

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §35-1-4

§35-1-4. Insufficient designations of beneficiaries or objects not to cause failure of trust; acquisition, conveyance, etc., of property.

No conveyance, devise, dedication, gift or bequest if the same does not conflict with the limitations of section eight of this article, and no gift or bequest hereafter made to any church, religious sect, society, denomination, or to any individual church, congregation, parish or branch within this state, or to the trustee or trustees for either, shall fail or be declared void for insufficient designation of the beneficiaries in, or the objects of, any trust annexed to such conveyance, devise, dedication, gift or bequest in any case where a lawful trustee or trustees of such church, religious sect, society, denomination, or of any individual church, parish, congregation or branch, are in existence or where such church, religious sect, society, denomination, or any individual church, parish, congregation or branch, is capable of appointing such trustee or trustees as provided in this article; but such conveyance, devise, dedication, gift or bequest shall be valid; and whenever the object of such trust shall be undefined, or so uncertain as not to admit of enforcement by a court of chancery, then such conveyance, devise, dedication, gift or bequest shall inure and pass to the trustee or trustees of the beneficiary church, religious sect, society, denomination, individual church, parish, congregation or branch, to be held, managed, and the principal or income appropriated for the religious and benevolent uses of such church, religious sect, society, denomination, or individual church, parish, congregation, or branch, as such trustee or trustees may determine, by and with the approval of the bishop, vestry, board of deacons, board of stewards, official board, board of elders, board of consultors, or other authorities which, under the rules or usages of such church, religious sect, society, denomination, or individual church, parish, congregation or branch, have charge of the administration of the temporalities thereof.

Whenever the laws, rules or ecclesiastic polity of any church or religious sect, society or denomination commits to its duly elected or appointed bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer, authority to administer its affairs, such duly elected or appointed bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer shall have power to acquire by deed, devise, gift, purchase or otherwise, any real or personal property, for any purpose authorized and permitted by its laws, rules or ecclesiastic polity, and not prohibited by the laws of West Virginia, and the power to hold, improve, mortgage, sell and convey the same in accordance with such laws, rules and ecclesiastic polity, and in accordance with the laws of West Virginia. In the event of the transfer, removal, resignation or death of any such bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer, the title and all rights with respect to any such property shall pass to and become vested in his duly elected or appointed successor immediately upon election or appointment, and pending election or appointment of such successor, such title and rights shall be vested in such person or persons as shall be designated by the laws, rules or ecclesiastic polity of such church or religious sect, society or denomination.

All deeds, deeds of trust, mortgages, wills or other instruments heretofore made to or by a duly elected or appointed bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer, who, at the time of the making of any such deed, deed of trust, mortgage, will or other instrument, or thereafter, had authority to administer the affairs of any church or religious sect, society or denomination under its laws, rules or ecclesiastic polity, transferring property, real or personal, of any such church, or religious sect, society or denomination, are hereby ratified and declared valid. All transfers of title and rights with respect to property, prior to the effective date of the ratification of this section, from a predecessor bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer who had resigned or died, or has been transferred or removed, to his duly elected or appointed successor, by the laws, rules or ecclesiastic polity of any such church or religious sect, society or denomination, either by written instruments or solely by virtue of the election or appointment of such successor, are also hereby ratified and declared valid.

No gift, grant, bequest or devise hereafter made to any such church or religious sect, society or denomination, or the duly elected or appointed bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer authorized to administer its affairs, shall fail or be declared void for insufficient designation of the beneficiaries in, or the objects of, any trust annexed to such gift, grant, bequest or devise; but such gift, grant, bequest or devise shall be valid, provided that whenever the objects of any such trust shall be undefined, or so uncertain as not to admit of specific enforcement by the chancery courts of the state, such gift, grant, bequest or devise shall be held, managed, and the principal or income appropriated, for the religious and benevolent uses of such church or religious sect, society or denomination by its duly elected or appointed bishop, minister or other ecclesiastical officer authorized to administer its affairs.

This section shall not affect rights or litigation vested or pending on or before the day upon which this section becomes effective, nor shall it be so construed as to effect an implied repeal of any other provisions of this chapter.

The rights created and remedies provided herein shall be construed as cumulative and not exclusive.