

United Methodist Open Meeting Policy and Practice

Upper New York Conference members should be aware of the provisions and boundaries of open meeting practice as quoted in ¶722 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline*:

In the spirit of openness and accountability, all meetings of councils, boards, agencies, commissions, and committees of the Church at all levels of the church, including subunit meetings and teleconferences, shall be open. Regardless of local laws or customs, all participants shall be notified at the beginning of any meeting, including telephone or video conference calls, if the meeting is being recorded electronically and the intended use of such recording. Portions of a meeting may be closed for consideration of specific subjects if such a closed session is authorized by an affirmative public vote of at least three-fourths of the voting members present. The vote shall be taken in public session and recorded in the minutes. Documents distributed in open meetings shall be considered public.

Great restraint should be used in closing meetings; closed sessions should be used as seldom as possible. Subjects that may be considered in closed session are limited to real estate matters; negotiations, when general knowledge could be harmful to the negotiation process; personnel matters;12 issues related to the accreditation or approval of institutions; discussions relating to pending or potential litigation or collective bargaining; communications with attorneys or accountants; deployment of security personnel or devices and negotiations involving confidential third-party information. Meetings of the committee on pastor-parish or staff-parish relations are to be closed meetings pursuant to ¶ 258.2e. While it is expected that the General Conference, the Judicial Council, and the Council of Bishops will live by the spirit of this paragraph, each of these constitutional bodies is governed by its own rules of procedure.