

## **Suggested Title: Creation of a U.S. Regional Conference**

Add a new paragraph between existing ¶¶ 506 and 507 and renumber subsequent paragraphs accordingly:

- [NEW ¶]1. There shall be a U.S. Regional Committee (“the Committee”) composed of all General Conference delegates representing annual conferences in the United States which shall have legislative function. In addition, one lay person and one clergyperson from each of the Central Conferences shall be elected by the Central Conferences or their leadership bodies and shall serve with voice and vote. This Committee shall be assigned all petitions pertaining to the operation, governance, witness, and ministry of The United Methodist Church in the United States and which are adaptable by central conferences according to ¶ 101 and per ¶ 543.7 (referred to hereafter as U.S. Region – Adaptable). The Committee shall operate in accordance with provisions enacted by the General Conference and the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order of the General Conference, as amended, to provide for the work of this Committee.
2. The provisions pertaining to the Committee shall be in effect until a United States Regional Conference has been created and is functional, at which time the Committee and these provisions will expire.
3. The Committee shall convene and process the legislation assigned to it immediately prior to the opening of the General Conference.
4. Actions of the Committee will be reported to the General Conference for vote of the General Conference, in accordance with procedures for legislation coming from the Committee.

**U.S. Regional Committee – Enabling Legislation (Petition NonDis)**

A U.S. Regional Committee (“the Committee”), a committee of the General Conference with legislative function, shall be established to deal with U.S. Region – Adaptable petitions concerning U.S. matters. The objectives of this Committee are to unburden the full General Conference from U.S. legal, contextual, and financial matters that are outside the purview of central conference delegates and to provide a venue for consideration of U.S. Region – Adaptable petitions and other matters pertaining to the Church in the United States. This Committee may be an interim body, and shall continue functioning until a United States Regional Conference is created and is functional. The Committee shall operate according to the following provisions:

1. A bishop assigned by the Council of Bishops shall convene the Committee initially for the purpose of electing Committee officers. Officer elections shall follow the processes for election of legislative committee officers in the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order of the General Conference.
2. Based on the number and nature of petitions assigned to the Committee, the Commission on the General Conference shall set the number of subcommittees as needed.
3. Legislative items receiving no more than 50 votes against the prevailing position in the committee shall be placed on a General Conference consent calendar for U.S. Matters. It shall require the requisite number of signatures, as per the Rules of the General Conference, to remove an item from this consent calendar.
4. The Commission on the General Conference shall be responsible for developing any other rules, responsibilities, and limitations needed for the functioning of the Committee and the attainment of its objectives as stated above.

5. Where not otherwise specified in the Book of Discipline, in this petition or other General Conference actions, or in the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order, the rules for General Conference legislative committees will direct the processes of this Committee.

6. Petitions which pertain to U.S. Region – Adaptable matters shall be coded accordingly, in a manner comparable to the coding used to denote petitions with financial implications or global impact.

## DIVISION TWO—ORGANIZATION

### Section I. Conferences

[Add new ¶ 11. Article IV. and renumber subsequent paragraphs and articles]

¶ 11. Article IV.—There shall be a regional conference for the Church in the United States of America, with such powers, duties, privileges, and limitations as are hereinafter set forth.

### Section II. General Conference

[Deletion from ¶ 16.4]

¶ 16.4. To provide for the organization, promotion, and administration of the work of the Church. ~~outside the United State of America.~~

[Insert new Section VI., ¶¶ 32-35 and renumber successive sections and paragraphs]

### Section VI. Regional Conferences

¶ 32. Article I.—There shall be a regional conference for the work of the Church in the United States of America with such duties, powers, privileges, and limitations as are hereinafter set forth. The regional conference shall initially include all areas that comprise the jurisdictional conferences as defined in Section VII., ¶ 37. Subsequently, the General Conference shall have authority to make changes in the number and boundaries of regional conferences.

¶ 33. Article II.—The regional conference shall be composed of as many delegates as determined by the General Conference. The delegates shall be clergy and lay in equal numbers.

[new ¶ 551]

¶ 34. Article III.—The regional conference shall meet in accordance with provisions determined by the General Conference. [new ¶ 552]

¶ 35. Article IV.—The regional conference shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To make such rules and regulations for the administration of the Church's work within its boundaries, including such changes and adaptations of the General Book of Discipline as the conditions in the regional conference may require, subject to the powers that have been or shall be vested in the General Conference.

2. To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the regional conference Discipline enacted by the regional conference.

3. Such other duties and powers as may be conferred by the General Conference, provided that the

regional conference has no authority over duties assigned to the jurisdictional conferences in

¶¶ 23-27.

[Amend existing ¶ 39 as follows]

¶ 39. Article III.—Changes in the number, names, and boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences may be effected by the ~~General Conference~~ United States Regional Conference upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences of each of the jurisdictional conferences involved.

Part VI. Chapter Four — The Conferences

[Add new Section V. United States Regional Conference, ¶¶ 550 – 555; renumber successive sections accordingly]

Section V. United States Regional Conference

¶ 550. Authorization—There shall be a regional conference whose boundaries shall include all the jurisdictional conferences, and it shall be called the United States Regional Conference, notwithstanding that it may include territory not included within the United States.

¶ 551. Composition—The United States Regional Conference shall be composed of all General Conference delegates from annual conferences in the U.S. jurisdictions elected to the General Conference immediately prior to the regional conference meeting, and shall represent those same annual conferences. Reserve delegates elected from the annual conferences in the U.S. jurisdictions to the General Conference shall also serve as reserve delegates to the United States Regional Conference. In addition, one lay person and one clergyperson from each central

conference shall be elected by the central conferences or their leadership bodies and shall serve with voice but not vote.

¶ 552. Organization—1. The United States Regional Conference shall meet within the year succeeding the meeting of the General Conference at such time and place as determined by the preceding regional conference. The date and place of the first regional conference meeting shall be fixed in such manner as determined by the General Conference.

2. The regional conference has the right to hold such adjourned sessions as it may determine. The sessions of said conference shall be presided over by the bishops of the jurisdictional conferences. The bishops shall have the authority to call an extra session of the regional conference to be held at the time and place designated by them.

3. The presiding officer of the regional conference shall decide questions of order, subject to an appeal to the regional conference, and shall decide questions of law, subject to an appeal to the Judicial Council, but questions relating to the interpretation of the rules and regulations made by the regional conference for the governing of its own session shall be decided by the regional conference.

4. The regional conference shall have the power to organize and incorporate one or more executive committees, executive boards, or councils of cooperation, with such membership and such powers as may have been granted by the regional conference for the purpose of representing it in its property and legal interests and for transacting any necessary business that may arise in the interval between the sessions of the regional conference or that may be committed to said boards or committees by the regional conference, provided these actions do not modify or supersede the powers and duties of the jurisdictional conferences.

¶ 553. Powers and Duties—1. The United States Regional Conference shall receive and act on missionary, educational, evangelistic, industrial, publishing, medical, and other connectional interests of its annual conferences, missionary conferences, and jurisdictions and such other matters as may be referred to it by these bodies or by the General Conference. It shall provide suitable organizations for such work and elect the necessary officers for the same.

2. The regional conference shall have power to make such changes and adaptations of the Book of Discipline, excluding any portions of the Discipline that a General Conference may designate as non-adaptable, as the special conditions and the mission of the Church in the area require, especially concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church, district, annual conference, and jurisdictional levels, provided that no action shall be taken that is contrary to the Constitution and the General Rules of The United Methodist Church, and provided that the spirit of connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general Church. Subject to this restriction, the regional conference may delegate to a jurisdiction or an annual conference within its boundaries the power to make one or the other of the changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon the request of such jurisdiction or annual conference.

3. The regional conference shall have power to make changes and adaptations in procedure pertaining to the annual, district, and charge conferences within its territory and to add to the business of the annual conference supplementary questions considered desirable or necessary to meet its own needs.

4. The regional conference shall have authority to examine and acknowledge the journals of the jurisdictional conferences, annual conferences, and missionary conferences within its

bounds and to make recommendations for the drawing up of the journals as may seem necessary.

5. The regional conference shall have authority to edit and publish a regional conference Discipline, which shall contain in addition to the Constitution of the Church such sections from the general

Discipline of The United Methodist Church as may be pertinent to the entire Church and also such revised, adapted, or new sections as shall have been enacted by the regional conference concerned

under the powers given by the General Conference.

¶ 554. Records and Archives—1. The journal of the proceedings of the regional conference, duly signed by the president and secretary, shall be sent for examination to the General Conference. Two paper copies shall be sent without charge to the General Commission on Archives and History and the General Council on Finance and Administration, and one copy of a digital version shall be sent along with the paper copies.

2. The regional conference shall submit a copy of every adaptation of the general Discipline or portion thereof in use in the regional conference to the General Commission on Archives and History and the General Council on Finance and Administration.

¶ 555. Regional Conference Agencies—1. The regional conference, shall establish a judicial court, which in addition to other duties that the regional conference may assign to it shall hear and determine the legality of any action of the regional conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by a presiding bishop of the regional



conference pertaining to the adapted portions of the Discipline, upon appeal by the presiding bishop or by one-fifth of the members of the regional conference. Further, the judicial court shall hear and determine the legality of any action of an annual conference taken under the adapted portions of the Discipline or of a decision of law by the presiding bishop of the annual conference pertaining to the adapted portion of the Discipline, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be determined by the regional conference.

2. The regional conference shall establish such other agencies, commissions, or committees as it may determine are important to the work and witness of the Church in the United States.

### **A Non-Disciplinary Petition to Create a Plan for Organization of a United States Regional Conference**

Authorization: There shall be an Interim Committee on Organization (ICO) for one quadrennium that organizes and plans for the establishment and functioning of a new United States Regional Conference (USRC) comprising the five jurisdictions of the United States.

Composition: The Council of Bishops, through the Leadership Discernment Committee, shall appoint a 20-25-member Interim Committee on Organization (ICO). The committee membership shall be determined using proportionate representation of the U.S. jurisdictions, with a minimum of three members from each U.S. jurisdiction, ensuring broad diversity, including racial and gender inclusion. All members of the ICO shall be chosen from among the

voting delegates elected by the annual conferences in the U.S. jurisdictions. Meeting and other necessary costs shall be funded by the General Administration Fund. In addition, two central conference members shall be elected by the central conferences or their leadership bodies to advise and consult the ICO.

Responsibilities: The ICO shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. The ICO shall choose the time and place for the convening of the initial gathering of the USRC.
2. The ICO shall work with the Secretary of the General Conference and the Business Manager of the General Conference in planning for the first gathering of the USRC.
3. The ICO, in consultation with the appropriate committees of the Commission on the General Conference, shall recommend to the USRC for action at its first gathering what committees and officers are required to ensure the functionality of the USRC.
4. Upon the completion of the first USRC gathering, the ICO shall cease to exist as a committee of the General Conference, unless the USRC authorizes the continuation of their work for a specific time and purpose.

This petition will go into effect only upon the General Conference approval of the establishment of the United States Regional Conference (proposed new ¶¶ 11, 32-35, and 550-555).

## Anticipated financial requirements– U.S. Regional Conference

The creation of a U.S. Regional Conference is predicted to decrease the cost of General Conference by reducing the number days of the gathering. Due to a decrease in number of days for the entire General Conference, and the expectation that the U.S. Regional Conference would save money for the denomination. The U.S. Regional Conference could convene at the end of General Conference or in conjunction with Jurisdictional conference, and meet for not more than a few days to handle the U.S. specific matters.

The Interim Committee on Organization for the USRC would meet two times total during the quadrennium each time for no more than 3 days (two nights lodging). The committee could meet in a central U.S. location and perhaps could receive donated meeting space from a church or an agency. At a maximum number of 25 members with flights, meals, lodging, staffing and venue costs meeting two times, the committee would need new funding of between \$83,000 and \$98,000. The committee would only meet for one quadrennium, so the expenses would be needed for 2021-2024, but not beyond.