

A CONVERSATION WITHIN THE COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD: The Connectional Conference Plan

CONNECTIONAL CONFERENCE PLAN

Summary of Connectional Conference Plan

The Connectional Conference Plan reflects a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services. This plan creates three values-based connectional conferences that have distinctive definitions of accountability, contextualization and justice. Current central conferences have the choice of becoming their own connectional conference (up to five additional connectional conferences) or joining one of the three values-based connectional conferences. A redefined Council of Bishops focuses on ecumenical relationships and shared learning. Episcopal oversight, accountability, elections, assignments and funding occur within the College of Bishops of each connectional conference.

Features of Connectional Conference Plan:

- Five U.S. jurisdictions are replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology including perspectives on LGBTQ ministry (i.e. progressive, unity, and traditional) (note: see page 50 of the report for a full description).
- Cross-connectional conference cooperation, relationships, and partnerships in mission and ministry continue as they do now, at the initiative of the entities involved. All connectional conferences would continue to support mission work and sustain ministry in the areas outside the U.S.
- General Conference is shortened and would still have authority over the shared doctrine and services of continuing general agencies. It would also serve as a venue for connecting the connectional conferences, worship, sharing of best practices/learning, and inspiration.
- Continuing general agencies include: Wespath, Publishing House, GCFA, Archives & History and parts of GBGM (as determined in consultation among the connectional conferences inside and outside the U.S.). Future structure of other general agencies would be decided based on which connectional conferences desire to participate in them, after a transition period. Any connectional conference could contract with any agency for fee-based services.
- The Council of Bishops houses ecumenical relations and functions as a collegial learning and nurturing body.
- Connectional conference Colleges of Bishops have authority for supervision and mutual accountability of bishops in their respective colleges.
- Each connectional conference elects and (in the U.S.) pays for its own bishops. Bishops outside the U.S. would continue to be supported by all U.S. annual conferences.
- Each connectional conference would create its own *Book of Discipline*, which would begin with The General Book of Discipline, including Articles of Religion, Confessions of Faith, the General Rules and other items that are commonly agreed upon by United Methodists. Each connectional conference also has the authority to adapt those items not included in *The General Book of Discipline*.
- The Judicial Council would continue as the supreme judicial body, with authority over all judicial matters based on the respective connectional conference Books of Discipline. The Judicial Council would consist of two persons elected by each connectional conference.
- Connectional conferences at their discretion could have separate connectional conference judicial courts with authority in rulings related to the connectional conference *Book of Discipline*. Such rulings could be appealed to Judicial Council.
- Justice ministries related to racism and sexism would be organized at the connectional conference level and held accountable by the general church. During the 2021-25 quadrennium, GCORR and GCSRW would assist in the development of principles and benchmarks for connectional conferences to measure

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efforts to combat racism and sexism. Quadrennial reports would be made by each connectional conference to a Standing Committee on Connectional Conferences (see below).

- Central conferences have the choice of becoming their own connectional conference with the same powers as U.S. connectional conferences, or have the option of joining a U.S. connectional conference. U.S. connectional conferences joined by a central conference become a global instead of a U.S. connectional conference. Annual conferences that disagree with the decision of their central conference could vote to join a different connectional conference than their central conference. The central conferences in Africa could decide to unite in forming one African connectional conference (an option that is being discussed currently by African leadership)
- In addition to the shared doctrine and shared services, each connectional conference has its own structure, agencies, and method of financing its ministry and the shared services, as well as support for bishops and annual conferences outside the U.S.
- Each connectional conference has its own policies regarding LGBTQ weddings and ordination.
- Each connectional conference sets its own standards for ministerial credentialing and list of approved schools/seminaries.
- Jurisdictional conferences would have the first level vote regarding connectional conference affiliation. Annual conferences that disagree with the decision of their jurisdiction may decide to affiliate with a different connectional conference. No local church is required to take a vote unless it decides to join a different connectional conference than its annual conference.
- Jurisdictional property would belong to the connectional conference chosen by the jurisdiction for affiliation. Church-owned or church-related entities could change their affiliation to a different connectional conference, to multiple connectional conferences, or to no connectional conference based on the bylaws governing each institution.
- When the connectional conferences are organized and put into effect, jurisdictions and central conferences would cease to exist, unless a connectional conference decides to include a mid-level judicatory in its structure. In that case, it would be encouraged to consult with other connectional conferences to use a different name than jurisdiction or central conference for such a mid-level judicatory.
- Central conferences would be authorized to elect bishops in 2020, as scheduled, unless they determine otherwise. Jurisdictions and any central conferences not electing bishops in 2020 would have the mandatory retirement age of bishops waived until 2022 in order to avoid a potential mismatch in the number of bishops for each branch.
- The blanket tax exemption (501(c)3) would move to each connectional conference, filed with the assistance of GCFA. GCFA is being asked to provide an estimate for legal costs of implementing this plan and a plan for funding such costs.
- A Standing Committee on Connectional Conferences would be established by the 2020 General Conference to help the Council of Bishops facilitate cross-connectional conference connections and cooperative ministry. Legislation for this would be written by the Transition Team and submitted for the 2020 General Conference.
- General Conference 2024 would be postponed to 2025 to allow time for the transition. This would disconnect succeeding General Conferences from the U.S. election cycle.

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Theological & Biblical Foundations of the Connectional Conference Plan

John Wesley confessed that God is “the great ocean of love.” (*Wesley Sermon 26*) Affirming that “Love is the end, the sole end, of every dispensation of God,” (*Wesley Sermon 36*) he proposed that Christ came: “To spread the fire of heavenly love over all the earth.” (*Wesley NT Notes – Luke 12:49*) He thus wrote that true religion “is neither more nor less than love; it is love which ‘is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.’” (*Wesley Sermon 75*) Religion is the love of God and our neighbor; that is, every man under heaven. This love ruling the whole life, animating all our tempers and passions, directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, is ‘pure religion and undefiled.’” (*Wesley Sermon 84*) It is thus not surprising that he understood that one of the tests of whether or not an institutional church was an expression of the universal church was whether it was characterized by a radical love for God and human beings. The church participates in Christ’s mission of spreading the “fire of heavenly love over the earth” through the example of its communal life, through the proclamation of God’s love revealed in the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through concrete acts of love toward others. In affirming this we need to note four Wesleyan distinctives:

- Love and holiness are two complimentary ways of describing the gracious transformation in peoples’ lives that is expressed in ultimate loyalty to God revealed in and through the scriptures and a self-sacrificial commitment to the spiritual and bodily well-being of others.
- Love and law are inseparably interrelated and cannot be played off against each other. The law is the expression of what radical love for God and others requires in particular contexts and relationships. To love God is to obey God’s commandments.
- The purpose of God’s grace is to transform our lives so that pervasive love defeats and drives out sin. However, this occurs as we respond to the work of the Spirit of God.
- The structures and polity of an institutional church are a mixture of divine institution and human wisdom directed towards the mission of the church to embody and spread “heavenly love.” Ideally polity is flexible, adaptive, and contextual.

Wesley wrote: “It is the nature of love to unite us together, and the greater the love, the stricter the union.” (*Sermon 75*) The visible unity of the church is thus an expression of the transforming love of God. However, because human beings are embodied and fallen creatures, this unity is threatened by two interrelated but distinct dynamics that are themselves expressions of love.

The first is contextuality; the church is called to embody and spread divine love in diverse social, cultural, economic, political, and national contexts. The way the church structures its life and engages in its mission is shaped by its dynamic relationship with these contexts. When one institutional church is present and witnessing in diverse contexts this witness will take different shapes leading to strain on the unity of the church, particularly when one group or context dominates the decision making processes. However, contextuality is vital to our mission and identity because love can only be embodied in relation to real people in concrete contexts.

Mission in context is a key aspect of the connectional conference plan. The cry of every connection in the “connectional conference model” is the desire to share the Gospel in a way that aligns with the particular connectional conference’s biblical understandings and is relevant to the culture each connection is addressing. This plan enables each connectional conference to be a faithful ambassador of the Gospel within its own understanding of Scriptural truths and sociocultural context.

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The second dynamic is freedom of conscience before God. Because we are fallen and fallible creatures our understanding of God and God's purpose and will is always subject to mistakes and limitations. Christians sincerely seeking to love and serve God will come to different conclusions as to what God requires of them. Within a church people will have diverse and even contradictory understandings of the will of God. Our ultimate loyalty to God requires that we act in good conscience - that is, in accordance with what we are convinced is the will of God. Love for others requires that we do not coerce others to act against their consciences even when we are convinced that they are wrong.

The present conflict within the UMC over same gender marriage and ordination standards arises out of the interaction of these dynamics. Faithful Christians have come to different and contradictory understandings of God's will in relationship to the affirmation of sexual relationships between people of the same gender. The UMC ministers in diverse socio-cultural and politico-legal contexts – these include contexts where homosexual relationships are criminal offenses punishable by death to places where same gender marriage is legal and religious or moral opposition to it is regarded as irrelevant. The challenge before us is how to structure The United Methodist Church so that it embodies and spreads “the fire of heavenly love over all the earth” given this diversity and contradiction in conviction and context. In the Connectional Conference Plan the different connectional conferences which could reflect both differences of conviction and/or context are expressions of love in the context of diversity and contradiction, while the uniting structures embody the desire to maintain as much unity and community as possible and to share resources in fulfilling our mission. Beyond this, staying together instead of dividing embodies the common core that we share.

This plan represents a redefinition of our connection in a new way to empower disciples for greater mission and ministry.

- “So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!” (II Corinthians 5:17)
- “Look! I’m doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it?” (Isaiah 43:19)

New structures and relationships are needed for a new time in our Church. Keeping the old structures in place could result in a fracturing of our Church.

- “No one sews a piece of new, unshrunk cloth on old clothes because the patch tears away the cloth and makes a worse tear. No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If they did, the wineskin would burst, the wine would spill, and the wineskins would be ruined. Instead, people pour new wine into new wineskins so that both are kept safe.” (Matthew 9:16-17)

This plan emphasizes connection to Christ, while acknowledging the reality of different connectional conferences growing in different directions with different emphases and understandings. We are still connected to one another through Christ (the Vine) and our shared doctrine, heritage, mission, and shared services. Connection points include: The Apostle's and Nicene creeds, Articles of Religion/Confession of Faith, the General Rules, Wesley hymns, John Wesley's Standard Sermons and The Notes upon the New Testament, disciplined engagement with Scripture, works of piety, mercy and justice, sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, small group accountability and support, and a connectional way of life that includes superintendency, itineracy, and conferencing.

- “I am the vine, you are the branches.” (John 15:5 – see additionally John 15:1-17)

This plan acknowledges that we are gifted differently and creates space for those different gifts to be expressed in ways that honor conscience, while still maintaining connection to the body.

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- “Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. ... You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.” (I Corinthians 12:12, 27 – see the whole chapter)

This plan provides a way to mobilize more workers for the mission and ministry of Christ through the expansion envisioned out of the multiple branches.

- “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.’” (Matthew 9:37-38)

In conclusion the Connectional Conference Plan attempts to find a way of structuring the life of The United Methodist Church so that it can embody the divine love in the midst of our diversity and disagreement. It can thus fulfill the vision that the seventy-eight year old John Wesley described as he reflected on the movement that he had founded and led.

"We all aim to spread that truly rational religion which is taught and prescribed in the Old and New Testament; namely, the love of God and neighbor, filling the heart with humility, meekness, contentedness. ... We leave every man to enjoy his own opinion, and to use his own mode of worship, desiring only that the love of God and his neighbor be the ruling principle in his heart, and show itself in his life by a uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. And accordingly we give the right hand of fellowship to every lover of God and man, whatever his opinion or mode of worship be; of which he is to give an account to God." (*A Short History of the People Called Methodist*).

The Connectional Conference Plan Vision for the Church

We affirm joyfully and with great hope that the church belongs to God. We believe that God is at work in our midst, doing something radically new in our beloved UMC that will result in greater focus on mission, more contextualization, a different form of unity, a new structure, and increased fruitfulness.

Mission and Fruitfulness: The Connectional Conference Plan is an opportunity to unleash the church in new ways for mission and fruitfulness. By providing a place for a variety of perspectives, this plan diffuses the conflicts about human sexuality that beset our church. Persons will be able to serve in a place in the church where their perspective is honored and followed. This sorting will diminish the current conflicts about same gender marriage and ordination and allow the church to increase our focus on the mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world. Resources currently frozen by or mobilized for conflict can be redirected toward mission. Reservations about the church can be converted into enthusiastic support for that part of the church in which one finds one’s primary identity, resulting in passionate support that grows organically and bears increased fruit, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

More Contextualization: The Connectional Conference Plan enables the most contextualized and inclusive mission strategy. Each connectional conference will approach the mission with a different context in mind, enabling each to reach a different type of target audience. The result is a wider variety of people reached with the gospel and disciplined in different ways to serve God’s mission of transformation. The three connectional conferences that include the U.S. can each engage their target audiences across the entire country, giving a bigger reach to the contextualized mission. In addition, each connectional conference will be free to experiment with different approaches to the mission that

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promise to engage different groups of people. The cumulative result will be the widest possible missional engagement for the variety of populations across the world.

A Different Form of Unity: The Connectional Conference Plan provides both space and connection between those parts of the church currently in deep conflict. The space is needed for us to live together with different core convictions on ordination and same gender marriage. The connection allows us to continue to accomplish more in ministry across the globe than we could separately.

A New Structure: The Connectional Conference Plan simplifies General Church structure and processes and allows for that simplification at the connectional and annual conference level by allowing specified segments of *The Book of Discipline* to be adaptable. Each connectional conference can experiment to determine which structures and processes are the most effective in fostering fruitful mission. Through our ongoing connection of the General Conference and Council of Bishops, we can learn from one another's experience and replicate effective structures and processes.

In addition, the restructuring and reconfiguring occasioned by the Connectional Conference Plan will enable the reimagining of general church agencies and functions in a way that most effectively serves the constituencies that desire those services. This plan enables an adaptive approach to restructuring the church for mission effectiveness, rather than simply tweaking the current pattern. Agencies can focus on specific constituencies, developing excellence in specialization. Or agencies can broaden their focus to provide services that meet the needs of a broad range of the constituencies encompassed within The United Methodist Church, developing excellence in comprehensive service. Agencies can then be right-sized and linked with the appropriate constituencies, funding sources, and funding models to provide effective mission and ministry for the next generation.

In sum, the Connectional Conference Plan addresses the reality of the UMC as it is now. It enables an adaptive approach to missional effectiveness. It provides enhanced contextuality, flexibility and differentiation within an organic whole. It redefines unity by providing a creative tension between space and connection. It simplifies structure and processes, allowing an organic restructuring of agencies. Finally, it is fruitful as it broadens and deepens the UMC witness around the world.

The Connectional Conference Plan and the Mission, Vision and Scope

The following aspects of the Mission, Vision, and Scope are emphasized in this plan:

MISSION:

"The matters of human sexuality and unity are the presenting issues for a deeper conversation that surfaces different ways of interpreting Scripture and theological tradition." – This plan leads to the formation of multiple connectional conferences that accommodate various theological perspectives.

VISION:

- *"A way for being church that maximizes the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible"* – This plan keeps many people within The United Methodist Church and enables missional mobilization from a variety of theological perspectives.
- *"Allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible"* – In this plan, each connectional conference can adapt structures and policies to its geographical location and theological perspective.

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- *“Balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible”* – This plan creates space for each perspective, while maintaining a connection via General Conference, shared doctrine, some shared agencies, and a shared Council of Bishops.

SCOPE:

“Open to new ways of embodying unity that move us beyond where we are in the present impasse... consider new ways of being in relationship across cultures and jurisdictions, in understandings of episcopacy, in contextual definitions of autonomy for annual conferences, and in the design and purpose of the apportionment ... ‘new forms and structures’ of relationship ... greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present connectionality.” - This plan reflects an extensive restructure of the denomination, not only to resolve the current impasse, but to position the church for future mission expansion and vitality.

The effects of the Connectional Conference plan on each segment of The United Methodist Church

Local Churches

- This plan seeks to maximize our ability to reach and be in ministry from a variety of theological perspectives with those who are unchurched and de-churched. It multiplies our capacities to do ministries in a variety of contexts while honoring differing core convictions around LGBTQ ordination and marriage. This creates a new form of being independent while being interdependent.
- Local churches may choose to align with a connectional conference different from the one decided by their Annual Conference.
- Only local churches that choose a connectional conference other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote.
- Local churches can choose to define the parameters of their building use and/or wedding policies as it relates to same-gender marriage by affiliating with the appropriate connectional conference; those in the unity connectional conference have flexibility to move in either direction.
- The Cabinet would administer a process alongside local congregations wishing to affiliate with a connectional conference other than the one adopted by their Annual Conference via prayer, study and a majority (50 percent + 1) vote of the church conference.

Clergy

- Clergy will choose to affiliate with a connectional conference. Some clergy may make themselves available to serve in more than one connectional conference. In order to serve in a connectional conference, a clergy person will need to agree to meet the qualifications of the connectional conference and maintain the standards of conduct as set forth by the connectional conference they are serving.
- A process of appointment making, which takes into account the stated desires of clergy related to the connectional conference they would prefer and the covenants they can uphold, would be administered by the Bishops.
- The Board of Ordained Ministry would be responsible for communicating the expectations of the connectional conference to the person who transfers in and holding them accountable for their actions while in the connectional conference. Transfer between connectional conferences is subject to approval by each annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry.
- Clergy ordination performed within each of the connectional conferences is recognized by all three connectional conferences; but ability to serve in a particular connectional conference is determined by the qualifications and expectations set by that connectional conference.

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- Clergy can serve in a transitional appointment for a period of time until options are available in the connectional conference they desire.
- Security of appointment will need to be addressed by each connectional conference. Steps shall be taken to ensure that persons who have historically been protected by the guaranteed appointment, including women and ethnic minorities, retain those protections.
- A clergy person's willingness or ability to serve in more than one connectional conference may impact whether they receive an appointment. Connectional conference qualifications for serving within that connectional conference would take priority, and each connectional conference would determine the acceptability of a person desiring to serve in that connectional conference (through the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session).
- For deacons, the greatest impact could be the narrowing of opportunities to serve based on which connectional conference(s) the deacon selects.
- Appointments for Full-Time Local Pastors would depend on the number of elders in each connectional conference.

Annual Conferences

- Central conferences and U.S. jurisdictional conferences would have first responsibility to determine what connectional conference to join. They would choose a connectional conference by a simple majority vote.
- Annual conferences that want to join a different connectional conference than the one chosen by their jurisdiction or central conference may do so by a simple majority vote.
- Jurisdictions and annual conference would be wise to prepare for potential geographical boundary adjustments depending on how many churches opt out of and into the connectional conference that the annual conference joins.
- Annual conferences would be given consistent information presented by the transition team to understand the intended and unintended consequences of their decision. This preparation would begin with annual conference leaders.
- Particular answers to questions about issues such as pension, etc. will need to be placed in a common space for all to access.
- Annual conferences may participate in a multi-vote process where the vote should be done by a simple majority after the least supported option is dropped from consideration. If a simple majority is found in the first vote, the voting is concluded.
- Annual conferences must administer a process for local churches who decide to depart from their annual conference and join a different connectional conference through the church conference process. The church conference will make its decision by simple majority. The Cabinet would facilitate this process in a timely fashion. The Cabinet will make a team available to provide care and conflict resolution to these churches as needed.
- Annual conferences would have a venue where questions can be asked if local churches want to vote to join a different connectional conference. Annual conference leaders would be equipped for this purpose.
- If an annual conference wants to re-vote to align with a different connectional conference, there would be a way to do this. Reconsideration of whether to align with a different connectional conference should be limited to once every four years.
- New annual conferences may be formed in the connectional conferences to place churches that opt in from an area where the predecessor annual conference chose a different connectional conference. Existing annual conference boundaries may also need to be redrawn. Net impact could be fewer annual conferences in each connectional conference, but more annual conferences overall.

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Council of Bishops

- The Council of Bishops would provide a venue for ecumenical relationships and be a missional body to help gather and distribute best practices for vital and innovative ministry in the world. It would also serve as a learning, equipping, and nurturing community. The Council would uphold the Wesleyan focus on justice, inclusiveness, and the UMC's historic protections as outlined in the 1968 Plan of Union.
- The Council would foster partnerships at various levels between the connectional conferences, connect branches around the globe, act as connectors to jointly-shared ministries, promote ecumenical relations, and mediate accountability challenges.
- Each U.S.-based connectional conference would fund its own Bishops at comparable levels through GCFA. All U.S.-based annual conferences would continue shared funding for bishops in annual conferences outside the U.S., as needed, with a goal of all annual conferences moving toward self-sufficiency.
- Episcopal Leadership Oversight and Accountability occurs within the College of Bishops of each connectional conference.

A note about Episcopal Assignments:

- Each bishop (active and retired) will choose a connectional conference to affiliate. Some bishops may make themselves available to serve in more than one connectional conference if they meet the qualifications of the connectional conference in which they serve and maintain their conduct within the boundaries set by that connectional conference.
- Retirement and tenure provisions would be waived for episcopal leaders in U.S jurisdictions. This would also be done in central conferences that desire to wait to elect new bishops until as late as 2022. Tenure could be extended by two years in these annual conferences for transition purposes in order to avoid a mismatch of the number of bishops for each connectional conference.
- No episcopal elections in 2020 in the U.S. are recommended.
- Retired Bishops could be invited to serve as interims, if needed (i.e. if currently active Bishops do not want to extend tenure).
- The Executive Committee of each Central Conference would decide upon the date when the Episcopal election takes place between 2020 and 2022.
- New U.S. bishops would be elected at the organizing conferences of the connectional conferences in 2022.
- Bishops may serve in a different connectional conference during a transition period [2022-2025]

General Agencies

- Jointly Funded Boards, Agencies and Organizations of the new UMC – Wespath; GCFA; Publishing House; UMCOR; Archives and History and parts of GBGM (as determined in consultation among the branches inside and outside the U.S.).
- Program agencies are reimagined by a leadership group formed with equal representation from all the connectional conferences inside and outside the U.S.
- Based on decisions made by the organizing conferences of the various connectional conferences, a task force of five representatives from each connectional conference will evaluate the General Agency structure and propose a new model to the 2025 General Conference. In that model, agencies would serve only those connectional conferences that desire to participate in each agency.
- Keep current agencies through 2025, enabling a transition period where decisions are made about future structure.
- General Agencies could relate to as many or as few connectional conferences inside or outside the U.S. desire that relationship.

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Justice Related Ministries:

- A unique part of our Wesleyan DNA is emphasis on justice, fairness, and inclusiveness.
- Functions of Justice-related ministries must be immediately attended to by structures to be organized, established, and sustained in each connectional conference, especially but not limited to sexism and racism.
- The General Conference will hold the connectional conferences accountable to justice. General Conference would name a set of principles to guide matters of race and gender and require connectional conferences to report on how they are doing. The General Conference would also define consequences if a connectional conference was not in compliance with the agreed upon set of expectations.

UMC Related Institutions/ camps/colleges/ etc.

- Property owned by Annual Conferences follows the Annual Conference into its connectional conference.
- Jurisdictional properties follow the jurisdiction into its connectional conference.
- Colleges and Universities, camps and health and welfare agencies, could choose to relate to one or more annual conferences in multiple connectional conferences.

**Note: This will be determined in several situations on a case by case basis. Several of these decisions will be governed by by-laws and other governing documents.*

Mission Field

- The plan opens up the whole geography of the US to all three connectional conferences to be in ministry. New church starts sponsored by any connectional conference could happen anywhere. The mission field is open.
- This plan allows the UMC to have more workers in a wider range of contexts.
- Historically, when there was division the church was often able to provide a more focused ministry that allowed mission to grow in the various contexts served by the parts of the previously united denomination. While this plan does not propose division, but greater contextuality, we hope the effect on the mission field will be enhanced.

Judicial Council

- Judicial Council would have authority over matters decided by General Conference or the Constitution.
- Connectional conferences would have judicial councils with authority in rulings related to the connectional conference Book of Discipline.

Global Church

- Any central conference can exist as its own connectional conference or it can choose to align with a U.S. connectional conference. U.S. connectional conferences joined by central conferences become global connectional conferences.
- The executive committee of each central conference decides upon the date when the Episcopal election takes place between 2020 and 2022.
- Central conferences would be renamed as connectional conferences and would have the same responsibilities and processes as connectional conferences in the U.S. Support for annual conferences and episcopal expenses outside the U.S. would continue from all the branches, as would partnerships and mission support.

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Financial & Pension Considerations

- There will be legal fees to understand legacy connections of the historic UMC and how these relationships will continue in the changes brought by the Connectional Conference Plan. GCFA will need to provide some estimate of cost for these fees.
- Wespeth will stay intact and extend its coverage to all connectional conferences. All medical and pension liabilities remain the legal obligations of the annual conference regardless of which connectional conference is chosen by the annual conference. Wespeth will develop methods to reassign pension liabilities associated with local churches that opt into another connectional conference. Wespeth may reassign liabilities to the annual conferences, as appropriate, based on active and retired clergy affiliation. The non-Disciplinary legislation in Section IV.A of Appendix 4: Wespeth Resource should also be adopted, i.e., freezing the legacy pension plans, moving quickly to a defined contribution retirement plan, and developing new plan governance structures for the connectional conferences.
- Annual Conferences will reconfigure budgets and care for boundary reconfiguration costs.
- General Conference will reconfigure budget in 2025 and consider potential fallout in 2020 budget.

Proposed Implementation Plan for the Connectional Conference Plan

2019

Approval of plan and constitutional amendments. Constitutional amendments are voted on in 2019 or early 2020. General Conference secretary will prioritize quick translation turnaround to distribute amendments to annual conferences. Each annual conference will make this a priority to complete the amendments by the 2020 General Conference. Annual conferences may vote at a regularly scheduled session or call a special session for that purpose. Annual conference vote tallies not received by April 15, 2020, will be considered “not voting” (see ¶ 59) and thus not included in the aggregate number of members. The General Conference secretary will send out the amendments to the annual conferences within six weeks of the conclusion of General Conference.

2020

- Constitutional Amendments approved by 4/15/20
- Regularly scheduled General Conference
- Jurisdictional and central conferences vote to determine connectional conference
- Central conferences free to elect new bishops as needed

By August 1, 2021

Once a jurisdictional or central conference has decided, annual conferences that disagree may vote to join a different connectional conference. All such votes shall be completed by 8/1/21. Annual conferences may vote at a regularly scheduled meeting or call a special annual conference. (This provision gives up to a year for annual conferences to take a vote.)

Bishops align with a connectional conference. Beginning in September, active bishops for each connectional conference begin meeting and planning with the Transition Team for the organizing conferences.

By July 1, 2022

Local churches who wish to align with a connectional conference different from their Annual Conference may vote to join a different connectional conference. Clergy align with a connectional conference. (This provision gives local churches a minimum of 11 months to take a vote.)

Fall 2022: Organizational conferences of the connectional conferences.

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2025

First General Conference of the new United Methodist Church Connectional Conference Meetings following General Conference

Transition Team Explanation

- The transition team consists of approximately 30 members appointed for skill and expertise, with attention to representing all constituencies.
- The team includes a project manager hired by and responsible to the team. Other paid staff or contracted services (ramping up over time) are hired by and responsible to the project manager.
- This group is responsible for administering and overseeing the transition process moving from General Conference 2019 to the organizing conferences in 2022, working with existing groups and agencies where possible and appropriate, including matters like:
 - 1) Developing a standardized process for assigning delegates to the organizing conferences;
 - 2) Working with appropriate leaders in each connectional conference to set up the organizing conferences of the connectional conferences
 - 3) Ensuring that candidates in the ministry process know how to transition into the new processes; and
 - 4) Working with the bishops to develop the process for communicating with the connectional conference regarding moving and assigning clergy and transitioning churches to a branch different from their annual conference.
- The transition team is named by and responsible to the Council of Bishops, with necessary funds provided by GCFA.

Names of Commission Members who signed the Connectional Conference Plan

Note: The Commission never took a vote regarding which members of the Commission supported which plan. At various points in the work of the Commission, Commission members did express preferences for plans. Some Commission members could support the Commission's work on every plan while others expressed a preference for one or two of the plans. At the end of our process, in order to place the plans in petition format, Commission members were asked to which plans they were willing to give public support. Several Commission members gave support to more than one plan. For a variety of reasons, some members of the Commission, while giving their support to the Commission's report, chose not to express a preference for any of the plans.

The following Commission Members publicly support the Connectional Conference Plan: Jorge Acevedo, Jacques Akasa, Hortense Aka, Scott Johnson, Tom Lambrecht, Julie Hager Love, Mazvita Machinga , Pat Miller, Eben Nhiwatiwa, Casey Orr, Donna Pritchard, Tom Salsgiver.

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Note: The following disciplinary changes will be submitted as legislative petitions. They are included here for informational purposes.

Disciplinary Changes for the Connectional Conference Plan:

Amend Par. 101 as follows:

¶ 101. The *General Book of Discipline* reflects our Wesleyan way of serving Christ through doctrine and disciplined Christian life. We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline, and mission through our connectional covenant. The *General Book of Discipline* expresses that unity. Each ~~central~~ connectional conference may make changes and adaptations to the *General Book of Discipline* to more fruitfully accomplish our mission in various contexts. However, some portions of the General Book of Discipline are not subject to adaptation. The following parts and paragraphs are not subject to change or adaptation except by action of the General Conference. ~~The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters has primary responsibility for proposing to General Conference revisions to this paragraph.~~

Parts I -V

I. Constitution ¶¶ 1-61

II. *General Book of Discipline* ¶ 101

III. Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task ¶¶ 102-105

IV. The Ministry of All Christians ¶¶ 120-143

V. Social Principles Preface, Preamble, and ¶¶ 160-166 (as replaced by the Global Social Principles to be adopted by the 2020 General Conference)

Part VI. General Organization and Administration ¶¶ 201-204, 260-261, 301-303, 305-308, 401-403, 421-423, 431-450, 501-523, 525-528, 570-575, 601, 701-702, 703.1-4, 703.7-12, 704, 801-809, 1501-1712, 2201, 2501-2502, 2504-2511, 2552, 2601-2612, 2701, 2703-2719, 2801-2802 (All references in these paragraphs referring to jurisdictional or central conferences shall be modified to refer to connectional conferences. Where provisions between jurisdictional and central conferences conflict, they shall continue to apply differently within the United States and outside the U.S., but the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters shall lead a process in consultation with the Connectional Table to reconcile the differences and rewrite paragraphs containing conflicts to be proposed to the 2025 General Conference.)

Part VII. Additional Organization and Administration (All other paragraphs in the *Discipline*, as amended by General Conference 2020, shall remain in effect through December 31, 2025, unless adapted by a connectional conference. Based on decisions by connectional conferences during 2022- 25, the 2025 General Conference may add or subtract paragraphs to Part VI. All references in these paragraphs referring to jurisdictional or central conferences shall be modified to refer to connectional conferences. These paragraphs shall be subject to adaptation by the central conferences beginning in 2020 and the connectional conferences beginning in 2022.)

The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order, will bring legislation to the 2020 General Conference to change the structure of the *General Book of Discipline* to include a Part VI, General Organization and Administration not subject to change or adaptation by central conferences, and a Part VII, Additional Organization and Administration, adaptable by central conferences according to ¶ 31.5. The content of Part VI of the 2016 Book of Discipline will be included in either Part VI or Part VII of the *General Book of Discipline*.

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~~For the work on Part VI, Chapter 2 (The Ministry of the Ordained) and Chapter 3 (The Superintendency) of the 2016 Book of Discipline, the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters will work in consultation with the Commission for the Study of Ministry, and for Part VI, Chapter 5 (Administrative Order) of the 2016 Book of Discipline, the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters will work in consultation with the Connectional Table.~~

The Commission on the General Conference is directed to set aside adequate time in the first three days of the ~~2020-2025~~ General Conference for plenary consideration and action on Part VI, General Administration and Organization, submitted by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, and revisions to what constitutes Part VI, based on decisions made by the connectional conferences. Subsequent changes to Part VI shall be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters for submission to General Conference.

Rationale: These changes define what portions of the Discipline apply to the whole church and what portions are adaptable. Provisions pertaining to homosexuality (except regarding funding) are moved to the adaptable section. The 2025 General Conference is able to make changes based on the decisions of the connectional conferences.

Add a new ¶ 2801 as follows:

¶ 2801 – Implementation of the Connectional Conference Plan

This paragraph contains the process for implementing the Connectional Conference Plan and takes precedence over all other paragraphs in the *Book of Discipline* not in the Constitution. The processes contained in this paragraph substitute for any processes in other parts of the *Discipline*, and those other processes and approvals are preempted by this paragraph.

1. As soon as possible after the adjournment of the 2019 General Conference, and no later than March 31, 2019, the General Conference secretary shall forward to the annual conferences the Constitutional amendments approved by General Conference for the Connectional Conference Plan. Annual conferences shall be responsible to vote on ratification of these amendments by April 15, 2020, forwarding the results of this vote to the Council of Bishops immediately at the conclusion of each annual conference. Any annual conference that has not forwarded the results of its ratification ballot to the Council of Bishops by April 30, 2020, shall be deemed not present and voting under ¶ 59. The ratification percentage for the amendments shall be counted based on the ballots received, and ballots not received shall not count as part of the total (of which a two-thirds affirmative vote is required for ratification).

2. Upon the announcement by the Council of Bishops that all Constitutional amendments have been ratified, the 2020 sessions of the jurisdictional conferences shall choose by simple majority vote of the delegates present and voting as to which of the three connectional conferences that jurisdiction desires to affiliate. All jurisdictionally owned assets and liabilities shall belong to the connectional conference with which that jurisdiction affiliates when the connectional conference becomes effective. All annual conferences of that jurisdiction shall have the status chosen by their jurisdictional conference, unless an annual conference desires to choose a different option (¶ 2801.4). The decision of each jurisdictional conference shall be immediately communicated to the president of the Council of Bishops and the Transition Team.

3. Upon the announcement by the Council of Bishops that the Constitutional amendments have been ratified, each 2020-21 session of a central conference shall choose whether it wants to be

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constituted as a connectional conference (either by itself or joined with other central conferences) or to join one of the three theologically-based connectional conferences (making it a global connectional conference). The option chosen (own connectional conference or affiliation with another connectional conference) shall require a majority vote by the delegates present and voting.

All central conference owned assets and liabilities shall belong to the connectional conference with which that central conference affiliates when the connectional conference becomes effective.

All annual conferences of that central conference shall have the status chosen by their central conference, unless an annual conference desires to choose a different option (§ 2801.4). The decision of each central conference shall be immediately communicated to the president of the Council of Bishops and the Transition Team.

4. Following the decision of each jurisdictional or central conference but no later than July 31, 2021, any annual conference inside or outside the United States that disagrees with the decision of its jurisdictional or central conference may vote to join a different connectional conference by a majority vote by the conference members present and voting. The proposal for an annual conference to affiliate with a different connectional conference shall originate either from the Cabinet, the annual conference Connectional Table (or equivalent structure), or a petition signed by a minimum of ten percent of the annual conference members (clergy or lay). The proposal would then be handled in accordance with the annual conference rules. All annual conference owned assets and liabilities shall remain with the annual conference, no matter which connectional conference it affiliates with. The decision of each annual conference shall be immediately communicated to the president of the Council of Bishops and the Transition Team.

5. After January 1, 2026, an annual conference may by a 60 percent majority vote of its members present and voting decide to switch its affiliation from one connectional conference to another. Such a switch in affiliation shall require the majority approval of the receiving connectional conference. An annual conference shall not consider a switch in its affiliation within less than four years from a previous vote on the question.

6. Between August 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022, any local church (charge) inside or outside the United States that disagrees with the decision of its annual conference (whether the annual conference chose by vote or by acquiescing to the decision of the jurisdictional or central conference) may vote to join a different connectional conference by a simple majority vote of the church's professing members present and voting at a duly called regular or special church conference. The proposal to affiliate with a different connectional conference shall originate either from the church council (or equivalent structure) or from a petition signed by a minimum of ten percent of the congregation's professing members. The bishop and Cabinet, along with other appropriate individuals of the annual conference, shall facilitate the orderly and timely administration of this process. The decision of each local congregation shall be immediately communicated to the president of the Council of Bishops and the Transition Team. After July 1, 2022, any local congregation desiring to switch its affiliation from one connectional conference to another shall follow the requirements of §41. A local church shall not consider a switch in its affiliation within less than four years from a previous church conference vote on the question.

7. Past and current pension and annuity liabilities under the Clergy Retirement Security Program shall remain the legal obligations of the annual conferences. Clergy affiliating with a different connectional conference from their original annual conference shall have their associated past and current pension and annuity liabilities and related assets calculated, assigned and transferred as appropriate, by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to the annual/connectional conference to which the clergy participant transfers.

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8. By August 31, 2021, each active or retired bishop shall register with the president of the Council of Bishops and the Transition Team with which connectional conference he or she desires to affiliate.

9. During this transition, to provide continuity and avoid a mismatch of the number of bishops for each connectional conference, the mandatory retirement provisions of ¶ 408.1 shall be waived for all bishops. Bishops in the United States may continue serving their current appointments past the mandatory retirement age until the organizing conferences of the connectional conferences in 2022, at which time new bishops shall be elected as needed in each connectional conference. The retirement date would be December 31, 2022, and the effective date for new bishops January 1, 2023. Bishops unwilling to continue serving may take retirement, and the Council of Bishops shall appoint another retired bishop as interim bishop to serve through 2022. No new bishops would then be elected at the 2020 jurisdictional conferences, but election of members to the general boards and agencies would still need to occur. The 2020 jurisdictional conferences may be shortened to account for the reduced business to be conducted, or each College of Bishops may decide to conduct the necessary business via email and/or video conference. The central conferences shall meet and elect bishops as usual in 2020, unless the central conference College of Bishops determines that a realignment of the central conference may reduce the number of bishops needed. A central conference experiencing realignment, either by changing annual conference boundaries or joining another connectional conference, shall meet for organizational purposes prior to July 1, 2023, and elect any required new or replacement bishops at that time. In such a case, a central conference bishop shall not be subject to mandatory retirement until 60 days following the organizational conference (see ¶ 2801.14).

10. Each active or retired clergy person (ordained or licensed or in process) shall have until July 1, 2022, to register with his or her bishop and the Transition Team a desire to affiliate with a different connectional conference than that chosen by his or her annual conference. Any clergy person not registering a choice shall by default remain a member of that person's annual conference and affiliate with the connectional conference chosen by that annual conference.

11. Clergy appointments taking effect July 1, 2022, shall be made as much as possible by matching the desired affiliation of clergy and congregation. Clergy credentials of ordination, commissioning, and licensing shall be recognized by all connectional conferences and shall not be repeated, no matter which conference granted the credential, but the ability to serve in a particular annual conference shall be determined by the qualifications and expectations set by that annual conference. All clergy with security of appointment shall continue under appointment.

a. Transitional Appointments. Clergy may make themselves temporarily available to serve in an annual conference/connectional conference different from their preferred one, either by continuing a current appointment or in an interim appointment. In order to serve in an annual/ connectional conference different from their preferred one, a clergy person shall agree to meet the qualifications of the different annual/connectional conference and maintain the standards of conduct as set forth by the annual/connectional conference they are serving. Failure to abide by this agreement shall constitute grounds for the bishop to revoke the appointment. Such transitional appointments are designed to be temporary until a place of service is found in the clergy person's preferred annual conference.

b. Service in Other Connectional Conferences. Clergy persons may make themselves available to serve in more than one annual/connectional conference. Such clergy person shall designate one annual conference for their primary conference membership. They shall indicate to their bishop a willingness to serve in other annual/connectional conferences. In order to serve in an annual/connectional conference different from the one where his or her membership is lodged, a clergy person shall agree to meet the qualifications of the different annual/connectional conference and maintain the standards of conduct as set forth by the annual/connectional conference they are serving. Failure to abide by this agreement

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shall constitute grounds for the bishop to revoke the appointment. Such a clergy person shall maintain membership in his or her designated annual/ connectional conference, but shall be eligible for appointment to a different annual/connectional conference with the approval of the receiving annual conference bishop and clergy session.

12. Beginning September 1, 2021, the bishops of each new connectional conference may begin meeting to plan the transition into the new structure, in conjunction with the Transition Team.

13. The organizing conferences of each of the three theological connectional conferences shall take place between September 1 and November 30, 2022 on a date and in a place set by each conference's College of Bishops in consultation with the Transition Team. The organizing conferences of any new connectional conferences formed outside the United States shall take place on a date set by the connectional conference College of Bishops, but prior to July 1, 2023. Notwithstanding other provisions in the *Discipline* or in jurisdictional or central conference rules, materials proposed to be adopted by the organizing conference shall be in the hands of the delegates no later than sixty (60) days prior to the date of the meeting.

14. Delegates to the organizing conferences from annual conferences that choose to affiliate with that connectional conference shall be the General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates of that annual conference or their duly elected successors according to the provisions for election of delegates (§§ 15, 34-36, 316.6, 321.2, 327.2-3, 334.1, 344.4, 346.2, 353.7, 355.8, 514-15, 586.3, 602.1). Congregations and clergy who desire to affiliate with a connectional conference different from their annual conference shall be represented at the organizing conference of their chosen connectional conference by one clergy and one lay delegate who qualify as proper delegates under the provisions for election of delegates to jurisdictional conference cited in this paragraph. Clergy delegates from areas not covered by an annual conference related to that connectional conference shall be elected by and from the clergy who desire to affiliate with that connectional conference. Lay delegates from areas not covered by an annual conference related to that connectional conference shall be elected by and from the lay members of the annual conference of those congregations that desire to affiliate with the connectional conference. The bishop of that area shall call a special meeting of the clergy and lay members of annual conference desiring to affiliate with a different connectional conference for the purpose of electing the one clergy and one lay delegate to the organizing conference. This meeting shall take place between July 1 and August 15, 2022.

15. The new connectional conference structure, annual conference boundaries, and episcopal supervisory relationships inside the United States shall take effect on January 1, 2023. The new connectional conference structure, annual conference boundaries, and episcopal supervisory relationships for newly formed connectional conferences outside the United States shall take effect on the date set by the organizing conferences. A central conference choosing to become its own connectional conference where no annual conferences are added or subtracted or boundaries changed shall not be considered "newly formed" or "new" and shall not be subject to requirements of newly formed or new connectional conferences in this paragraph (§ 2801).

16. Connectional conferences at the organizing conference shall redraw the boundaries of their annual conferences in order to encompass all their territory and congregations. Any new annual conferences formed shall have their organizing meeting between January 1 and June 30, 2023, or on another date set by the connectional conference college of bishops.

17. During the 2020-2025 period, the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women shall engage all branches of the church to identify general principles and benchmarks that would foster accountability in the whole church for combatting racism and sexism. They shall synthesize that work and propose to the 2025 General Conference general principles and benchmarks for adoption by the conference. Subsequently each connectional conference

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shall be responsible to provide the resources and accountability necessary to abide by the principles and achieve the benchmarks and shall report on its compliance to the Standing Committee on Connectional Conferences at least 240 days prior to each General Conference.

18. During the period 2020-2025, the General Council on Finance and Administration and General Board of Global Ministries shall continue to facilitate and support the financial underwriting of bishops, annual conferences, and mission work outside the United States through the general apportionment and Advance giving.

19. The general agencies shall continue in the structure and funding level established by the 2020 General Conference through 2025, with the possibility of using reserve funds to supplement apportionments for those agencies not included in the *General Book of Discipline* for the years 2023-2025. Other general church funds shall be budgeted through the normal process for this period, with plans to accommodate the potential loss of apportionment income through the transition. Each connectional conference shall elect five representatives to a task force to evaluate the General Agency structure and propose a new model to the 2025 General Conference. In that new model, agencies shall serve only those connectional conferences that desire to participate in each agency, and funding shall come only from participating connectional conferences. The following agencies shall continue to serve the whole church and be part of the *General Book of Discipline*: Wespeth, the Publishing House, Archives and History, General Council on Finance and Administration, Faith and Order, and United Methodist Committee on Relief. The above named task force shall determine which aspects of the General Board of Global Ministries are to be included in the *General Book of Discipline* supported by the whole church.

Rationale: This new paragraph outlines the process for implementation and of transitioning into the new structure. The principles outlined in the summary of the plan are codified in this legislation.

Adopt a new ¶ 2802 as follows:

¶ 2802. Transition Team—1. The Council of Bishops shall appoint a Transition Team of approximately 30 persons chosen for skill and expertise, with attention to representing all constituencies. The Team shall work with the Council and be amenable to the Council, with necessary funds to be provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

2. The Team shall be responsible for administering and overseeing the transition process moving from GC2019 to the organizing conferences in 2022, working with existing groups and agencies where possible and appropriate. It's term of service shall expire as of December 31, 2025. The responsibilities of the Team shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. assist in implementing the process for electing delegates to the organizing conferences (¶ 2801.14)

b. working with appropriate leaders in each connectional conference to set up the organizing conferences of the connectional conferences

c. ensuring that candidates in the ministry process know how to transition into the new processes

d. tracking decisions by jurisdictional and central conferences, annual conferences, and local churches about connectional conference affiliation, and communicating with the developing leadership teams of each connectional conference with up to date information

e. working with the bishops to develop the process for communicating with the connectional conferences regarding moving and assigning clergy and transitioning churches to a connectional conference different from their annual conference

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f. writing legislation to be submitted to the 2020 General Conference for a Standing Committee on Connectional Conferences to foster cooperation between the conferences, monitor compliance with efforts to combat racism and sexism, and deal with issues of conflict between the conferences

g. working with the General Council on Finance and Administration to handle legal, financial, and administrative changes and with Wespath to handle pension changes necessary in the transition

h. other responsibilities assigned by the Council of Bishops not in conflict with the Constitution.

3. As approved by the Council of Bishops, the Team shall have a project manager hired by and responsible to the Team and other paid staff or contracted services hired by and responsible to the project manager.

Rationale: This paragraph describes the creation and work of a Transition Team to assist the Council of Bishops with overseeing the transition and caring for the many details that will arise.

Amend ¶ 422 as follows:

¶ 422. Council and College of Bishops—1. Bishops, although are elected by jurisdictional or central connectional conferences, are elected general superintendents of the whole Church and exercise their authority primarily within the connectional conference college of bishops. As all ordained ministers are first elected into membership of an annual conference and subsequently appointed to pastoral charges, so bishops become through their election members first of the Council College of Bishops before they are subsequently assigned to areas of service. By virtue of their election and consecration, bishops are members of the Council of Bishops and of their college and are bound in special covenant with all other bishops. In keeping with this covenant, bishops fulfill their servant leadership and express their mutual accountability. The Council of Bishops and the colleges are is a faith communities of mutual trust and concern responsible for the faith development and continuing wellbeing of its their members.

2. The Council of Bishops and the colleges are is thus the collegial expressions of episcopal leadership in the Church and through the Church into the world. The Church expects the Council of Bishops and the Colleges of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships.

3. In order to exercise meaningful leadership, the Council of Bishops is to meet at stated intervals. The Council of Bishops is charged with the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of shared by the whole Church, to be executed in regularized consultation and cooperation with other councils and service agencies of the Church. The role of the Council of Bishops is to serve as a missional body that helps gather and distribute best practices for church vitality; is a learning, equipping, and nurturing community; acts as connectors to the jointly-shared ministries; guides the Wesleyan DNA emphases around justice, fairness, and inclusiveness, with special concern around the elimination of racism and sexism; handles Ecumenical relations; mediates accountability challenges; and ensures the carrying into effect of the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.

4. The bishops of each connectional conference shall constitute a College of Bishops, and such College of Bishops shall arrange the plan of episcopal supervision of the annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within their respective territories. Each college shall meet at least once a year and plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the Church within their connectional conference and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the connectional conference. Each college shall also nurture and support its members and hold them accountable to the highest standards of United Methodist leadership and discipleship.

4.5. The Council of Bishops may assign one of its members to visit another episcopal area or Methodist-related church, subject to the consent of that area's College of Bishops or that church's

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leadership. When so assigned, the bishop shall be recognized as the accredited representative of the Council of Bishops, and when requested by the resident bishop or president in that area or church, may exercise therein the functions of episcopacy.

Rationale: This paragraph reconfigures the Council of Bishops as more of a learning community that cares for our ecumenical relationships, while transitioning the oversight and accountability functions to the respective connectional conference colleges of bishops. It implements the constitutional amendments related to bishops included in this plan.

Amend ¶ 2602, incorporating ¶¶ 2602-2606 and a portion of ¶ 2608.2, and renumber succeeding paragraphs as follows:

¶ 2602. Effective January 1, 2023, delete the existing ¶¶ 2602-2606 and replace with the following:

Composition—1. Members—The Judicial Council shall be composed of two members, one clergy and one lay, from each connectional conference, elected in such a manner as each conference shall determine. In the same manner, each connectional conference shall elect two alternates, one clergy and one lay. All the laypersons shall be professing members of The United Methodist Church. A member’s term of office shall be eight years. The term of the alternates shall be for four years. A member may serve a maximum of two consecutive eight-year terms, with a minimum of four years off before reelection to the council. The terms of the two members of a connectional conference shall be staggered, so that both terms shall not expire in the same quadrennium. The secretary of the General Conference in 2022 shall randomly determine which member (clergy or lay) in each connectional conference shall be elected to a three-year term (serving 2023-2025), so that the number of clergy and lay members whose terms expire in a given quadrennium are equal or nearly so. Members elected to a three-year term in 2022 shall be eligible to be elected to two additional consecutive eight-year terms. Members elected in 2022 to a seven-year term (serving 2023-2029) shall be eligible to be elected to one additional consecutive eight-year term.

2. Vacancies—a. If a vacancy in the membership of the council occurs during the interim between sessions of the connectional conference, the vacancy shall be filled by the respective clergy or lay alternate. The alternate filling such vacancy shall hold office as a member of the Judicial Council for the unexpired term of the member whom the alternate succeeds. In the event of any vacancy, it shall be the duty of the president and secretary of the council to notify the alternate entitled to fill it. When an alternate becomes a member of the council, the connectional conference college of bishops shall appoint a replacement alternate to fill out the unexpired term of the promoted alternate.

b. In the event of an absence of one or more members of the council during a session of the Judicial Council, such temporary vacancy shall be filled by the respective clergy or lay alternate. If the appropriate alternate is unable to be present, the other alternate from that connectional conference shall fill the temporary vacancy. Inability or failure to fill a vacancy does not affect the validity of any action of the council so long as a quorum is present.

3. Expiration of Term—The term of office of the members of the council and of the alternates shall expire upon the adjournment of the connectional conference at which their successors are elected.

4. Ineligibility of Members—Members of the council shall be ineligible to serve as delegates to the General or connectional conference or to serve in any General or connectional conference board or agency.

5. Quorum—Eighty percent of the council members shall constitute a quorum except on questions of the constitutionality of acts of General Conference, in which case a quorum shall be all members or their alternates duly seated according to the rules established by the Judicial Council. An

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affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the council shall be necessary to declare any act of the General Conference unconstitutional. On other matters, a majority vote of the entire council shall be sufficient. The council may decline to entertain an appeal or a petition for a declaratory decision in any instance in which it determines that it does not have jurisdiction to decide the matter.

~~¶ 2608.2. *Time and Place*—The council shall meet at the time and place of the meeting of the General Conference and shall continue in session until the adjournment of that body, and at least one other time in each calendar year and at such other times as it may deem appropriate, at such places as it may select from time to time. Seven members shall constitute a quorum except on questions of the constitutionality of acts of General Conference in which case a quorum shall be nine members or alternates duly seated according to the rules established by the Judicial Council. An affirmative vote of at least six members of the council shall be necessary to declare any act of the General Conference unconstitutional. On other matters, a majority vote of the entire council shall be sufficient. The council may decline to entertain an appeal or a petition for a declaratory decision in any instance in which it determines that it does not have jurisdiction to decide the matter.~~

Rationale: These changes reconfigure the Judicial Council as a representative body of the connectional conferences, ensuring equal representation. It designs the Council to cope with the reality of potentially as many as ten connectional conferences, each with a different Book of Discipline that would need to consider cases regarding those Disciplines.

Constitutional Amendments for the Connectional Conference Plan

Note about constitutional amendments: Nine constitutional amendments, one of which is simply changing the names to “connectional conference”, would be needed. Some of the amendments consolidate a number of existing paragraphs in the Constitution into one new paragraph. The following constitutional amendments will be submitted as legislative petitions. They are included here for informational purposes.

1. Amend ¶9 and delete ¶10 and renumber succeeding paragraphs as follows:

~~¶9. Article II.—There shall be jurisdictional-connectional conferences for the Church in the United States of America, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth, provided that in The United Methodist Church there shall be no jurisdictional or central-connectional conference based on any ground other than geographical and regional division race or ethnicity. Such duties, powers, and privileges shall be the same, whether the connectional conference is within or outside the United States, except as otherwise stated in the Constitution.~~

~~¶10. Article III.—There shall be central conferences for the Church outside the United States of America and, if necessary, provisional central conferences, all with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.~~

Rationale: This amendment makes jurisdictions and central conferences equal, changing the name to connectional conferences. It also allows the creation of connectional conferences based on theology, rather than geography.

2. Amend ¶14 as follows:

¶14. Article II.—The General Conference shall meet once in four years at such time and in such place as shall be determined by the General Conference or by its duly authorized committees. The change in the preceding sentence shall become effective at the close of General Conference in

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2016. The 2024 General Conference shall be moved to 2025, shifting the four-year cycle to odd-numbered years.

A special session of the General Conference ...

Rationale: This amendment provides an extra year for transition to the new structure and ensures that General Conference will not be held in a United States election year.

3. Amend ¶16 as follows:

¶16. Article IV.—The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional, and in the exercise of this power shall have authority as follows:

1. 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.

2. To define and fix the powers and duties of elders, deacons, supply preachers, local preachers, exhorters, deaconesses, and home missionaries, with adaptation by the connectional conferences except as otherwise precluded by the Constitution, including ¶ 20.

3. To define and fix the powers and duties of annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences and missions, and of ~~central~~ connectional conferences, district conferences, charge conferences, and congregational meetings.

4. To provide for the organization, promotion, and administration of the work of the Church outside the United States of America.

5. To define and fix the powers, duties, and privileges of the episcopacy, to adopt a plan for the support of the bishops, to provide a uniform rule for their retirement, and to provide for the discontinuance of a bishop because of inefficiency or unacceptability, with adaptation by the connectional conferences except as otherwise precluded by the Constitution, including ¶ 45.

6. To provide and revise the hymnal and ritual of the Church and to regulate all matters relating to the form and mode of worship, subject to the limitations of the first and second Restrictive Rules, with adaptation by the connectional conferences.

7. To provide a judicial system and a method of judicial procedure for the Church, except as herein otherwise prescribed.

8. To initiate and to direct all connectional enterprises of the Church and to provide boards for their promotion and administration.

9. To determine and provide for raising and distributing funds necessary to carry on the work of the Church.

10. ~~To fix a uniform basis upon which bishops shall be elected by the jurisdictional conferences and to determine the number of bishops that may be elected by central conferences.~~

11. To select its presiding officers from the bishops, through a committee, provided that the bishops shall select from their own number the presiding officer of the opening session.

12. ~~To change the number and the boundaries of jurisdictional conferences upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences in each jurisdictional conference involved.~~

13. To establish such commissions for the general work of the Church as may be deemed advisable.

14. To secure the rights and privileges of membership in all agencies, programs, and institutions in The United Methodist Church regardless of race, gender, or status.

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

16. To enact such other legislation as may be necessary, subject to the limitations and restrictions of the Constitution of the Church.

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Rationale: This amendment allows connectional conferences to adapt various structures to the context in which they do ministry, including: powers and duties of various ministry leadership offices, number of bishops needed, the responsibilities of bishops, their support, and their retirement, worship and liturgy of the church, and the requirement for jurisdictional conferences.

4. Amend ¶19 as follows

¶ 19. Article III.—The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant ~~general~~ superintendency.

Rationale: This amendment allows episcopacy to be adapted and tailored to the theological and geographical context within each connectional conference. It eliminates the expectation that a bishop in one part of the church should be expected to serve as a bishop in other parts of the church.

5. Amend ¶23 as follows, incorporating ¶¶24-28, and deleting Section V., ¶¶28-31 renumbering the following sections and paragraphs as appropriate.

Section IV. ~~Jurisdictional~~ Connectional Conferences

¶ 23.1 Article I.—The ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences shall be composed of as many representatives from the annual conferences and missionary conferences as shall be determined by a uniform basis established by the General Conference, provided that no ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conference shall have fewer than 100 delegates. The delegates shall be clergy and lay in equal numbers. The missionary conferences shall be considered as annual conferences for the purpose of this article.

¶ 2423.2 Article II.—All ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences shall have the same status and the same privileges of action within the limits fixed by the Constitution. The ratio of representation of the annual conferences and missionary conferences in the General Conference shall be the same for all ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences.

¶ 25. Article III.—~~The General Conferences shall fix the basis of representation in the jurisdictional conferences, provided that the jurisdictional conferences shall be composed of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates to be elected by the annual conferences, the missionary conferences⁴⁷ and the provisional annual conferences.~~

¶ 2623.3 Article IVIII.—~~Each jurisdictional conference shall meet at the time determined by the Council of Bishops or its delegated committee, each jurisdictional conference convening on the same date as the others and at a place selected by the jurisdictional committee on entertainment, appointed by its College of Bishops unless such a committee has been appointed by the preceding jurisdictional conference. The connectional conferences shall meet within the year succeeding the meeting of the General Conference at such times and places as shall have been determined by the preceding respective connectional conferences or by commissions appointed by them or by the connectional College of Bishops.~~

¶ 2723.4 Article VIV.—The ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences shall have the following powers and duties and such others as may be conferred by the General Conferences:

1- a. To promote the evangelistic, educational, missionary, and benevolent interests of the Church and to provide for interests and institutions within their boundaries.

2- b. To determine the number of bishops that may be elected, to elect bishops and to cooperate in carrying out such plans for their support as may be determined by the General

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~~Conference.~~ Each connectional conference shall provide the entire financial support for its bishops, including salary, housing, benefits, travel, and office expenses, unless supplemental funds are approved by the General Conference with the consent of the other connectional conferences.

~~3. c.~~ To establish and constitute jurisdictional connectional conference boards as auxiliary to the general boards of the Church as the need may appear and to choose their representatives on the general boards in such manner as the General Conference connectional conference may determine.

~~4. d.~~ To determine the boundaries of their annual conferences, provided that there shall be no annual conference with a membership of fewer than fifty clergy in full connection, except by the consent of the General Conference.

~~5. e.~~ To make rules and regulations for the administration of the work of the Church within the jurisdiction connectional conference, including such changes and adaptations of the *General Book of Discipline* as the conditions in the respective conferences may require, subject to such powers as have been or shall be vested in the General Conference and subject to the Constitution.

~~6. f.~~ To appoint if desired a judicial court to determine legal questions arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the connectional conference *Discipline* enacted by the connectional conference. There shall be a right of appeal of the decisions of such a court to the Judicial Council. To appoint a committee on appeals to hear and determine the appeal of a traveling preacher of that jurisdiction connectional conference from the decision of a trial committee.

Rationale: This amendment combines powers of jurisdictional and central conferences and standardizes them for connectional conferences, including a connectional judicial court. It requires each connectional conference in the U.S. to support its own bishops. It gives all connectional conferences the power to adapt the *Discipline* now enjoyed by central conferences.

6. Amend ¶ 37, incorporating ¶¶ 38-41, and renumbering the following paragraphs as appropriate:

Section ~~VII~~ VI. Boundaries

¶ 37.1 Article I.—The United Methodist Church shall have jurisdictional connectional conferences, each covering the entire United States and its territories, made up as follows:

~~Northeastern—Bermuda, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, the Virgin Islands, West Virginia.~~

~~Southeastern—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia.~~

~~North Central—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.~~

~~South Central—Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas.~~

~~Western—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming and the territory of the United States in the Pacific region.~~

a. Traditional Connectional Conference, in which marriage shall continue to be defined as between one man and one woman, same-sex weddings cannot be performed, and those practicing homosexuality cannot be ordained, along with a covenantal commitment to a more traditional understanding of the doctrinal and moral standards of the church with enhanced accountability.

b. Unity Connectional Conference, which acknowledges that members are not of one mind regarding biblical interpretations related to human sexuality, in which pastors are allowed but not required to perform same-sex weddings, annual conferences are allowed but not required to

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ordain those practicing homosexuality, local churches are allowed but not required to receive an LGBT person as pastor, and in which no bishop, pastor, or congregation is compelled to act against conscience in these matters.

c. Progressive Connectional Conference, in which same-sex weddings are performed by all clergy, all annual conferences ordain qualified LGBT persons, and all local churches welcome LGBT pastors who match the needs of the congregation and its ministry.

d. Each of these three connectional conferences is empowered to choose its own name and insignia, which may or may not include the use of the cross and flame and the name “United Methodist.” When such names are chosen by a connectional conference, the names in this paragraph shall automatically be replaced with the new name without the need for additional constitutional amendment.

e. The process of realignment from the geographical jurisdictions to the new connectional conferences shall not require the approval of the various annual conferences as specified in ¶¶ 16.12 and 37.3.

f. No connectional conference shall adopt policies that are inconsistent with or violate ¶ 4 of the Constitution, either expressly or by practice.

¶ ~~38~~37.2 Article II.—The work of the Church outside the United States of America may be formed into ~~central~~ connectional conferences, the number and boundaries of which shall be determined by the ~~Uniting Conference~~ those in effect as of January 1, 2020, the General Conference having authority subsequently to make changes in the number and boundaries. Connectional conferences outside the United States may, by majority vote, elect to join one of the connectional conferences described in ¶ 37.1, in which case the connectional conference it joins shall become global.

¶ ~~39~~37.3 Article III.—Changes in the number, names, and boundaries of the ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences may be effected by the General Conference upon the consent of a majority vote by ~~two-thirds~~ of the annual conferences of each of the ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences involved. This article shall not preclude the process established by the 2019 General Conference to allow for a transition to non-geographic connectional conferences in the United States.

¶ ~~40~~37.4 Article IV.—The number, names, and boundaries of the annual conferences and episcopal areas shall be determined by the ~~jurisdictional~~ connectional conferences in the United States of America and by the ~~central~~ conferences outside the United States of America according to the provisions under the respective powers and pursuant to the respective structures of the ~~jurisdictional and the central~~ conferences. The authority of ~~jurisdictional and central~~ connectional conferences provided herein is not circumscribed or limited by the authority provided to the College of Bishops to arrange a plan of episcopal supervision. This article shall not preclude the process established by the 2019 General Conference to allow for a transition to non-geographic connectional conferences in the United States.

¶ ~~41~~37.5 Article V. Transfer of Local Churches—

1. a. A local church may be transferred from one annual conference to another in which it is geographically located upon approval by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the following:

- a-i) the charge conference;
- b-ii) the congregational meeting of the local church;
- e-iii) each of the two annual conferences involved.

The vote shall be certified by the secretaries of the specified conferences or meetings to the bishops having supervision of the annual conferences involved, and upon their announcement of the required majorities the transfer shall immediately be effective.

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~~2. b.~~ The vote on approval of transfer shall be taken by each annual conference at its first session after the matter is submitted to it.

~~3. c.~~ Transfers under the provisions of this article shall not be governed or restricted by other provisions of this Constitution relating to changes of boundaries of conferences.

d. This article shall not preclude the process established by the 2019 General Conference to allow for a transition to non-geographic connectional and annual conferences in the United States.

Rationale: This amendment is the heart of the Connectional Conference Plan, establishing the new non-geographic connectional conferences and defining the primary values of each. It adopts language that makes this paragraph consistent with other amendments. It ensures that the Constitution allows the transition to the new structure with a fair process.

7. Amend ¶ 45, as follows, incorporating ¶¶ 46-54 and renumbering the following paragraphs as appropriate:

DIVISION THREE—EPISCOPAL SUPERVISION

~~¶ 45.1~~ Article I.—There shall be a continuance of an episcopacy in The United Methodist Church of like plan, powers, privileges, and duties as now exist in The Methodist Church and in The Evangelical United Brethren Church in all those matters in which they agree and may be considered identical; and the differences between these historic episcopacies are deemed to be reconciled and harmonized by and in this Plan of Union and Constitution of The United Methodist Church and actions taken pursuant thereto so that a unified superintendency and episcopacy is hereby created and established of, in, and by those who now are and shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church; and the said episcopacy shall further have such powers, privileges, and duties as are herein set forth.

~~¶ 46~~45.2 Article II.—The bishops shall be elected by the respective ~~jurisdictional and central~~ connectional conferences and consecrated in the historic manner at such time and place as may be fixed by the General Conference for those elected by the jurisdictions and by each central ~~connectional~~ conference for those elected by such central conference, provided that episcopal elections in central conferences shall be held at a regular, not an extra, session of the ~~central~~ conference, except in the case where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.

~~¶ 47~~45.3 Article III.—There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of all the bishops of The United Methodist Church. The council shall meet at least once a year and shall serve as a missional body that helps gather and distribute best practices for church vitality; is a learning, equipping, and nurturing community; acts as connectors to the jointly-shared ministries; guides the Wesleyan DNA emphases around justice, fairness, and inclusiveness, with special concern around our historic efforts to combat racism and sexism; handles Ecumenical relations; mediates accountability challenges; plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for and ensures the carrying into effect of the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference and in accord with the provisions set forth in this Plan of Union.

~~¶ 48~~45.4 Article IV.—The bishops of each ~~jurisdictional and central~~ connectional conference shall constitute a College of Bishops, and such College of Bishops shall arrange the plan of episcopal supervision of the annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within their respective territories. Each college shall meet at least once a year and plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the Church within their connectional conference and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the connectional conference. Each college shall also nurture and support its members and hold them

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accountable to the highest standards of United Methodist leadership and discipleship.

~~¶ 49-45.5~~ Article V. —The bishops shall have residential and presidential supervision in the ~~jurisdictional or central-connectional~~ conferences in which they are elected or to which they are transferred. Bishops may be transferred from one ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ to another ~~jurisdiction~~ for presidential and residential supervision under the following conditions: (1) The transfer of bishops may be on either of two bases: (a) a ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ that receives a bishop by transfer from another ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ may transfer to that ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ or to a third ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ one of its own bishops eligible for transfer, so that the number transferred in by each ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ shall be balanced by the number transferred out; or (b) a ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ may receive a bishop from another ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ and not transfer out a member of its own College of Bishops. (2) No bishop shall be transferred unless that bishop shall have specifically consented. (3) No bishop shall be eligible for transfer unless the bishop shall have served one quadrennium in the ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ that elected the bishop to the episcopacy. (4) All such transfers shall require the approval by a majority vote of the members present and voting of the ~~jurisdictional-connectional conference~~ committees on episcopacy of the ~~jurisdictions-connectional conferences~~ that are involved. After the above procedures have been followed, the transferring bishop shall become a member of the receiving College of Bishops and shall be subject to residential assignment by that ~~jurisdictional-connectional conference~~.

A bishop may be assigned by the Council of Bishops for presidential service or other temporary service in another ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ than that which elected the bishop, provided that the request is made by a majority of the bishops in the ~~jurisdiction-connectional conference~~ of the proposed service.

In the case of an emergency in any ~~jurisdiction or central-connectional conference~~ through the death or disability of a bishop or other cause, the Council of Bishops may assign a bishop from another ~~jurisdiction or central-connectional conference~~ to the work of the said ~~jurisdiction or central-connectional conference~~, with the consent of a majority of the bishops of that ~~jurisdiction or central-connectional conference~~.

~~¶ 50. 45.6~~ Article VI. —The bishops, both active and retired, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and of The Methodist Church at the time union is consummated shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church.

The bishops of The Methodist Church elected by the jurisdictions, the active bishops of The Evangelical United Brethren Church at the time of union, and bishops elected prior to 2021 by the jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church shall have life tenure. Each bishop elected by a central conference of The Methodist Church prior to 2021 shall have such tenure as the central conference electing him/her shall have determined. Bishops elected after 2020 shall have such tenure as the connectional conference electing him/her shall have determined.

The ~~jurisdictional-connectional conference~~ shall elect a standing committee on episcopacy to consist of one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual conference, on nomination of the annual conference delegation. The committee shall review the work of the bishops, pass on their character and official administration, and report to the ~~jurisdictional-connectional conference~~ its findings for such action as the conference may deem appropriate within its constitutional warrant of power. The committee shall recommend the assignments of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the ~~jurisdictional-connectional conference~~.

~~These provisions shall not preclude the adoption by the General Conference of provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in episcopal areas.~~

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~~¶ 51.45.7~~ Article VII.—A bishop presiding over an annual, ~~central, or jurisdictional or~~ connectional conference shall decide all questions of law coming before the bishop in the regular business of a session, provided that such questions be presented in writing and that the decisions be recorded in the journal of the conference.

Such an episcopal decision shall not be authoritative except for the pending case until it shall have been passed upon by the Judicial Council for matters related to the General *Book of Discipline* and by the connectional conference judicial court (if any ¶ 23.4) for matters related to the connectional conference *Book of Discipline*. All decisions of law made by each bishop shall be reported in writing annually, with a syllabus of the same, to the Judicial Council or connectional conference judicial court as appropriate, which shall affirm, modify, or reverse them.

~~¶ 52.45.8~~ Article VIII.—The bishops of the several ~~jurisdictional and central~~ connectional conferences shall preside in the sessions of their respective conferences.

~~¶ 53.45.9~~ Article IX.—In each annual conference there shall be one or more district superintendents who shall assist the bishop in the administration of the annual conference and shall have such responsibilities and term of office as the ~~General Conference~~ connectional conference may determine.

~~¶ 54.45.10~~ Article X.—The bishops shall appoint, after consultation with the district superintendents, ministers to the charges; and they shall have such responsibilities and authorities as the General Conference shall prescribe, with adaptation by connectional conferences except as precluded by the Constitution, including ¶ 20.

Rationale: This amendment re-envision the Council of Bishops as a different type of body, while shifting authority to the Connectional Colleges of Bishops. It makes language consistent with other amendments. It allows each connectional conference to determine its bishops' tenure and otherwise equalizes the powers currently held by jurisdictional and central conferences.

8. Amend ¶ 56.3 as follows:

¶ 56. Article II.—The Judicial Council shall have authority:

3. To pass upon decisions of law made by bishops in annual conferences regarding the General *Book of Discipline* or on appeal of a decision of law from a connectional conference judicial court regarding a connectional conference *Book of Discipline*.

Rationale: This amendment conforms this paragraph with the new ¶¶ 23.4f and 45.7, which allow for a connectional conference judicial court to rule on questions of law related to the connectional conference *Book of Discipline*, which may be appealed to the Judicial Council.

9. Name Change: In ¶¶ 32-36, 56, and 61 the names “jurisdiction,” “jurisdictional conference,” or “central conference” should be replaced by “connectional conference,” and the phrase “of the central conferences” replaced by “outside the United States.”

¶ 32. Article I.—The annual conference shall be composed of clergy and lay members. The clergy membership shall consist of ... The lay membership shall consist of ... In the annual conferences ~~of the central conferences outside the United States~~, the four-year participation and the two-year membership requirements may be waived by the annual conference for young persons under thirty (30) years of age. Such persons must be professing members of The United Methodist Church ...

¶ 33. Article II.—The annual conference is the basic body in the Church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote on all constitutional amendments, on the election of clergy and lay

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delegates to the General and the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conferences, on all matters relating to the character ...

¶ 34. Article III.—The annual conference shall elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference and to its ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference in the manner provided in this section, Articles IV and V. Such elections shall include open nominations from the floor by the annual conference, and delegates shall be elected by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast. The persons first elected up to the number determined by the ratio for representation in the General Conference shall be representatives in that body. Additional delegates shall be elected to complete the number determined by the ratio for representation in the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference, who, together with those first elected as above, shall be delegates in the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference. The additional delegates to the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference shall in the order of their election be the reserve delegates to the General Conference. The annual conference shall also elect reserve clergy and lay delegates to the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference as it may deem desirable. These reserve clergy and lay delegates to the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conferences may act as reserve delegates to the General Conference when it is evident that not enough reserve delegates are in attendance at the General Conference.

¶ 35. Article IV.—The clergy delegates to the General Conference and to the ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference shall be elected from the clergy members ...

¶ 36. Article V.—The lay delegates to the General and ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conferences shall be elected by the lay members of the annual conference or provisional annual conference without regard to age, provided such delegates shall have been professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years next preceding their election, and shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years next preceding their election, and are members thereof within the annual conference electing them at the time of holding the General and ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conferences.

¶ 56. 1. To determine the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference upon an appeal of a majority of the Council of Bishops or one-fifth of the members of the General Conference and to determine the constitutionality of any act of a ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference upon an appeal of a majority of the bishops of that ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference or upon the appeal of one-fifth of the members of that ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference.

¶ 56. 4. To hear and determine the legality of any action taken therein by any General Conference board or ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference board or body, upon appeal by one-third of the members thereof, or upon request of the Council of Bishops or a majority of the bishops of a ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference.

¶ 61. Article III.—A ~~jurisdictional or central~~ connectional conference may by a majority vote propose changes in the Constitution of the Church ...

Rationale: This amendment changes the names “jurisdiction,” “jurisdictional conference,” or “central conference” to “connectional conference,” and the phrase “of the central conferences” to “outside the United States” in order to create consistency of names throughout the Constitution.