

General Conference 2020 (rescheduled: 2024)

U.S. Regional Conference Proposal



Wespath strongly supports the concept of a U.S. regional body to deal with U.S.-specific matters, and helped develop the UMC Connectional Table's General Conference (GC) legislation to create a U.S. Regional Conference.

After this legislation was submitted, the Christmas Covenant legislation was developed (largely by delegates and others from the central conferences), and submitted to the GC. The Christmas Covenant proposal provides a path for regional equity, contextualization and governance throughout the Church. Both proposals would meet the need for a *U.S. regional entity to handle U.S.-specific matters*. Therefore, **both the Connectional Table and Wespath have affirmed their support for the Christmas Covenant legislation.**

While this document outlines features of the original proposal (U.S. Regional Conference), *the rationale for creating a U.S. regional entity for U.S.-specific matters described here also applies to the Christmas Covenant proposal.*

Proposal At-a-Glance

The petition would establish a new U.S. Regional Conference for governance of U.S.-only matters. GC delegates from across the worldwide UMC would no longer need to vote on petitions that affect only people who live, worship and minister in the U.S.



United Methodist Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences in the U.S.

The U.S. Regional Conference proposal is designed as a two-stage process:

Stage 1: U.S. Regional Committee

Committee of the GC (temporary until Stage 2 is implemented)

- Effective at the close of General Conference
- Functions as a legislative committee at next General Conference after adoption
- Processes legislation for U.S.-specific matters; refers petitions to full GC plenary (consent calendar or calendar item)
- Representation:
 - All GC delegates from U.S. annual conferences
 - One clergy and one lay person from every central conference

Stage 2: U.S. Regional Conference

Creates forum for U.S. annual conferences to address regional/national issues

- Requires Constitutional amendment (ratification by 2/3 of annual conferences' voting members)
- Representation:
 - All GC delegates from U.S. annual conferences
 - One clergy and one lay person from every central conference

Decision-Making for U.S. Matters

A U.S. Regional Conference could make decisions that affect *only* the U.S. For example:

- Compensation and pension plans for U.S. clergy
- Policies related to U.S. laws
- Adaptable parts of *The Book of Discipline*



What would not change:

- The proposal makes no change in how bishops are elected
- The proposal does not change jurisdictional structure or duties
- The U.S. would remain in connection with the worldwide UMC

Cross-Connectional Support

The Connectional Table's proposal for a U.S. Regional Conference was created through collaboration by many groups, including representatives from:

- Connectional Table
- Several general agencies (including Wespath)
- U.S. annual conferences
- Central conferences

The proposal also received favorable support from:

- Council of Bishops
- Central conference bishops

More Info: Petition and FAQs at Wespath.org/gc2020

Why Create a U.S. Regional Conference?

Helps The United Methodist Church (UMC)

- Upgrades UMC governance to meet needs of demographic shifts.
- Aligns with work toward *General Book of Discipline*—distinguishes between connectional issues (for entire UMC) vs. adaptable issues (regional/national).
- Allows for U.S. decision-making *on adaptable matters for the U.S.*

Simplifies General Conference proceedings; reduces GC costs

- Makes more GC time available for connectional matters for the entire Church (much less focus on U.S.-only petitions).
- May save the Church millions of dollars per quadrennium (potentially shorter GC, fewer petitions to translate into multiple languages).
- Delegates from outside the U.S. would not spend time studying and voting on hundreds of petitions that have no impact on their local churches or ministry.

Creates consistent governance between U.S. and Central Conferences

- Each central conference already makes its own decisions at the episcopal or national level. They do not need GC approval for local matters like clergy pensions, pastors' salaries or adaptable parts of the *Discipline*.
- *U.S. is the only part of the Church whose adaptable matters are decided by the full General Conference.*



General Conference:
Connectional Matters



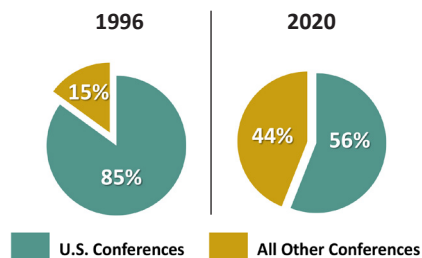
National/Episcopal Governance:
Adaptable, Local Matters

UMC's Changing Demographics

When the UMC was formed in 1968, about 90% of UMC membership lived in the U.S. As the UMC becomes less U.S.-based, it is inefficient and even illogical for a growing majority of non-U.S. delegates to spend so much GC time on decisions that affect only U.S. clergy and church members.

UM News article: [U.S. dips below majority of membership](#)
(Nov. 25, 2019)

General Conference Delegates
(reflects UMC membership changes)



Timeline

