

A Christmas Covenant: A Gift of Hope

An Equitable Structure of Global Regionalism

Overview of the Constitutional Amendments

The purpose of these constitutional amendments is to create regional conferences around the globe including the United States. The goal is to create global equity between the regions. Right now, there are significant differences in how regions operate. Thus, the Constitutional Amendments in Para. 28 allow for a time of transition. Ultimately, by January 1, 2033, all of the regional conferences would be governed by the same disciplinary paragraphs.

Another underlying goal is to change the Constitution so that regional conferences have increased legislative power. This was done in consultation with a number of experts on the UM Constitution and Judicial Council decisions that relate to the power of central conferences to amend the Constitution.

A review of existing Judicial Council Decisions shows that the Judicial Council has determined that the current language of the constitution including “adaptable”, “rules”, and “regulations” means that the power of a central conference (and also a US regional conference as proposed in the current CT proposal) is in practice very limited. This includes:

- Central conferences, like all other conferences, are subject to limitations imposed by the Constitution of The United Methodist Church. JCD 142.
- All actions of central conferences and their representatives must be based on and limited by Church law. JCD 1366.
- The central conference's adaptation right is "subject to the powers that have been or shall be vested in the General Conference." JCD 147.
- Central conferences can make rules, regulations, including adaptations, pertaining to their specific contexts, but cannot legislate. JCD 147.
- The General Conference is prohibited from delegating legislative powers to central conferences. JCD 147.
- “Legislation” is defined in terms of all matters distinctively connectional over which General Conference has exclusive authority. JCD 313.
- The power to establish ministerial standards and qualifications for ordination is distinctively connectional and placed in the General Conference. JCD 313.
- The adaptation authority is limited by the Restrictive Rules. JCD 142.
- Central conferences are not permitted to combine or eliminate organizational structures and bodies prescribed by the General Conference. JCD 904.
- Adaptation is preempted when General Conference has legislated on a matter distinctly connectional. JCD 904.
- The General Conference has full legislative authority to set uniform standards for the ministry. JCD 1341.

These proposed constitutional amendments end the applicability of these Judicial Council Decisions by eliminating words like “adaptable”, “rules” and “regulations” from sections of the Constitution which confer the power to change the *Discipline* by the new regional conferences.

In addition, they amend Para. 16 to specifically allow the new regional conferences to make changes in certain provisions of the *Discipline* unless prohibited to do so by a 2/3rds vote of the General Conference. See change to the preamble of Para. 16 and the new Para. 16.17.

Finally, in Para. 31.5 they specifically enumerate areas where the regional conferences may make changes unless prohibited by a 2/3rds vote of the General Conference. This enumeration of powers is patterned after the enumeration of powers given to the General Conference in Para. 16. And, by enumerating in the constitution the powers which the regional conferences may exercise unless prohibited by the General Conference clarifies which powers in Para. 16 may now be delegated to the new regional conferences. Note specifically that para. 31.5.b. clarifies that this includes the power of regional conferences to change ordination standards.

The existing U.S. jurisdictional structure is preserved. Since there are no amendments to the section of the Constitution that governs jurisdictional conferences, none of this section of the constitution appears in the amendments. However, on the basis of equity between regional conferences, these amendments allow any regional conference to create jurisdictions. It is unclear whether any other regional conference would want to do this. But on the basis of equity, it is important that this is an option for every regional conference.

The Connectional Table's proposal for the US as a regional conference is incorporated into this new overall system of regional conferences across the globe. It is the intent of these amendments that all of the powers in the Connectional Table proposal would be given to all regional conferences.

Also attached are sections of the Discipline which must be changed to reflect the change of name from "central conference" to "regional conference." Note that as allowed by para. 28 for a time of transition that regional conferences outside the US are governed by one set of disciplinary passages which another set of passages governs the US regional conference.