

2024 REPORT OF THE BYLAWS COMMITTEE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

By Daniel K. Dik, Chairman, on behalf of and with input from the Bylaws Committee

To the Officers, Executive Committee, and Constituency Representatives of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Greetings.

Your Bylaws Committee was comprised of a broad spectrum of individuals: Black, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, representatives from large and small congregations, pastors, former Executive Committee members, educators, several lawyers, a parliamentarian, and other laymen from various walks of life. We received proposed revisions from multiple churches, and we reviewed, considered, discussed and acted upon those proposals. In addition, we have proposals of our own to present to the church Constituency. This document, which should be read in conjunction with the proposed bylaw revisions, contains a summary report of our undertakings.

Empowering the Bylaws Committee

The Bylaws Committee, as presently constituted by the plain language of the current Bylaws, does nothing. As presently written, the Bylaws Committee reviews the Articles and Bylaws of the Conference, receives proposals for amendments, and issues a report. That is all the Bylaws Committee is to do. As presently written, the Bylaws Committee has expressed no power; no authority to evaluate or to pass judgement upon the wisdom of any proposed bylaw or article amendment, no ability to propose such amendments as may seem to the Bylaws Committee members to be necessary or prudent, and no gatekeeping responsibilities to the Conference or the Church. As presently written, the Bylaws Committee receives proposals and issues a report. You do not need a Bylaws Committee, comprised of multiple members of the Church, in order to perform these limited functions—all you really would need is an inbox and a secretary.

In our earliest meetings, serious consideration was given to disbanding the Bylaws Committee entirely. That proposal did not pass. There was input, from a number of sources, that denominational policy across the country provides for and indeed assumes that a Bylaws Committee would be part of the organizational structure of any denominational sub-part, be that a Division, Conference, or local school board. There was other input that past Bylaws Committees had themselves proposed revisions to the Articles and/or Bylaws and had deliberated upon the wisdom of proposed amendments they had received. It thus appeared to us that the historical practice in the Conference had been that the Bylaws Committee did, and was expected to do, something more than take in proposals, pass them on without comment or action, and issue a report.

Therefore, if the Bylaws Committee was to remain a part of the Southern California Conference, and if the Bylaws Committee was to have some meaningful function in the Conference worthy of its existence and worthy of the time and mental investment asked of its members, then it appeared that the Bylaws Committee needed an overhaul. We recognize the chicken and egg dilemma posed by a committee without written authority re-writing the Bylaws, thereby empowering the Bylaws Committee for future Committees to come. There appeared to us to be no responsible alternative. Thus, the extensive changes to Article 8 that appear in your materials.

As proposed to you, and set forth in Article 8 Section 8.1.1, the Bylaws Committee now has real work to do and authority to do it. The Committee will review the Articles and Bylaws for continued relevance and may recommend amendments thereto. The Bylaws Committee shall review proposals to amend either the Articles or the Bylaws, and pursuant to Section 8.1.3, the Bylaws Committee shall actually evaluate and act upon such proposals, by accepting, modifying, or outright rejecting amendment proposals the Committee receives, which would include proposals made by Bylaws Committee members themselves. The Committee may, but is not

required to, engage with dialogue with any amendment proposal source, as part of its activities. As described immediately below, the process for submitting amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Conference, which we found to be both vague and unsatisfying, has been revised.

Rationalizing the Amendment Process

As proposed and as described above, Section 8.1.3 gives the Bylaws Committee the responsibility to receive and to propose amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws, and the authority to evaluate and take action upon such proposed amendments: acceptance, modification, or rejection. Those amendments that the Bylaws Committee have weighed and accepted are reported to the Executive Committee and the Constituency in advance of the upcoming constituency meeting at which they may be adopted; see Section 8.1.7 and Section 3.3.2.

To avoid a chaotic process, proposed amendments are to be in writing delivered to the Bylaws Committee chair or executive secretary. This funnels proposals into the hands of those persons responsible for bringing them to the Committee members for consideration and avoids the obvious problem of oral requests for amendment purportedly communicated to one or another Bylaws Committee member, to an officer of the Conference, or someone else. See Section 8.1.6. Amendment proposals are now to come from three sources: 1) a church, whether by a vote of its board, its elders or its delegation to the Constituency session; 2) a Region Committee; or 3) by Bylaws Committee members. (See Section 8.1.4.) This also diminishes the specter of an individual with an agenda to push commandeering a Constituency session, and perhaps even requiring multiple sessions to be convened, with the concomitant haggling over the minutiae of any such proposal. That, we believe, is the reason to have a Bylaws Committee in the first place: to assemble a representative collective of the Conference membership, to go through, evaluate, and haggle over the details of amendment proposals which, if they survive the process as apparently good ideas, then get proposed to the larger body for approval and enactment.

Bringing So Cal Conference Parliamentary Process into line with Denomination Practice

This Conference has used *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* as its guide to parliamentary process. Some time ago, the denomination promulgated the *General Conference Rules of Order*, which is a simplified version of *Robert's* and is now widely used across the denomination. Article 12 of the Bylaws has been revised to choose the *General Conference Rules of Order*.

Supermajority Votes to Amend Bylaws or Articles or for Dissolution of the Conference.

Article 12 Section 12.7 of the Bylaws presently refers to both amendment of the Bylaws and Articles of the Conference and also to dissolution of the Conference. The voting requirements for amending the Bylaws or Articles have been moved to Article 8, which, as amended, deals with the Bylaws Committee and with the process for amending the Bylaws. Rather than a simple majority, Section 8.1.1 provides that, going forward, the Articles and Bylaws may be amended by a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the delegates present and voting at a regular Session and/or special Session of this Conference.

Section 12.7 as revised and proposed retains the requirement for a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the delegates present to effect a dissolution of the Conference, as well as the requirement that notice of such proposed drastic action be given to the delegates prior to the meeting.

We thank you for entrusting us to collectively wrestle with the organizational structural fine points of the Conference. We, your elected members of the Bylaws Committee, present to you this report, and the proposed Bylaws, for your consideration. We think these amendments and revisions strengthen and clarify the workings of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and we urge your enactment of these 2024 Bylaws as revised.

Respectfully submitted, July 2024, by the Bylaws Committee of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists