community development grants.**

Additionally, funds that were received from assessable contributions that were dispersed to the following ministries will be exempt from the base income:

- for Global Partners Division.
- for Wesleyan Native Ministries.
- for the Easter offering to the Church Multiplication and Discipleship Division.
- for the Heart of Ministries offering.
- for Hephzibah Ministries.
- for Wesleyan Emergency Relief Fund.**
- for the Hope and Holiness Trust**
- for World Hope International.**
- for youth attendance at international or area Wesleyan Youth conventions.
- for major building projects that has been approved by the District Board of Administration (2005:3b).
- for district or denominationally approved church plants and sent through the district or the Church Multiplication and Discipleship Division.



**General Conference Memorial #3**  
**Task Force to Study Financial Cost of Ministerial Education**

**Whereas**, The cost of education at our colleges and universities is such that many of our students cannot attend without assuming student loans;

**Whereas**, The amount of student loans carried by most of our college graduates who are going into ministry is burdensome and adversely affects their ability to serve the church;

**Resolved**, That the General Board appoint a task force of two or more persons to thoroughly study creative ways to make ministerial education more affordable, and to report its recommendations to the General Board for recommendation to the 2020 General Conference.