

US



Regional

 **Conference**

Legislative Overview

GC 2020



Connectional Table

The United Methodist Church



U.S. Regional Conference:

The Connectional Table approved (April 2019) bringing a legislative proposal to the GC2020 to create a **United States Regional Conference** comprising the **current U.S. jurisdictional conferences and the geographical boundaries congruent with the territory of U.S. annual conferences** (“U.S. Regional Conference”). Naming this new structure for U.S. governance a regional conference rather than a central conference acknowledges the painful, racist history and still existing wound associated with the former Central Jurisdiction in the U.S.

Currently, many if not most, General Conference petitions pertain mostly or exclusively to the UMC in the U.S. Yet, the U.S. Church currently has **no venue other than General Conference** for considering this legislation. As a result, these U.S.-specific petitions dominate General Conference time, burden central conference delegates with matters that are

A Two-Stage Proposal

outside their purview, and materially impact the efficiency of the legislative process.

Creation of a U.S. Regional Conference will provide an organizational structure for the U.S. to have **parity** with existing central conferences for doing work on the adaptable portions of The Book of Discipline. It is important to note that this proposal is consistent with and complementary to the work on a **General Book of Discipline**. The General Book of Discipline currently in design would allow only General Conference to work on non-adaptable sections, while continuing to allow central conferences to work on adaptable sections. It is also important to note that the U.S. proposal would not change the role and authority of U.S. jurisdictional conferences.

The proposal is designed to be implemented in two stages. Because constitutional amendments needed to create a U.S. Regional Conference would require passage first by the General Conference and then ratification by the annual conferences, Stage I would create a committee of the General Conference called the U.S. Regional Committee (“the Committee”). Stage I would function as both a contingency and an interim plan. For this purpose, Stage I would comprise all the GC delegates elected by the annual conferences in the U.S. This Committee would have a legislative function at GC2024 to consider all petitions pertaining to the operation, governance, witness, and ministry of The United Methodist Church in the United States that are adaptable according to ¶ 101 and ¶ 543.7 (referred to hereafter as “U.S. Region – Adaptable”). The Committee would process legislation that is U.S. Region – Adaptable in nature just as the other central

conferences work on their own adaptable legislation. The Committee would not develop any legislation. All legislation approved by the Committee would also need to be approved by the General Conference plenary.

Stage II would create and organize a U.S. Regional Conference to convene following the GC2024. Again, the U.S. Regional Conference would include the U.S. jurisdictions, which would continue with the same jurisdictional powers and duties and the same geographic configurations. It is important to note that, if the U.S. Regional Conference legislation is passed and ratified by annual conferences, the U.S. Regional Committee would be interim and might never need to convene.

STAGE I LEGISLATION OVERVIEW: THE FORMATION OF A U.S. REGIONAL COMMITTEE

The Stage I petition proposes the formation of a **U.S. Regional Committee** (“the Committee”), adding it to the Discipline section on General Conference by creating a new paragraph between ¶ 506 and ¶ 507. The Committee, with legislative function, would include all of the General Conference delegates from annual conferences in the U.S. and would deliberate **only** on petitions meeting the definition of U.S. Region – Adaptable—such as the U.S. clergy pension plan and resolutions related to U.S. policies and secular law. The inclusion of additional members from the central conferences outside of the U.S., one lay person and one clergyperson from each of the central conferences, to be elected by each central conference or their leadership bodies to serve with voice and vote, would help bring insight on whether some legislation that is perceived as U.S.-specific may also have some global implications. This Committee may be an **interim body** and would continue functioning until creation of a U.S. Regional Conference or similar entity to provide governance for adaptable matters. **At that point the Committee would cease to exist.** While adoption of Stage II and creation of a U.S. Regional Conference is the desired end-state, Stage I legislation does not depend on adoption of Stage II legislation.

A second Stage I non-Disciplinary petition provides for the administration and planning for a U.S. Regional Committee. For example, this petition provides for the initial convening and election of Committee officers, and the creation of subcommittees, as needed, to most effectively process the legislation assigned to the Committee.

Because of the unique nature of this Committee, the Connectional Table Advisory Group chair took steps to forge a **partnership** with the Commission on the General Conference and its Rules Committee to ensure that everyone was aware of and understood the proposal and could offer administrative guidance and support as appropriate.

STAGE II LEGISLATION OVERVIEW: FORMING A U.S. REGIONAL CONFERENCE (USRC)

Constitutional Amendments: The proposal offers **two paragraphs in the Constitution to be amended (16.4 and 39), and four paragraphs to be added** that will establish a United States Regional Conference with geographic boundaries congruent with the territory of the U.S. annual conferences. Jurisdictions will continue to function with the same powers and duties they currently have.

New Section V. United States Regional Conference: There would be **new paragraphs, ¶¶ 550-555: in Part VI. Chapter Four – The Conferences** as follows:

- ¶ 550. Authorization
- ¶ 551. Composition
- ¶ 552. Organization
- ¶ 553. Powers and Duties
- ¶ 554. Records and Archives
- ¶ 555. Conference Agencies

These changes focus on composition and clarification of powers and duties. These changes would include specifying that the General Conference delegates of U.S. annual conferences are also the delegates to the U.S. Regional Conference, defining the boundary of the U.S. Regional Conference as congruent with the territory of the U.S. annual conferences, and reiterating that the duties and authority of the U.S. Regional Conference do not encroach on the duties and authority of the jurisdictional conferences.

Organization: Lastly, there would be a petition calling for a 20-25-member Interim Committee on Organization (ICO) of the U.S. Regional Conference. All members of this Interim Committee shall be chosen from among the voting delegates elected by the annual conferences in the U.S. jurisdictions. The ICO membership shall be determined using proportionate representation of the U.S. jurisdictions, with a minimum of three members from each U.S. jurisdiction. The Council of Bishops, through the Leadership Discernment Committee, shall appoint the interim committee members who will be directed to work with the Commission on the General Conference and the Business Manager of the General Conference to care for the organization and planning of a new regional conference in the United States. In addition, two central conference members shall be elected by the central conferences or their leadership bodies to advise and consult the ICO.

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