



# Progressive Jurisdiction Legislation

## **A Plan to Achieve Amicable Unity by Creating a Progressive Jurisdiction in The United Methodist Church**

Version 2.4

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### Introduction:

In the spirit of continued commitment to amicable unity in The United Methodist Church, this proposal is offered for a nation-wide Progressive Jurisdiction (PJ) to stand alongside the five geographic jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church. Annual conferences of The United Methodist Church would be allowed to enter the PJ without penalty and pursue, within limits, standards on human sexuality not allowed under *The Book of Discipline*. Individual churches and clergy would have the opportunity to dissent from the jurisdictional affiliation of their annual conference and either stay in their geographic jurisdiction as part of another conference or enter the PJ. While remaining United Methodist, the PJ would have a distinctive logo and would be granted customized participation at General Conference and on general church agencies.

The legislation contained in this document makes most sense when paired with other legislation aimed at restoring integrity to our existing covenant. Unless accountability measures are passed, Progressives may not feel the urgency to enter the PJ and the discord in our denomination would continue. Examples of restorative measures might include greater accountability for bishops, moving episcopal accountability from the jurisdictions to the general church, and establishing minimum sentences for clergy conducting same-sex weddings. While these measures will no doubt be repugnant to some, they are an integral part of this overall plan for unity. Some traditionalists will be very slow to approve



1 greater liberties for Progressives without assurances that *Book of Discipline* will be upheld and further  
2 disobedience halted. If worded correctly, many of these accountability measures can be passed by a  
3 simple majority at General Conference. The authors of this plan envision a traditionalist coalition  
4 passing measures aimed at restoring order to the UMC and a broader coalition, including Progressives,  
5 joining to enact the constitutional and other provisions needed to create the PJ.

## 6 MEASURES TO CREATE A 7 PROGRESSIVE JURISDICTION

### 8 TWO CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

9 The following constitutional changes require a 2/3 General Conference majority vote and ratification by  
10 2/3 majority vote of the aggregate members of the annual conferences.

#### 11 **Amendment #1: Allow for a Jurisdiction Based on Something Other** 12 **Than Geography.**

##### 13 **Division Two, Section One, Article II (¶ 9)**

14 “There shall be jurisdictional conferences for the Church in the United States of  
15 America, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth, provided  
16 that in The United Methodist Church there shall be no jurisdictional or central  
17 conference based on ~~any ground other than geographical and regional division~~ race or  
18 ethnicity.”

19 **Rationale:** *The original language was enacted to drive a nail in the coffin of the racial segregation that*  
20 *was behind the creation of the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church. The amendment removes*  
21 *the general language which prohibited non-geographic jurisdictions and inserts more specific language*  
22 *that continues the constitutional assurance that jurisdictions will not be used as a tool for racial*  
23 *segregation.*



1 **Amendment #2: Amend ¶24 to allow for jurisdictions with different**  
2 **privileges.**

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

7 **Rationale:** *The basis of this jurisdictional proposal is the creation of a specialized*  
8 *jurisdiction with customized participation in the general church.*

9 **Amendment #3: Allow for the Creation of a Progressive Jurisdiction**  
10 **Empowered to Adapt the *Book of Discipline*.**

11 **Division Two, Section VII, Article 1 (¶137)**

12  
13 *“The United Methodist Church shall have jurisdictional conferences made up as follows:*  
14 *Northeastern—Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland,*  
15 *Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont,*  
16 *the Virgin Islands, West Virginia.*

17 *Southeastern—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South*  
18 *Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia.*

19 *North Central—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South*  
20 *Dakota, Wisconsin.*

21 *South Central—Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico,*  
22 *Oklahoma, Texas.*

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

26 There shall also be an Progressive Jurisdiction composed of those annual conferences  
27 that choose to adopt standards and practices regarding human sexuality different from the  
28 standards and practices of the *Book of Discipline*. Annual conferences in The United States may  
29 enter the Progressive Jurisdiction by the process elsewhere determined by General Conference.

30 This Progressive Jurisdiction shall be empowered to make such changes and adaptations  
31 of the General Discipline as the jurisdiction chooses, subject to such powers that have been or  
32 shall be vested in the General Conference. The Progressive Jurisdiction may appoint a judicial



1 court to determine legal questions arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted,  
2 or new sections of the jurisdictional Conference Discipline enacted by the Progressive  
3 Jurisdiction. The Progressive Jurisdiction shall be entitled to the same ratio of representation at  
4 General Conferences as other jurisdictions, but delegates from the Progressive Jurisdiction shall  
5 not vote on matters otherwise adaptable by their jurisdiction. Enabling legislation passed by  
6 General Conference to implement this amendment shall become effective and begin to be  
7 implemented when the Council of Bishops shall certify the amendment’s ratification. The  
8 jurisdictional realignments needed to implement this paragraph shall not be subject to the  
9 consent of the annual conferences required in the provisions of ¶¶16.12 and 39.  
10 Notwithstanding other constitutional provisions, the Progressive Jurisdiction shall be  
11 responsible for funding its own programs and episcopal expenses.

12 Notwithstanding any other provision of the Constitution, in the event that all annual  
13 conferences of a geographic jurisdiction vote to join the Progressive Jurisdiction, that geographic  
14 jurisdiction is dissolved and its territory shall be divided between contiguous geographic  
15 jurisdictions in a plan to be drawn, approved, and implemented by the Council of Bishops.

16  
17 ***Rationale:** This amendment allows for the creation of a Progressive Jurisdiction that has*  
18 *the explicit permission to adopt certain provisions regarding marriage and human*  
19 *sexuality that differ from the General Discipline.*  
20

## 21 **NON-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

### 22 **Change #1: Allow Jurisdictions with Customized Participation in the** 23 **General Church**

24  
25 ~~¶1513.—Equal Status—All jurisdictional conferences shall have the same status and the~~  
26 ~~same privileges of action within the limits fixed by the Constitution.~~  
27 ~~Jurisdictions and Race -- In The United Methodist Church there shall be no~~  
28 ~~jurisdictional or central conference organized on the basis of race or ethnicity.~~  
29

30 ***Rationale:** The basis of this jurisdictional proposal is the creation of a specialized*  
31 *jurisdiction with customized participation in the general church. It is reinforced,*  
32 *however, that jurisdictions shall not be organized on the basis or race or ethnicity, as*  
33 *was the case with the Central Jurisdiction that existed from 1939-1968.*



1 **Change #2: Define the Progressive Jurisdiction and the Process by**  
2 **which It Is Organized.**  
3

4 ¶1538. *The Progressive Jurisdiction* – There shall be an Progressive Jurisdiction for those  
5 annual conferences in The United States that decide on a principled dissent  
6 from standards and practices related to marriage, human sexuality, and gender  
7 issues. Other provisions notwithstanding, the Progressive Jurisdiction shall  
8 function as other jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church except for the  
9 following provisions:

- 10 1. The jurisdiction shall be empowered to make such changes and adaptations  
11 of the Book of Discipline as the mission of the jurisdiction require, especially  
12 concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church,  
13 district, annual conference, and jurisdictional levels, provided that no action  
14 shall be take that is contrary to the Constitution (¶¶1-61), General Rules,  
15 Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task (¶¶101-104), The Ministry of  
16 All Christians (¶¶120-142), and The Preface and Preamble to the Social  
17 Principles. Subject to these restrictions, the jurisdiction may delegate to a  
18 constituent annual conference the power to make one or other of the  
19 changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon request of such  
20 annual conference.
- 21 2. The jurisdiction shall be free to adapt the ordination standards in ¶304.3  
22 that prohibit self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being certified as  
23 candidates for ministry, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The  
24 United Methodist Church. Bishops elected by the jurisdiction shall meet the  
25 qualifications expected of all other United Methodist bishops, including  
26 compliance with ¶304.3. The jurisdiction shall also be free to adapt ¶613.19  
27 to allow the expenditure of annual conference funds to promote the  
28 acceptance of homosexuality.
- 29 3. The jurisdiction shall be free to permit clergy and churches of its annual  
30 conference to perform whatever marriage ceremonies it chooses to permit,  
31 and such clergy shall not be subject to charges under ¶2702.1(b).
- 32 4. The jurisdiction may appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions  
33 arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections  
34 of the *Progressive Jurisdictional Conference Discipline* enacted by the  
35 jurisdiction.
- 36 5. The jurisdiction shall develop its own logo which may be an adaptation of  
37 The United Methodist Cross and Flame, pending approval by The General  
38 Council on Finance and Administration. Churches and annual conferences



- 1                   of the jurisdiction shall use the logo of the jurisdiction and indicate their  
2                   jurisdictional affiliation on signage and letterhead.  
3                   6. While annual conferences of the jurisdiction shall be entitled to the same  
4                   ratio of General Conference delegates as those in other jurisdictions, these  
5                   delegates shall be restricted from voting on changes to parts of the  
6                   Discipline that the jurisdiction is empowered to adapt.  
7                   7. The jurisdiction shall have the following representation on general church  
8                   agencies:  
9                   a. The jurisdiction is entitled to proportional representation on the  
10                   General Council on Finance and Administration, the General Board  
11                   of Pensions and Health Benefits, the General Board of Global  
12                   Ministries, the General Commission on Religion and Race, the  
13                   General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the General  
14                   Commission on United Methodist Men, the General Commission on  
15                   Archives and History, the General Commission on Communications,  
16                   the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, the United  
17                   Methodist Publishing House, and United Methodist Women.  
18                   b. The jurisdiction is not entitled to representation on the General  
19                   Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Discipleship, the  
20                   General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or affiliate bodies  
21                   of these general agencies.  
22                   c. The jurisdiction shall be entitled to one representative on the  
23                   Connectional Table.  
24                   8. Assessment of general church apportionments to the annual conferences of  
25                   the jurisdiction shall take the following factors into consideration:  
26                   a. The jurisdiction shall be responsible for funding its own programs  
27                   and episcopal expenses.  
28                   b. The jurisdiction shall share in general church support of Central  
29                   Conference bishops through The Episcopal Fund.  
30                   c. The jurisdiction shall not participate in the budgets of those  
31                   agencies to which it is not entitled representation except as  
32                   negotiated with the General Council on Finance and Administration  
33                   and in keeping with the provisions of ¶806.9. The jurisdiction is  
34                   encouraged to participate in The Advance.  
35                   d. As the jurisdiction is not bound by the body of the Social Principles,  
36                   it does not participate in the budget of the General Board of Church  
37                   and Society. The jurisdiction may enter into agreements with the  
38                   board for shared services and develop funding agreements as  
39                   negotiated with the General Council on Finance and Administration.



- 1 e. As the jurisdiction bears the weight of determining its own  
2 standards for ministry and ministerial education it shall not be  
3 required to fund the Ministerial Education Fund or the work of the  
4 General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The jurisdiction  
5 may enter into agreements with these agencies for shared services  
6 and develop shared funding agreements as negotiated with the  
7 General Council on Finance and Administration. The jurisdiction is  
8 also encourage to develop alternative means of supporting  
9 ministerial students who are candidates from its annual  
10 conferences.
- 11 f. The jurisdiction may enter into agreements with the General Board  
12 of Discipleship for shared services and develop funding agreements  
13 as negotiated with the General Council on Finance and  
14 Administration.
- 15 g. The jurisdiction shall participate in Africa University Fund, the Black  
16 College Fund, the General Administration Fund, and the  
17 Interdenominational Cooperation Fund.
- 18 h. In any funding agreement with the jurisdiction entered into by an  
19 agency of the general church shall adhere to the provisions of  
20 ¶806.9.

21 ¶539. The following process is enacted to implement amended ¶37 creating a Progressive  
22 Jurisdiction in the United States. The secretary of the General Conference shall work with the  
23 bishops to ensure that voting on the ratification of these constitutional amendments begins  
24 with the regularly scheduled annual conference sessions after September 1, 2016 and is  
25 completed by August 31, 2017, with the Council of Bishops certifying the outcome of the  
26 amendment ballots by December 31, 2017.

- 27 1. The Progressive Jurisdiction shall encompass the entire United States of  
28 America and overlap geographically the five standard jurisdictions.
- 29 2. In anticipation of the approval of the relevant constitutional amendments,  
30 the 2016 General Conference shall (subsequent to approving the  
31 amendments by the required two-thirds vote) elect a seven-person team to  
32 represent the vision of the Progressive Jurisdiction, consisting of three  
33 laypersons, three clergypersons, and one bishop. Nominations shall be  
34 taken from the floor of General Conference at least 24 hours prior to the  
35 election being held. Each nominee shall certify his/her commitment to the  
36 general principles contained in the description of the Progressive  
37 Jurisdiction in amended ¶ 37.
- 38 3. In the ten months following General Conference, the team shall write and  
39 approve a vision and mission description for the Progressive Jurisdiction,



- 1 including a one-page summary. These documents shall be the initial guide  
2 for decision-making by bishops, annual conferences, clergy, congregations,  
3 and church institutions about a decision whether or not to affiliate with the  
4 new jurisdiction. The descriptive documents shall be publicly released at  
5 the time when the Council of Bishops certifies that the relevant  
6 constitutional amendments have been ratified.
- 7 4. *Episcopal Affiliation—*a) No more than 60 days following the certification of  
8 the constitutional amendments the Progressive Jurisdiction, each active and  
9 retired United Methodist bishop serving The United States of America may  
10 elect to relate to the new jurisdiction described in ¶ 37 and in the  
11 descriptive documents (¶ 538.9(b)). These jurisdictional choices shall be  
12 canvassed by the Council of Bishops and made public at the conclusion of  
13 the 60 days. Bishops shall relate to both the new jurisdiction and their  
14 former geographical jurisdiction until the transition is completed. b)  
15 Following the 60 days, the College of Bishops for the new jurisdiction may  
16 convene and begin ordering the work of their new jurisdiction. The College  
17 of Bishops for the Progressive Jurisdiction shall oversee the implementation  
18 of the new jurisdiction and serve as a clearinghouse of information for  
19 annual conferences, clergy and congregations desiring to affiliate with the  
20 jurisdiction.
- 21 5. *Annual Conference Affiliation—*a) Within eight months of the certification of  
22 constitutional amendments, votes shall be held by secret ballot in each  
23 annual conference in the U.S. as to whether or not to join the Progressive  
24 Jurisdiction. A simple majority vote of annual conference members shall  
25 suffice. The vote of each annual conference shall be announced before the  
26 adjournment of that conference. b) Annual conferences voting to affiliate  
27 with the Progressive Jurisdiction shall elect a jurisdictional delegation,  
28 consisting of the same number of delegates who were elected to the  
29 previous jurisdictional conference. If clergy are elected who later dissent  
30 from the jurisdictional affiliation of their annual conference, these clergy  
31 become ineligible to serve. Lay members elected become ineligible to serve  
32 if the local church to which they belong votes to dissent from the  
33 jurisdictional affiliate of the annual conference. Annual conferences shall  
34 elect sufficient numbers of reserve delegates to ensure a full delegation.  
35 Jurisdictional legislation may also be proposed by annual conferences.
- 36 6. *Congregational Affiliation—*a) Congregations will automatically continue to  
37 belong to the annual conference to which they previously belonged unless  
38 the congregation takes action to change affiliations. Congregations who  
39 dissent from the jurisdictional affiliation of their annual conference under



1 this paragraph will have until December 31, 2018 to indicate, by majority  
2 secret ballot vote of a duly called special church conference, their decision  
3 to be placed in an annual conference of either the Progressive Jurisdiction  
4 or the geographical jurisdiction to which they previously belonged.  
5 Congregations voting to leave their annual conference shall remain part of  
6 their former annual conference until the conclusion of the  
7 organizing/reorganizing conference of the new annual conference. b)  
8 Churches wishing to change jurisdictional affiliation after the process  
9 described may do so under the provisions of ¶ 41 of the Constitution.  
10 **7. Clergy Affiliation— a) Clergy shall have until December 31, 2018 to notify**  
11 **their bishop of their desire to serve in a jurisdiction other than the one**  
12 **selected by their annual conference. Their bishop shall forward the names**  
13 **of these clergy to the college of bishops of the receiving jurisdiction.**  
14 **Conference membership will continue in the former conference until a**  
15 **transfer to another annual conference is complete. b) Subsequent to their**  
16 **original affiliation, clergy may elect to transfer from an annual conference in**  
17 **one jurisdiction to an annual conference in another jurisdiction under the**  
18 **provisions of ¶347.1.**  
19 **8. Organizing Jurisdictional Conferences—a) The colleges of bishops of the**  
20 **respective jurisdictions shall call a special organizing or reorganizing**  
21 **jurisdictional conference for each jurisdiction. The conferences shall take**  
22 **place during February 2019. In the event that no annual conference in a**  
23 **particular jurisdiction votes to join the Progressive Jurisdiction, and further**  
24 **that no annual conferences from geographically contiguous jurisdictions are**  
25 **added to that jurisdiction through processes elsewhere described, and**  
26 **further that no bishops of that jurisdiction exit to join the Progressive**  
27 **Jurisdiction, the college of bishops in that jurisdiction may forgo holding a**  
28 **special session of that jurisdictional conference. b) At the**  
29 **organizing/reorganizing conference for each jurisdiction, the annual**  
30 **conference maps of each jurisdiction shall be redrawn so as to provide**  
31 **coverage for the entire geographical area assigned to the jurisdiction. The**  
32 **Progressive Jurisdiction shall create a map of annual conferences that**  
33 **covers the entire United States. Such annual conferences shall encompass**  
34 **any and all churches seeking to transfer to an annual conference in the**  
35 **Progressive Jurisdiction. Where possible, coverage shall be attained by**  
36 **widening the boundaries of existing conferences. Provisional annual**  
37 **conferences and missionary conferences may be formed as needed. Bishops**  
38 **shall be assigned to their respective episcopal areas as elsewhere set forth.**  
39 **New bishops shall be elected as needed under the provisions of ¶ 404. For**



- 1           the purposes of this transition, bishops shall begin their new residential  
2           assignment on April 1, 2019. c) Each jurisdictional conference shall create a  
3           system for assisting clergy desiring to change annual conference affiliation  
4           in obtaining membership status in a new annual conference, in obtaining an  
5           appointment in the new annual conference, and/or in obtaining a  
6           transitional appointment. Clergy may continue to serve in a conference  
7           other than the one where their membership is held until a suitable  
8           appointment is found in their new annual conference. d) Following the  
9           remapping of annual conferences in each jurisdiction, each annual  
10           conference shall draw or adjust its districts to serve all the territory within  
11           its boundaries.
- 12           **9. *Institutional Affiliation***—Any church-related institution that is affiliated  
13           with, but not owned by, an annual or jurisdictional conference may choose  
14           to change their affiliation and relationship to the church following the  
15           organizing of the new jurisdictions and the redrawing of annual conference  
16           boundaries. The institution, by its own internal processes, may choose to  
17           continue affiliation with the successor annual or jurisdictional conference  
18           with which it was previously affiliated, change its affiliation, seek affiliation  
19           in both jurisdictions at the same time, or remove its church affiliation  
20           entirely. An institution’s request to affiliate with a different annual or  
21           jurisdictional conference is contingent upon approval by that conference.
- 22           **10. *Congregational Property***—The trust clause of each local congregation’s  
23           property shall be held and administered by the annual conference with  
24           which the local church chooses to affiliate (§2501, 2503). All assets and  
25           liabilities previously incurred by a local congregation shall remain with that  
26           congregation, regardless of affiliation.
- 27           **11. *Annual Conference Assets and Non-Pension Liabilities*** -- Annual conferences  
28           that vote to enter the Progressive Jurisdiction by a margin of at least  
29           seventy-five percent will do so with their conference properties, assets and  
30           liabilities intact. Those who opt into the Progressive Jurisdiction by a margin  
31           less than seventy-five percent shall divide conference assets and liabilities  
32           proportionately with annual conferences receiving the exiting  
33           congregations. Assets shall be divided based on the amount of annual  
34           conference apportionments paid by the exiting congregations over the  
35           previous five full years. Liabilities shall be divided based on the percentage  
36           of annual conference apportionments assessed to each congregation,  
37           averaged over the previous five full years.
- 38           **12. *Annual Conference Pension Liability*** – Each annual conference with at least  
39           one exiting congregation and unfunded pension liability shall elect



- 1 representatives to a Joint Distributing Committee who will allocate the  
2 pension liability with any receiving annual conference(s) under the  
3 provisions of ¶1509.  
4 **13. Jurisdictional Property** – If over fifty percent of the aggregate number of  
5 professing members in a jurisdiction leaves to join the Progressive  
6 Jurisdiction, properties held by the jurisdiction shall be divided with the  
7 Progressive Jurisdiction proportionate to the number of professing  
8 members.  
9 **14. Arbitration** -- Disputes over the division of assets and liabilities shall be  
10 settled in binding arbitration by the Judicial Council. Each annual or  
11 jurisdictional conference shall present its case in written and oral form, and  
12 the Council shall make the final determination of an equitable division of  
13 assets and liabilities. The expenses of any special meetings or travel  
14 incurred by the Council for such purposes shall be borne by the bodies  
15 engaging in arbitration.  
16 **15. General Conference 2020** is encouraged to review the effect of the  
17 reorganization enabled by this paragraph and consider remapping the  
18 geographic jurisdictions in accordance with the constitutional provisions of  
19 ¶15.12.  
20

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