

A CHRISTMAS COVENANT:

Our Gift of Hope

An equitable global regional structure
for The United Methodist Church

Submitted to the next General Conference by the
Philippines' Cavite Conference

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WHAT IS THE CHRISTMAS COVENANT?

The Christmas Covenant is a set of constitutional amendments and legislative proposals that seeks to decolonize current polity by establishing regional equity in the structures of the church for missional effectiveness while sustaining connectional unity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ▶ *We are all children of God.*
- ▶ *Ubuntu: an African concept that embodies a way of life based on interdependence, community, and relationships.*
- ▶ *Bayanihan: a Filipino practice of community spirit and cooperation to achieve communal goals.*

VALUES

The Christmas Covenant lifts up the following values:

- ▶ *Connectional relationships rooted in mission*
- ▶ *Respect for contextual ministry settings*
- ▶ *Legislative equity for regional bodies of the church*

WHAT WILL IT DO IF PASSED AND RATIFIED?

- 1. Transforms central conferences into regional conferences.*
- 2. Creates a U.S. Regional Conference as proposed by the Connectional Table.*
- 3. Upon adjournment of the General Conference, the U.S. Regional Committee can convene to do business as allowed under the present Book of Discipline and begin planning for what it will do after constitutional amendments are ratified. Composition: all delegates to the General Conference from the United States of America and two representatives from each regional conference outside the US.*

WHAT WILL IT DO IF PASSED AND RATIFIED?

- 4. Maintains jurisdictional conferences in the U.S. and allows other regional conferences to create jurisdictional conferences within their region. Bishops will be elected by jurisdictional conferences in regions that have jurisdictions. When a region does not have jurisdictions, then bishops are elected at the regional conference.*
- 5. Transforms the existing Standing Committee on Central Conferences into the Standing Committee on Regional Conferences outside the U.S.*
- 6. Creates equity among regional conferences by giving them legislative power to adopt policies and practice ministry and to contextualize mission in their own contexts.*

WHAT WILL IT DO IF PASSED AND RATIFIED?

- 7. Prevents a regional conference from having other regional conferences impose their contextual policies and ministry practices on it.*
- 8. Maintains General Agencies, Judicial Council, Council of Bishops, United Women in Faith, and other GC-created groups.*
- 9. Maintains our doctrinal standards (Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith), the Theological Task and Social Principles passed by GC.*
- 10. Authorizes a study to perfect the new regional conference structure that will be reported to the next General Conference.*
- 11. Maintains the unity of the church for global mission.*

OVERVIEW OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Purpose: Create regional conferences around the globe, including in the United States.

Goal: Achieve global equity between the regional conferences for effective contextual mission work.

How? Give regional conferences constitutional powers beyond even what central conferences presently have.

PETITION 1: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Amends The United Methodist Church's Constitution to create regional conferences on a global basis, and revises language throughout the Book of Discipline from "central conference/s" to "regional conference/s."

These amendments strengthen the ability of regional conferences to adapt the Book of Discipline to meet the missional needs of each region.

CREATES STRONG REGIONALIZATION: PAR 31.5

Current Powers of Central Conferences:

“To make such rules and regulations for the administration of the work within their boundaries including such changes and adaptations of the General Discipline as the conditions in the respective areas may require, subject to the powers that have been or shall be vested in the General Conference.”

CREATES STRONG REGIONALIZATION: PAR 31.5

Proposed Powers of US Regional Conference (CT proposal):

Par 35: *“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. “*

CREATES STRONG REGIONALIZATION: PAR 31.5

Proposed Powers of Regional Conferences (Christmas Covenant):

“To make changes or additions to the General Discipline in the following areas as the conditions and the mission of the Church in the region may require provided that no change shall be made to a portion or provision of the General Discipline which the General Conference has by a two-thirds vote prohibited from being changed:

a. To define and fix the conditions, privileges, and duties of Church membership, which shall in every case be without reference to race, gender, or status.

CREATES STRONG REGIONALIZATION: PAR 31.5

b. To define and fix the qualifications, powers and duties of elders, deacons, supply preachers, local preachers, exhorters, deaconesses, and home missionaries without reference to race, gender, or status....

d. To supplement the hymnal and ritual of the Church and matters relating to the form and mode of worship, subject to the limitations of the first and second Restrictive Rules....

g. To allow the annual conferences to utilize structures unique to their mission, other mandated structures notwithstanding.

h. To make changes in the chargeable offenses and/or their mandatory penalties...”

ON NUMBER AND BOUNDARIES OF REGIONAL CONFERENCES: PAR 16.12

The General Conference shall have full power:

“To change the number and the boundaries of regional conferences upon the consent of a two-thirds of the annual conferences in each regional conference involved.”

MAKES POSSIBLE JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES FOR ALL REGIONS: PAR 10

“There may be jurisdictional conferences for the work of the Church within the boundaries of a regional conference, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.”

ONLY REGIONAL CONFERENCES CAN MAKE CHANGES IN ITS JURISDICTIONS : PAR 31.8

How Regional Conferences can make changes in jurisdictions:

“ To establish jurisdictional conferences by dividing all of the area within its boundaries into jurisdictional conferences, and also to abolish such plan of jurisdictional conferences provided that a majority of annual conferences within each jurisdiction consent to the abolishment of the jurisdictional conferences. Changes in the number, names, and boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences maybe effected upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences of each of the jurisdictional conferences involved.”

Endorsements

as of February 2023

- Connectional Table
- North Central Jurisdictional Conference
- Western Jurisdictional Conference
- Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference
- South Central Jurisdictional Conference
- Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference
- Cavite Philippines Conference
- South Nueva Ecija Philippines Conference
- Bicol Philippines Provisional Conference
- East Mindanao Philippines Conference
- Mindanao Philippines Conference
- Northwest Mindanao Philippines Conference
- Visayas Philippines Conference
- North Texas Conference
- California-Pacific Conference
- California-Nevada Conference
- Mountain Sky Conference
- Oregon-Idaho Conference
- Baltimore Washington Conference
- Northern Illinois Conference
- Virginia Conference Delegation
- Florida Conference Delegation
- United Women in Faith
- UMC Inter-Ethnic Strategy and Development Group
- Western Methodist Justice Movement
- MARCHA
- Love Your Neighbor Coalition
- United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy

Comparison Chart with Connectional Table USRC Legislation

Please note paragraphs in bold are paragraphs opened by both pieces of legislation.

CT U.S.RC Petition #	Committee ADCA pg.	Paragraph	Summary CT's U.S.RC	Christmas Covenant	Paragraph	Summary Christmas Covenant
20725	CO, V2 S1, pg 312	¶ 11, ¶ 16.4 , creation new ¶ 32-35, ¶ 39 .	Amendments to the Constitution to create U. S. regional conference.	Petition 1	(¶¶ 9, 10, 16 (16.4), 28, 29, 30, 31, 38, 39 , 40, and 50	Amendments to the Constitution to create regional conferences on a global basis and revises language throughout the Book of Discipline from “central conference/s” to “regional conference/s.”
20726	CO, V2 S1, page 324	Addition ¶ 550-555	Enabling legislation creating a U.S. regional conference, and sets the composition, organization, powers and duties of U.S. regional conferences (Stage II)	Petition 2	¶¶ 540-548, 551-555 , 560-567	Enabling legislation transforming central conferences into regional conferences and creating a U.S. regional conference, and sets the composition, organization, powers and duties of regional conferences
none				Petition 3	¶ 2201	Enabling legislation to change terminology in the Book of Discipline referring to “Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters” to “Standing Commission on Regional Conference Matters Outside of the United States of America” contingent upon passage of constitutional amendments.
none				Petition 4	Non-Disciplinary Petition	Enabling legislation to change terminology in the Book of Discipline referring to “central conference bishop/s” to “bishop/s in a regional conference outside the United States of America.”

Comparison Chart with Connectional Table USRC Legislation

20723	CO, V2 S1, page 323	New paragraph between ¶506 and 507	Creates U.S. Regional Committee; It will be composed of all General Conference delegates from the United States and 1 lay and 1 clergy representative from each central conference. (Stage I)	Petition 5	¶ 507 (new ¶)	Creates a U.S. Regional Committee with legislative power (¶ 507). It will be composed of all General Conference delegates from the United States and 1 lay and 1 clergy representative from each regional conference outside the United States. This takes effect upon adjournment of the 2020 General Conference.
20722	CO, V2 S1, page 373	Non-Disciplinary petition	The enabling legislation for a U.S. Regional Committee (Stage I)	Petition 6	Non-Disciplinary petition the enabling a U.S. Regional Committee	Creates a U.S. Regional Committee & its plan of organization to take effect immediately upon the adjournment of General Conference 2020.
20724	CO, V2 S1, page 374	Non-Disciplinary petition for the creation of the Interim Committee on Organization	Creation of “Interim Committee on Organization” (ICO) responsible for the establishment of a fully functioning U.S. regional conference	Petition 7	Non-Disciplinary petition for the creation of the Interim Committee on Organization	Creation of “Interim Committee on Organization” (ICO) responsible for the establishment of a fully functioning U.S. regional conference to take effect immediately upon the adjournment of General Conference 2020.
none				Petition 8	This is a non-Disciplinary petition	Authorizes a study to perfect a new regional conference structure. The study will be facilitated by the Connectional Table and new standing committees on regional conferences (for the U.S. and outside the U.S.).

The background is a dark blue gradient with a starry space pattern. It features several technical diagrams: a circular gauge with a needle and scale on the right, and various circular and dashed lines with arrows on the left and bottom, suggesting a complex system or data flow.

Link to Comparison Chart with Connectional Table USRC Legislation

<https://tinyurl.com/CTcomparison>