

By-Laws of the United Methodist Rural Advocates

ARTICLE 1. Organization

Section 1. The organization shall be known as THE UNITED METHODIST RURAL ADVOCATES (UMRA). This is the successor organization of THE UNITED METHODIST RURAL FELLOWSHIP.

Section 2. The UMRA shall continue to be incorporated in the state of North Carolina under the name of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship as a perpetual, non-profit, non-private corporation.

Section 3. The corporation meeting will take place annually during a meeting of the UMRA Board of Directors.

ARTICLE 2. Mission and Covenant

Section 1. Mission: To advocate for the work of Jesus Christ in rural and town and country communities.

Section 2. Covenant: Believing God has called and gifted UMRA to advocate for the work of Jesus Christ and up-lifted by the practice of the Wesleyan means of Grace, UMRA members and affiliates covenant together to grow spiritually so that UMRA may:

- a. Create and advocate for General Conference legislation that may affect ministry of town and country churches and their communities;
- b. Provide models of sustainable, effective, replicable, generative ministry;
- c. Develop and maintain an organizational capacity to provide the leadership, management and fiscal oversight to support new and emerging programs;
- d. Utilize technologies to:
 1. build relationships and allies;
 2. share information and resources;
 3. connect rural leaders.
- e. Intentionally network with ecumenical and secular groups which have similar purposes;
- f. Seek to collaborate with official agencies of the United Methodist Church that have programmatic or financial responsibilities for the improvement of religious and secular life in towns and rural places, small membership churches and other issues of concern for UMRA;
- g. Collaborate with other groups that have similar concerns in regard to legislation for United Methodist General Conference.

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ARTICLE 3. Membership

Section 1. Any individual or group [e.g. church, cooperative ministry, district, annual conference, Episcopal area, seminary, etc.] that is sympathetic with the UMRA mission and willing to join in covenant may become a member of UMRA..

Section 2. Members shall pay annual dues set by the UMRA Board of Directors.

Section 3. All groups are invited and encouraged to organize as a UMRA chapter. Chapters will be organized under the structure provided by the UMRA and are amenable to the UMRA.

ARTICLE 4. Board of Directors (Board)

Section 1. The Board shall consist of not more than 20 persons who shall be elected for a four year term of service. As terms expire, the vacancies shall be filled by a replacement or re-election by nomination and election.

Section 2. The purpose of the Board is to advise, govern, oversee policy and direction, assist with the leadership and general promotion of the UMRA so as to support the organization’s mission and needs. In addition, it shall evaluate the organization’s work to carry out its mission. They may employ such persons as deemed necessary. Responsibilities, meeting attendance commitment and additional expectations are on a “*Member of Board of Directors Job Description and Expectations*” addendum.

Section 3. There will be a UMRA national meeting at least once a quadrennium at a time determined by the Board where the directors and officers of the Board as presented by the Nominating Committee and/or nominated from the floor shall be elected.

Section 4. The Board shall have power to appoint an Executive Committee composed of the officers and other so named members of the Board who shall have and exercise the authority of the Board in the control and management of the affairs of the organization between meetings of the Board.

Section 5. The Board shall have the power to appoint nominating committee, finance committee, audit committee and other regular or special committees as well as committee chairpersons, which shall have such duties as shall be prescribed by the Board.

Section 6. In the case of any vacancy existing in the Board through death, resignation or other cause, the remaining directors may, at any annual, regular or special board meeting, elect a successor to hold office for the un-expired portion of the term of the director whose place shall be vacant and until the election and qualification of his or her successor.

Section 7. At all meetings of the Board, members attending shall constitute a quorum for all purposes.

Section 8. The Board of Directors shall determine how funds will be cared for and disposed of when and if the corporation should be dissolved.

Section 9. The Board may authorize issuance of an official logo.

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2 **ARTICLE 5. Officers**
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4 **Section 1.** The officers of the Board shall include the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, immediate past
5 Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Director, Spiritual Director, Communications Director and
6 Advocacy Director and any other designated officer or person named by the Board.
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8 **Section 2.** A slate of officers will be presented by the Nominating Committee as UMRA convenes for a
9 national meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor. Elected officers will serve four years and
10 may be re-elected for a second term.
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12 **Section 3.** The officers will be elected as UMRA convenes at a national meeting and will take office on
13 January 1 of the year following that national meeting.
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15 **Section 4.** The Chairperson will represent the UMRA wherever requested by the Board, chair the meetings of
16 the Board and the Executive Committee and direct the activities of UMRA throughout the term of office.
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18 When an issue of urgency or sensitivity arises, the Chairperson is authorized to consult with Board officers to
19 determine an appropriate action or response and then report the result to the Board at the next meeting.
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21 **Section 5.** The Vice Chairperson will serve as Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson and send,
22 receive and coordinate information received from advisory members. The Vice Chair is responsible for the
23 oversight of Honorary Life Memberships, Citations of Merit or other recognitions as directed by the Board.
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25 **Section 6.** The Secretary will take minutes, keep records and retain correspondence as requested by the
26 Executive Committee and the Board.
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28 **Section 7.** The Treasurer will receive, deposit and disburse funds, keep records, submit records for a
29 quadrennial audit and be a member of the Finance Committee.
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31 **Section 8.** The Membership Director will maintain an accurate and current list of members of UMRA,
32 routinely transmit the names of members to others as directed by the Executive Committee and transmit funds
33 received to the Treasurer.
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35 **Section 9.** The Spiritual Director will guide the UMRA in fulfilling its covenant and in practicing the
36 Wesleyan means of grace.
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38 **Section 10.** The Communications Director will provide creative direction that ensures cohesive, effective and
39 consistent communication across a variety of platforms. In addition, the director will develop and implement a
40 communication plan for UMRA and in cooperation with the Board, set priorities and goals for UMRA
41 communications and publications. This would include, but is not limited to, ensuring a consistent use of brand
42 and style standards for all communications and publications.
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44 **Section 11.** The Advocacy Director will, in cooperation with the Executive Committee, set priorities and
45 goals for UMRA advocacy including but not limited to General Conference. The director will supervise the
46 implementation of the successful priorities and goals.
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ARTICLE 6. Executive Committee

Section 1. The Executive Committee will be composed of the elected officers of the UMRA Board. Any staff or short-term project leaders (such as the editor of the newsletter, field representatives or legislative co-coordinators) will be chosen by the members of the Executive Committee. These short term project leaders may be invited to be a part of the Executive Committee as they are needed.

Section 2. The UMRA Executive Committee shall define the role of any paid staff or short-term project leader.

Section 3. It will be the purpose of the Executive Committee to:

- a. Determine the time, place and program of convocations and other meetings;
- b. Name regular and special committees as needed for the purposes of the Executive Committee;
- c. Appoint members at-large to the Executive Committee;
- d. Fill vacant offices until the next national meeting;
- e. Convene as the annual corporation meeting at a regularly scheduled meeting;
- f. Direct the affairs of UMRA not otherwise provided for in the UMRA By-Laws.

Section 4. It will be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to oversee the administration, programmatic functions and other concerns of UMRA, including taking such actions as may be deemed to be in the interest of the UMRA between scheduled national meetings and/or Board meetings.

ARTICLE 7. Advisory Members

Section 1. There shall be advisory members who provide input and feedback through electronic means prior to the UMRA Board meetings. It will be an online group composed of persons who have a variety of experience, interest, training, position, linkage and accomplishment that will be helpful in fulfilling the UMRA mission. The Vice-Chairperson will coordinate the advisory members.

Section 2. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for inviting advisory members.

ARTICLE 8. Committees

Committees named by the Board of Directors each quadrennium are:

- a. Nominating Committee will supervise the recruitment of Board members and present slate of officers on regular basis.
- b. Finance Committee is responsible for budget preparation, fund raising, gifts and investments and has general oversight of UMRA monies.
- c. Audit Committee will be named by the Board Chairperson to function at the end of each quadrennium following a national meeting.

ARTICLE 9. Publications

Section 1. The United Methodist Rural Advocates may publish newsletters, books, articles, pamphlets, position papers and other materials as authorized by the Board.

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3 **ARTICLE 10. Amendments**

4 **Section 1.** These by-laws may be amended at any national meeting of UMRA by a majority vote of the
5 members present and voting. The proposal to deal with amendments will be stated in the call to the national
6 meeting, published in a UMRA publication, e-newsletter or transmitted electronically preceding the national
7 meeting,

8 **Section 2.** The rule of circulating information regarding proposed changes prior to the convening of a national
9 meeting, however, may be suspended upon support of three-fourths of those present and voting at any national
10 meeting.

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13 **As approved at the national meeting of the United Methodist Rural Advocates in**
14 **Portland, Oregon on October 1, 2014 and to be effective following General**
15 **Conference 2016 with full implementation January 1, 2017.**
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