



The Organic Jurisdictional Solution

General Conference Legislation Elevating Effectiveness and
Achieving Amicable Unity in The United Methodist Church

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INTRODUCTION TO THE JURISDICTIONAL APPROACH:

The recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling legalizing same sex marriage in America has only heightened tensions in The United Methodist Church over issues of human sexuality. The disparate reactions from United Methodists, including our bishops, highlight the deep divides we bring to our 2016 General Conference. For all the time and energy being expended in debate it is very possible that the votes will be lacking to either change our rules or to enforce them, boding continued rancor and distraction in the church with no clear end in sight.

The human sexuality debate is symptomatic of a larger divide in the denomination over how scripture is to be read and applied to ministry. For many these positions are deeply held and strike at the heart of their Christian identity. Two of our more progressive jurisdictions have voted non-compliance with the *Book of Discipline* and traditionalists have warned we are on a path toward schism. Because ministry moves at the speed of trust, our ability to work constructively on a host of other crucial issues is being compromised. We need a solution.

Relaxing the clergy and ministry standards in the *Book of Discipline* would prove unacceptable to traditionalists and negatively affects the capacity of our growing Central Conferences to do ministry in their culturally conservative contexts. Efforts to fully enforce our current rules would result in a wave of clergy trials, would undoubtedly be met with defiance, and would



1 further showcase our divisions in the media. Some “third way” solutions offered to date are
2 seen by many as lop-sided victories that perpetuate the possibility of a post-General
3 Conference schism. Other proposals would pass decision-making on these issues down to the
4 annual conference or congregational level, exacerbating the vitriol in moderate or divided
5 churches and conferences. Open Itineracy makes it extremely difficult for clergy and
6 congregations within the same conference to operate under separate covenants.

7 United Methodists, however, have a peculiar apparatus at our disposal within the toolbox of
8 our present connectional polity: The jurisdiction. This addition to our original system of
9 conferences was devised in 1939 as a way to keep Methodists just separate enough to live
10 somewhat peaceably under the same roof. There are five of these structures dividing clusters
11 of annual conferences in the USA from one another geographically. Although they have a
12 shameful history associated with the worst days of America’s racial struggle, jurisdictions
13 provide an extra judicatory layer, something potentially advantageous when re-designing a
14 denomination at odds with itself.

15 In the Southeast, the largest of our jurisdictions (2.8 million members) has a programming
16 function and operates as something of a sub-denomination. They have made much of their
17 jurisdiction as the whole jurisdictional system was originally created in response to Southern
18 concerns. In the West, the smallest of our jurisdictions (330K members) is prized by some there
19 as it has fostered and protected their unique and progressive form of United Methodism.
20 Everywhere else, jurisdictional conferences are mostly a place to gather once every four years
21 and conduct political/spiritual exercise of electing bishops. The episcopal leaders of a certain
22 jurisdiction comprise its “College of Bishops” and episcopal accountability is placed within
23 jurisdictional structures. A jurisdiction is basically a group of annual conferences led by a
24 particular team of bishops.

25 Since United Methodists in the U.S. are already segmented into jurisdictions, a straight-forward
26 solution is to acknowledge the implications of our divisions and alter our system of
27 jurisdictional conferences accordingly. We already have jurisdictions operating under a
28 different understanding of human sexuality than the one found in the *Discipline*. How they are
29 doing so, however, violates our covenant and is causing destructive conflict. Churches and
30 clergy in these jurisdictions who agree with the positions in our *Discipline* have become
31 unwilling passengers on their jurisdictional bus. Progressive clergy and congregations in
32 conservative areas are likewise unable to do ministry in the style they would wish. While
33 amicable jurisdictional division is not as desirable as genuine unity, surely it is preferable to
34 either schism or continued rancor.



1 In addition to the Jurisdictional Solution here described, there are two earlier versions that
2 have also been developed into legislation. The first replaces the five existing geographic
3 jurisdictions with two new ones based on ideology. Annual conferences would vote to join one
4 of these two new structures and our U.S. bishops, likewise, would choose a new jurisdiction to
5 which to relate. Like major league baseball, there would be two leagues each operating
6 nationwide and with slightly different rules.

7 The second Jurisdictional Solution leaves the current five geographic jurisdictions in place but
8 adds a sixth Progressive Jurisdiction for those conferences who can no longer abide by our
9 global stance on human sexuality. This new jurisdiction would interface with the general
10 church in a customized way. Both of these solutions allow individual churches and clergy an
11 opportunity to opt out of their annual conference if they cannot abide by its jurisdictional
12 selection. They also allow annual conferences to overlap so that the two basic approaches to
13 human sexuality would be available nationwide without causing any church or clergy to
14 compromise deeply held principles. Like all other comprehensive solutions, these jurisdictional
15 concepts require constitutional updates with their requisite supermajority passage and
16 ratification by the annual conferences.

17 **INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANIC JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION:**

18 Homosexuality is not the only issue facing The United Methodist Church. Even if the same sex
19 marriage debate somehow went away, we would still be a declining movement losing its
20 influence in the larger culture. There is a great need for innovation. There is also urgency in
21 addressing lingering issues like clergy effectiveness. If we allow each of our five existing
22 jurisdictions to adapt our ministry rules and chargeable offenses for clergy, and allow annual
23 conferences to join whatever jurisdiction they wish, we have given our denomination the tools
24 to organically reorganize itself over time from the grassroots. We have also created new
25 connectional relationships more conducive to collaboration and innovation.

26 This third version of the Jurisdictional Solution is the result of a full year of study and dialog
27 related to our connectional polity and the crisis in which we currently find ourselves. It uses
28 our five existing jurisdictions as the basis for a gradual, organic redefining of our connectional
29 system through self-selected networks of congregations and annual conferences. The genesis
30 of this re-ordering are the following five rules designed to help our top-heavy denomination
31 seem "flatter":

- 32 1. Annual Conference borders may overlap geographically.



- 1 2. Local congregations may join any annual conference willing to service their location and
2 they may reconsider their conference affiliation once every four years.
- 3 3. Annual conferences may join whatever jurisdiction they wish and may revisit their
4 jurisdictional affiliation once every four years.
- 5 4. Clergy and ministry standards of the general church may be adapted by the jurisdictions
6 with a two-thirds majority vote of their jurisdictional conference.
- 7 5. If a jurisdiction falls below 300,000 members, it is dissolved and its constituent annual
8 conferences will join another jurisdiction of their choosing.

9 One attractive feature of this third plan is that it allows General Conference to develop a
10 solution without specifically referencing sexuality at all. Instead of dividing the church into
11 structures predefined by ideology, it allows the U.S. church to reorganize itself based on
12 whatever criteria become important. All five jurisdictions would have the opportunity to
13 develop ministry covenants that best enable their constituent annual conferences to make
14 disciples of Jesus Christ. Annual conferences out of step with those rules would be free to exit
15 to another jurisdiction within United Methodism. Think of this as untethering our current
16 structures from the bounds of geography. It is an attempt to equip our denomination to
17 operate more fluidly in a culture that is certainly post-denominational and increasingly post-
18 Christian.

19 This Jurisdictional Solution has some unique features that set it apart from previous versions.
20 Unlike the Two-Jurisdiction Solution, this version does not require annual conferences to
21 choose between two pre-defined options. The Organic Jurisdictional Solution (OJS) gives each
22 of our five existing jurisdictions the authority, upon a two-thirds majority vote, to adapt the
23 clergy standards found in the *Discipline*. This will allow our more progressive jurisdictions the
24 option of ordaining practicing homosexual clergy and allowing clergy to perform same-sex
25 marriages. However, conferences, clergy, and congregations may exit these jurisdictions should
26 they find their approach morally objectionable. The lifestyle standards for bishops, as general
27 superintendents, continue to be defined by the general church as described in the *Book of*
28 *Discipline*.

29 Unlike the Six-Jurisdiction Solution, this version does not create a separate Progressive body
30 that would interface with the general church differently from other jurisdictions. The OJS uses



1 our current system of jurisdictions as the starting point, making implementation organic and
2 gradual. The plan addresses the concerns of moderates seeking to live somewhere in between
3 the full inclusion of homosexual practice in the ordained ministry and its complete prohibition.
4 Jurisdictions are free to seek a “third way”. The Organic Jurisdictional Solution will make our
5 connectional structures seem “flatter” by allowing congregations and conferences options with
6 regards to the types of connectional relationships of which they are a part.

7 **KEY FEATURE: OVERLAPPING ANNUAL CONFERENCE LINES**

8 Under our present demographic trends, dozens of annual conferences in the U.S. will cease to
9 exist over the coming decades. Presently, our only strategy for responding to numerically non-
10 viable conferences is merging them with an adjacent conference. This is a strategy that has
11 never yielded a turnaround. It is better for the church to foster healthy systems that can
12 gradually gain ascendancy over unhealthy ones.

13 Under this legislation, a local United Methodist congregation would be empowered to transfer
14 to a new annual conference if another is deemed by it as better matched and if one is willing to
15 provide coverage to their location (there are guidelines and limitations placed upon this
16 process). This is congregational empowerment without congregationalism. There are several
17 reasons why a congregation might consider such a move:

- 18 • Another conference serves the larger metropolitan area of which they are a part.
- 19 • Another conference has a clergy pool that is a better match.
- 20 • Conference lines had previously divided the congregations from other United
21 Methodists with which they share affinity.
- 22 • Another conference has ministry rules that are more in keeping with the convictions and
23 ministry approach of the congregation.

24 The ability for congregations to change to new annual conferences is an important measure for
25 achieving amicable unity. Judicatories based solely on geography serve to trap congregations
26 with different sensibilities under mismatched operational rules, sparking conflict or forcing
27 violations of conscience. Allowing congregations of like mind to network together will enable
28 collaboration and innovation while retaining our overall denominational diversity.



1 Clergy with moral objection to the ministry covenant of their jurisdiction would likewise be
2 allowed to transfer from their conference without interference by their bishop (under certain
3 circumstances). Healthy conferences would grow under this plan. Unhealthy ones need to
4 change or they will cease to exist under any plan.

5 Overlapping conferences already exist in the UMC, as with the Oklahoma Indian Missionary
6 Conference (OIMC). Despite its name, this conference actually covers not only Oklahoma but
7 also parts of Missouri, Kansas, and North Texas. Organized with a particular mission focus, the
8 OIMC overlaps with several other annual conferences and proves that United Methodist
9 churches within the same geography can be part of different annual conferences and be
10 accountable to different bishops. This fluid method of organizing allows for diversity within our
11 United Methodist organizational unity.

12 The process for a congregation changing conference affiliation would be as follows:

- 13 1. District superintendents would be required to honor the church conference request of a
14 local church considering affiliation with a new conference if (1) the request is made by
15 the church council, an equivalent body, or 10% of the membership, (2) if there has not
16 been a vote on conference affiliation for the past four years, and (3) if the church holds
17 a letter from the cabinet of another conference verifying that their conference is willing
18 and able to supervise the congregation.
- 19 2. The transfer would normally be effective on July 1 of the year following the vote,
20 allowing time for the cabinet to consult with the new congregation on its next pastoral
21 appointment.
- 22 3. The transferring church would continue to pay apportionments to their old conference
23 for at least 18 months (longer for very large churches). A conference may assess a
24 portion of the financial liabilities of the conference to a church transferring from them
25 as long as this amount is offset by the assets of the conference calculated by the same
26 proportional formula. Exiting churches would be required to pay all monies owed to the
27 old conference before beginning to pay apportionments to their new conference. They
28 would forfeit any claim to a share of conference assets. There would be little motivation
29 for a conference to receive a congregation that does not pay apportionments unless
30 they feel they can turn this practice around.



1 4. It is possible for a pastor and congregation to transfer together to a new conference.
2 For this to be accomplished, the pastor would have had to register a moral objection to
3 the clergy standards of the jurisdiction of which the conference is a part within six
4 months of jurisdictional conference. The receiving conference would necessarily be part
5 of a jurisdiction with different standards. The local church would continue to pay
6 apportionments to their old conference for as long as the lead pastor serves the
7 congregation. This will significantly curtail churches changing conferences in order to
8 retain a popular pastor who might otherwise be leaving. (The church would knowingly
9 be entering a conference with a financial motivation to soon appoint a new pastor to
10 the church.) Of course, all clergy are able to transfer from conference to conference
11 under the rules currently governing this process.

12 Annual conferences are a particular group of congregations served by a particular team of
13 pastors, and governed by the bishops and ministry standards of a particular jurisdiction. Shared
14 geography should be only one factor binding a conference together. With “fuzzy” and, in
15 places, overlapping borders, annual conferences would become something akin to regional
16 ministry networks charged with making disciples within their sphere of influence and under the
17 rules of their jurisdiction. Conferences will have strong motivation to maintain an effective
18 pool of clergy under this plan. Guaranteed appointments for clergy are retained, but
19 conferences that are shrinking would be forced to deal with excess ineffective clergy under the
20 means already available.

21 **KEY FEATURE: DYNAMIC JURISDICTIONS**

22 Under the Organic Jurisdictional Solution, annual conferences would be allowed to affiliate with
23 any U.S. jurisdiction and these jurisdictions may choose new names to reflect their new non-
24 geographic nature. Each jurisdiction would likewise be empowered to adapt the Discipline in
25 the same way currently allowed in our central conferences overseas. As these central
26 conference liberties are actually quite limited as interpreted over the years by Judicial Council,
27 specific authority is granted to customize the clergy standards and chargeable offenses for
28 clergy found in the *Book of Discipline* (by two-thirds vote). A jurisdiction might choose to
29 operate by the global rules, modify the rules to allow for same sex weddings and ordination of
30 practicing homosexuals, or seek some sort of moderating position. This process would be done



1 with great care as annual conferences that do not favor the change would be free to join a
2 jurisdiction with which they feel greater affinity.

3 A minimum size is placed upon jurisdictions to prevent any from becoming too out of step with
4 the larger church. Surplus bishops created from dissolving or downsized jurisdictions would be
5 received into other jurisdictions under existing rules requiring the consent of the jurisdiction or
6 be assigned to other duties by the Council of Bishops. Bishops would be clear stakeholders in
7 the effectiveness of their jurisdiction just as clergy would be clear stakeholders in the
8 effectiveness of their conference. The process for conferences changing jurisdiction would be
9 as follows:

- 10 1. Following jurisdictional conference, the jurisdictional delegation of each conference
11 would meet to bring a recommendation to their conference regarding future
12 jurisdictional alignment, along with an alternate choice. The ministry standards adopted
13 by the jurisdiction may be part of this discussion.
- 14 2. An annual conference may remain in its current jurisdiction by default or vote, by 2/3
15 majority, to change to a new jurisdiction, as long as this decision is made and
16 announced 18 months prior to the next jurisdictional conference.
- 17 3. Conferences that are moving to a new jurisdiction would send a delegation to their new
18 jurisdictional conference but remain under the supervision of their bishop from the old
19 jurisdiction until September 1 of the jurisdictional conference year.
- 20 4. If a jurisdictional conference falls below a cumulative membership of 300,000 members
21 (a number derived from ¶1404.2 of the *Book of Discipline*), the jurisdiction is dissolved
22 and its constituent annual conferences would each revert to their alternate
23 jurisdictional choice.
- 24 5. Excess bishops created by the dissolution or downsizing of a jurisdiction may seek to be
25 accepted into another College of Bishops under existing rules (see ¶149 and ¶1512) or be
26 placed in a responsibility by the Council of Bishops as general agency staff, assistant to
27 another bishop, bishop in residence at a church-related institution, or pastor. These
28 displaced bishops would choose to relate to one of the remaining jurisdictions for the
29 purpose of accountability.

30 **ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES**



1 The Organic Jurisdictional Solution is a compelling option for The United Methodist Church for
2 the following reasons:

- 3 1. Global standards on human sexuality are retained but individual jurisdictions may adapt
4 these standards and be joined by any annual conference in the United States.
- 5 2. The ability for conferences to join a new jurisdiction and congregations/clergy to join a
6 new conference should provide a solution to our divisions without perpetuating debate
7 or causing violations of conscience.
- 8 3. Annual conferences are given greater incentive to maintain high-quality clergy pools and
9 provide a good value to their local congregations for the apportionments paid.
- 10 4. The plan refocuses our connectional structure on the needs of local congregations:
11 "The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making
12 occurs." (¶201)
- 13 5. Guaranteed appointments are retained but conferences that are losing congregations
14 would be forced to deal with excess ineffective clergy by established means.
- 15 6. New connectional relationships are forged which are more likely to encourage
16 collaboration and innovation.
- 17 7. Same sex weddings and ordinations of practicing homosexuals could begin as early at
18 summer of 2017 in progressive jurisdictions that vote to allow this at their 2016
19 jurisdictional conference. However, local churches who do not agree with this move
20 could be received into other conferences equipped to stretch their boundaries and do
21 ministry in new places.

22 There are also challenges associated with this plan. Like all comprehensive solutions, all three
23 jurisdictional solutions require constitutional amendments. The legislation to enact this plan is
24 straightforward but sizeable. Constitutional amendments must be passed at General
25 Conference by 2/3 majority and ratified in the annual conference by the same ratio. All plans
26 for the future of the church, however, will rise or fall based on leadership. If people of good
27 will from across the ideological spectrum of the UMC come together, this plan would give our
28 church the tools to organically reorganize itself for the future.



1 Debate at General Conference over human sexuality would continue. There is no plan that
2 would stop this as debate is a key function of our quadrennial global gathering. The venom, it is
3 hoped, would be drawn from the debate as allowance has been made for divergent practices
4 within our polity. Some will certainly make the claim that this plan causes disruption.
5 Disruption, however, is necessary when a system is in decline. The opportunity for a messy
6 rebirth is to be preferred to an orderly death. The church does not exist for its own comfort
7 and there is much work to be done.
8 The complete legislation needed to enact this solution follows.

9 CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

10 The following constitutional changes require a 2/3 General Conference majority vote and ratification by
11 2/3 majority vote of the aggregate members of the annual conferences.

12 **Amendment #1: Allow Jurisdictions Based on Something Other Than** 13 **Geography.**

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

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

20 ***Rationale:** The original language was enacted to drive a nail in the coffin of the*
21 *racial segregation that was behind the creation of the Central Jurisdiction of The*
22 *Methodist Church (1939-1968). This amendment removes the general language*
23 *which prohibited non-geographic jurisdictions and inserts more specific*
24 *language that continues the constitutional assurance that jurisdictions will not*
25 *be used as a tool for racial segregation.*



1 **Amendment #2: Amend powers of General Conference to exclude**
2 **setting the boundaries of jurisdictions.**

3 **¶16. Article IV (Powers of General Conference)**

4 12. To define and fix the powers and duties of jurisdictional conferences. change the
5 number and the boundaries of jurisdictional conference upon the consent of a majority
6 of the annual conference in each jurisdictional conference involved.

7 ***Rationale:** Language is added that specifically gives general conference the*
8 *power to define and fix the powers of jurisdictional conferences, as with the*
9 *other conferences listed in ¶16.3. Language is deleted that allows General*
10 *Conference to change the number and boundaries of jurisdictional conferences*
11 *as these will be allowed to develop organically under this plan.*

12 **Amendment #3: Change language related to annual conferences with**
13 **fixed boundaries.**

14 **Division Two, Section IV. Jurisdictional Conferences, Article V (¶ 27)**

15 **¶ 27. Article V.**—The jurisdictional conferences shall have the following powers and
16 duties and such others as may be conferred by the General Conference:
17

18 4. If any of the annual conferences of the jurisdiction falls below fifty clergy in full
19 connection, except by the consent of General Conference, the jurisdiction shall dissolve
20 the conference and ensure that an equitable plan to divide the clergy, churches, assets,
21 and liabilities of the conference is implemented. To determine the boundaries of their
22 annual conferences, provided that there shall be no annual conference with a
23 membership of fewer than fifty clergy in full connection, except by the consent of the
24 General Conference.

25 ***Rationale:** Determining the boundaries of annual conferences is no longer a*
26 *needed function under this plan. Wording is retained that gives jurisdictions*



1 responsibility of equitably dividing the assets of any annual conference that falls
2 below fifty clergy in full connection.

3 **Amendment #4: Allow Jurisdictions the Same Liberties as Central**
4 **Conferences to Adapt the *Book of Discipline* and Specifically to Adapt**
5 **Clergy Standards.**

6 **Division Two, Section IV. Jurisdictional Conferences, Article V (¶ 27)**

7
8 **¶ 27. Article V.**—The jurisdictional conferences shall have the following powers and
9 duties and such others as may be conferred by the General Conference:

10 8. To make such rules and regulations for the administration of the work of their
11 jurisdiction including such changes and adaptations of the General *Discipline* as the
12 conditions in the jurisdiction may require, subject to the powers that have been or shall
13 be vested in the General Conference. These adaptations may include, upon two-thirds
14 majority vote of a duly called jurisdictional conference, clergy standards and chargeable
15 offenses for clergy that are distinct from those in the General *Discipline* within the
16 limitations elsewhere set forth. Enactment of this provision shall be contingent upon
17 the ratification of other constitutional measures that allow for any annual conferences
18 in the United States to join any other jurisdiction with a mere two-thirds majority vote
19 of that annual conference.

20 9. To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions arising on any
21 adaptations made by the jurisdiction to the General *Discipline* as allowed in this
22 paragraph as amended.

23 ***Rationale:*** *These additions to Article V of the Constitution give jurisdictions the*
24 *same flexibility currently afforded to central conferences. As the liberties*
25 *granted to central conferences are actually quite limited as interpreted by*
26 *Judicial Council rulings, this amendment expressly gives jurisdictional conference*
27 *the right to adapt clergy standards and chargeable offenses for clergy that are*
28 *distinct from the General Discipline, by 2/3 majority vote. Wording is added that*
29 *makes this right contingent upon ratification of other measures contained in this*
30 *plan. (Traditionalists may be reluctant to grant this liberty to jurisdictions*



1 *without assurances that those who agree with the present wording of the*
2 *Discipline will be able to locate themselves under a new jurisdiction). A*
3 *jurisdictional judicial court is seated that is as exists with the central conferences*
4 *to rule on the application of modifications made to the General Discipline.*

5 **Amendment #5: Redefine Our System of Jurisdictions.**

6
7 **Division Two, Section VII, Article 1 (¶137)**

8
9 “The United Methodist Church was originally organized with five shall have jurisdictional
10 conferences made up as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

23 1. Annual conferences in the United States and its territories may join, by two-thirds
24 majority vote of a duly called annual conference, any jurisdictional conference, provided that
25 these votes shall be made and announced at least eighteen months prior to the next regularly
26 scheduled jurisdictional conference and that this decision shall be binding upon the annual
27 conference for a time no less than the duration of the following four years.

28 2. Each jurisdiction is hereby empowered to select a new name as desired which shall
29 automatically replace the names used in this paragraph. Enabling legislation passed by General
30 Conference to implement this amendment shall become effective and begin to be implemented
31 when the Council of Bishops shall certify the amendment’s ratification.

32 3. Notwithstanding other constitutional provisions, each jurisdiction shall be responsible
33 for funding its own programs and episcopal expenses.



1 4. Other historically Methodist denominations in the United States may join The United
 2 Methodist Church as an additional jurisdiction upon approval of the General Conference of The
 3 United Methodist Church.

4
 5 **Rationale:** *This amendment allows a streamlined means by which annual conferences*
 6 *may join another jurisdiction. Jurisdictions are empowered to re-name themselves if their*
 7 *geographic designation is no longer helpful. Language is added that creates the*
 8 *possibility of other historically Methodist denominations joining The United Methodist*
 9 *Church as their own jurisdiction. While this feature is not essential to enacting the*
 10 *jurisdictional solution, including it here highlights that re-envisioning our jurisdictional*
 11 *system may open doors to greater unity within the larger Methodist family of*
 12 *denominations.*

13
 14 **Amendment #6: Setting a minimum membership for jurisdictions.**

15
 16 ¶139. Article III. ~~Changes in the number, names and boundaries of the jurisdictional~~
 17 ~~conferences may be effected by the General Conference. There shall be no jurisdiction with~~
 18 ~~membership of less than 300,000. upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences of~~
 19 ~~each of the jurisdictional conferences involved.~~

20
 21 **Rationale:** *This plan allows jurisdictions to determine their own names and the*
 22 *boundaries will be fluid. General Conference’s authority over the jurisdictional system is*
 23 *affirmed. A measure is added that stipulates that no jurisdiction shall continue if it falls*
 24 *below 300,000 members. This prevents jurisdictions from becoming so small that they*
 25 *become out of step with the large body of United Methodism. This minimum number is*
 26 *derived from ¶1404.2 of the BOD.*

27
 28 **Amendment #7: Removing Boundary-setting from the Powers of**
 29 **Jurisdictions.**

30
 31 ¶140. Article IV. ~~Changes in the number, and names, and boundaries of the annual conferences~~
 32 ~~and episcopal areas may be effected by the jurisdictional conferences in the United States of~~
 33 ~~America. Outside the United State of America, the number, names, and boundaries of the~~
 34 ~~annual conferences and episcopal areas may be effected by and by central conferences outside~~
 35 ~~the United States of America according to the provisions under the respective powers and~~



1 ~~pursuant to the respective structures of the jurisdiction and the central conferences, under the~~
 2 ~~respective powers and pursuant to the respective structures of the central conferences.~~

3
 4 ***Rationale:** The change removes boundary-setting of annual conferences from their list*
 5 *of powers. Annual conferences will have fluid boundaries under this plan.*
 6

7 **Amendment #8: Defining the Process Whereby Local Congregations**
 8 **Transfer to a New Annual Conference**

9
 10 ~~¶41. Article V. Transfer of Local Churches – 1. A local church may be transferred from one annual~~
 11 ~~conference to another in which is it is geographically located upon approval by a two-thirds vote of~~
 12 ~~those present and voting at each of the following:~~

- 13 ~~a) The charge conference. A church conference requested by the church council or equivalent~~
 14 ~~structure convening during the times and conditions established by General Conference for~~
 15 ~~consideration of local church transfers,~~
 16 ~~b) The congregational meeting of the local church;~~
 17 ~~c) Each of the two annual conferences involved. b) A duly called meeting of the cabinet of the~~
 18 ~~receiving annual conference.~~

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

22 ~~2. The vote on approval of transfer shall be taken by each annual conference at its first session after~~
 23 ~~that matter is submitted to it. The request for a church conference by a church council of a~~
 24 ~~congregation seeking possible transfer to another conference shall not be refused by the district~~
 25 ~~superintendent if made in keeping with the process for this as elsewhere set forth.~~

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

28
 29 ***Rationale:** There is an existing provision for a local church to transfer from one annual*
 30 *conference to another that serves the area in which it is geographically located. This is*
 31 *presumably only be presently relevant for missionary conferences as they are the only ones*
 32 *whose boundaries overlap with others under current polity. This amendment transforms this*
 33 *constitutional paragraph to allow for congregations to transfer to another annual conference*
 34 *without vote of their existing conference. This would only be done by the process that is to be*
 35 *spelled out elsewhere in the Discipline. Consent of the cabinet of the receiving conference is*
 36 *required for a transfer to take place. This will ensure that the conference is willing to receive and*
 37 *provide supervision to the congregation.*



1
2 **Amendment #9: Explicitly Allowing Bishops of Dissolved or Downsized**
3 **Jurisdictions to Serve Elsewhere in the Church**

4
5 ¶149. Article V. Bishops without episcopal assignment due to dissolution or downsizing of their
6 jurisdiction may be received into another jurisdiction by a majority vote of the members present and
7 voting of the jurisdictional committee on episcopacy and by consent of a majority of the bishops of
8 that same jurisdiction. These bishops may alternately be assigned duties by the Council of Bishops
9 as elsewhere set forth.

10
11 ***Rationale:** This amendment makes explicit that bishops of dissolved jurisdictions may be*
12 *otherwise assigned. There is an existing structure, The Interjurisdictional Committee on*
13 *Episcopacy (¶1512) which can assist bishops in a possible transfer to a new jurisdiction with*
14 *consent of that jurisdiction.*

15
16 **NON-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

17 The following non-constitutional changes enable the Organic
18 Jurisdictional Solution.

19
20 **Change #1: Allowing Local Churches to Transfer More Easily to**
21 **Another Annual Conference.**

22
23 **Section VIII. Transfer of a Local Church.**

24
25 ¶1260. ~~A local church may be transferred from one annual conference to another in~~
26 ~~which it is geographically located by a two-thirds vote of the professing members who~~
27 ~~are present and voting in each of the following: (1) the charge conference, (2) a~~
28 ~~congregational meeting of the local church, and (3) each of the two annual conferences~~
29 ~~involved. Upon announcement of the required majorities by the bishop or bishops~~
30 ~~involved, the transfer shall immediately be effective. The vote required may originate in~~
31 ~~the local church or either of the annual conferences involved and shall be effective~~
32 ~~regardless of the order in which taken. In each case a two-thirds vote of those present~~



1 ~~and voting shall remain effective unless and until rescinded prior to the completion of~~
2 ~~the transfer by a vote of a majority of those present and voting. The following~~
3 ~~provisions are in effect for any local church in the United States of America:~~

4 1. Other disciplinary provisions notwithstanding, a local church may transfer from one
5 annual conference to another by a two-thirds majority vote of the professing
6 members who are present and voting at a church conference under the provisions
7 and limitations elsewhere set forth in this paragraph.

8 2. A district superintendent shall not refuse the request of a church conference by a
9 for the purpose of considering a new conference affiliation if the following
10 conditions are met:

11 a) the request is made by the church council (or equivalent body) or 10
12 percent of the professing membership of the local church, and

13 b) the request for a church conference is made no less than 48 months
14 from any previous church conference vote on annual conference affiliation, and

15 c) the cabinet of the annual conference the congregation is seeking to join
16 has indicated by 2/3 majority vote, verified in writing, that they are willing and
17 able to receive and supervise the congregation.

18 3. The following rules shall be in place for congregations transferring from one annual
19 conference to another:

20 a) The transfer shall be effective on July 1 of the year following the vote,
21 unless another date is consented upon by the bishop and cabinet of the
22 conference being exited.

23 b) The local congregation shall continue to pay apportionments to their
24 conference of origin for no less than 18 months following the completion of the
25 transfer, minus apportionments that may directly support benefits paid to for
26 clergy. The congregation shall continue to pay these apportionments for as long
27 as the lead pastor serving at the time of the vote remains appointed to the
28 church. If the apportionments assessed to the local church represent over five
29 percent of the annual budget of the annual conference of origin, the church
30 shall continue to pay apportionments to that conference for an additional 12
31 months for every full percent over five percent of the annual conference budget
32 that their apportionments represented at the time of their transfer.

33 Congregations, however, must begin paying any clergy benefit support assessed
34 by their new conference from the date of transfer.

35 c) Annual conferences may forego or decrease the amount of
36 apportionments owed by a transferring church by request from the
37 congregation and a majority affirmative vote of the annual conference session.



1 d) Annual conferences may assess a share of the liabilities of the
2 conference to exiting churches as long as these liabilities are offset by the assets
3 of the conference calculated by the same proportional formula.

4 e) The local congregation shall not begin paying apportionments to their
5 new conference until all apportionments owed to their conference of origin
6 from the time of transfer are fully paid, except for apportionment categories
7 that directly support the benefits owed to the clergy.

8 f) Lay members of annual conference shall be entitled to attend and vote
9 at the session of the annual conference they are exiting while transfer is
10 pending but shall not be eligible for election as a delegate from that annual
11 conference to either jurisdictional conference or General Conference.

12
13 ***Rationale:*** ¶1260 originally related to the transfer of those few churches who
14 *might be served by an overlapping annual conference, as with a*
15 *missionary conference. This is replaced with an expanded process that*
16 *allows for the transfer of any local church to a new conference, with*
17 *several limitations and provisions. Requiring congregations to pay*
18 *apportionments to their conference of origin as long as they are served*
19 *by the same pastor should serve to curtail pastors leading their*
20 *congregations into a new conference. (The conference they would enter*
21 *together would have a financial motivation to appoint a new pastor as*
22 *soon as possible). Congregations would only be able to join new*
23 *conferences if the cabinet of that conference indicate they are willing to*
24 *service their location.*

25
26 **Change #2: Allowing Clergy to Transfer to Another Conference**
27 **Without Interference if the Jurisdictional Clergy Standards**
28 **Violate His/Her Conscience**

29
30 **Addition to ¶347: Transfers**

31
32 **¶347. Transfers – 1. From Other Annual Conferences –** Ordained clergy or
33 provisional members from other annual conferences of The United Methodist
34 Church may be received by transfer into provisional or full membership with the
35 consent of the bishops involved. Consultation with the chairperson or executive
36 committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry shall be help prior to the transfer.
37 If an ordained clergy or provisional member registers a moral objection to the



1 clergy standards of the jurisdictional conference of which the annual conference
 2 is a part, they may transfer to an annual conference of another jurisdiction
 3 without the consent of their supervising bishop, provided that this moral
 4 objection is registered in writing within six months of the close of the
 5 jurisdictional conference at which the clergy standard was altered or confirmed.

6
 7 **Rationale:** *Clergy may transfer to a new conference without interference by*
 8 *their bishop if their moral objection is registered within six months of the*
 9 *close of jurisdictional conference. It would be that pastor’s responsibility*
 10 *to find an annual conference willing to receive them. It is possible for a*
 11 *pastor to lead the congregation they serve into a new conference, but*
 12 *their congregation would be required to pay apportionments to their old*
 13 *conference as long as that pastor continues to serve them. This should*
 14 *curtail churches leaving just to keep a beloved pastor in place as the*
 15 *conference they are entering would have a financial motivation to*
 16 *reappoint the pastor. Registering a moral objection does not necessitate*
 17 *the immediate exit of the clergy from the conference. Conference*
 18 *membership would continue until membership in a new conference is*
 19 *established.*

20 **Change #3: Add the Power to Adapt Certain Clergy Standards to the**
 21 **List of Jurisdictional Conference Powers.**

22
 23 **Additions to Chapter Four: The Conferences, Section III, ¶1525**

24
 25 *Powers and Duties of Jurisdictional Conference* – The jurisdictional conference
 26 shall have powers and duties as described in the Constitution. It shall
 27 have such other powers and duties as may be conferred by the General
 28 Conference. It shall act in all respects in harmony with the policy of The
 29 United Methodist Church with respect to elimination of discrimination
 30 based on race.

31 1) A jurisdictional conference shall have power to make such
 32 changes and adaptations of the Book of Discipline as the special
 33 conditions and the mission of the church in the area require, especially
 34 concerning the organization and administration of the work on local
 35 church, district, and annual conference levels, provided that no action
 36 shall be taken that is contrary to the Constitution and the General Rules
 37 of The United Methodist Church, and provided that the spirit of



1 connectional relationship is kept between the local and the general
2 church. Subject to this restriction, a jurisdictional conference may
3 delegate to an annual conference of the jurisdiction the power to make
4 one or the other of the changes and adaptations referred to in this
5 paragraph, upon request of such annual conference.

6 2) The jurisdictional conference shall have the power, upon two-
7 thirds majority vote, to make such changes and adaptations to ¶304.3,
8 ¶341.6, ¶2702.(a-b) of *The Book of Discipline* as the special conditions
9 and the mission of the church of that jurisdiction require, as long as
10 measures are elsewhere in place that allow annual conferences to freely
11 affiliate with another jurisdiction by a mere 2/3 majority vote of the
12 annual conference, and further provided that measures are elsewhere
13 in place that allow circumstances under which individual congregations
14 and clergy may affiliate with an annual conference of another
15 jurisdiction without consent of their conference or supervising bishop.
16 The secretary of the General Conference shall work with the bishops to
17 ensure that voting on the ratification of these constitutional
18 amendments begins with the regularly scheduled annual conference
19 sessions after September 1, 2016, and is completed by August 31, 2017.
20 Jurisdictional conferences convening in 2016 may vote on adaptations to
21 the to the *Discipline* described in amended ¶525 and these adaptations
22 would become effective upon the announcement of the ratification of
23 ¶27.7 by the Council of Bishops.

24 3) Annual conferences and local congregations of jurisdictions that
25 have made adaptations to ¶304.3, ¶341.6, ¶2702.(a-b) of the *Discipline*
26 are encouraged to indicate their jurisdictional affiliation on signage and
27 letterhead so as to distinguish them from other conferences and
28 congregations.

29
30 **Rationale:** *The intent of this addition is to extend the power to jurisdictional*
31 *conferences the authorities currently granted to central conferences (the*
32 *language is borrowed from ¶543.7, Powers and Duties of Central*
33 *Conferences). As the liberties of the central conferences are actually*
34 *quite limited as interpreted by Judicial Council over the years, specific*
35 *permission is given to adapt the clergy standards of the General*
36 *Discipline by a two-thirds majority vote. This authority is contingent*
37 *upon the adoption of other measures that allow conferences to join*
38 *another jurisdiction and individual congregations and clergy to join*
39 *another annual conference. A timeline is established that would allow*



1 *jurisdictional conference to vote on adaptations in 2016 that would*
2 *become effective upon the announcement of ratification of the enabling*
3 *amendment by the Council of Bishops late in the summer of 2017.*

4 **Change #4: Placing the Recommendation of Adaptations of the Clergy**
5 **Standards with the Jurisdictional Committee on Ordained**
6 **Ministry**

7
8 **Addition to ¶535: *Committee on Ordained Ministry***
9

10 The duties of this committee may include: providing information on supply and
11 demand and encouraging mobility across conference lines; to create a forum to
12 deal with matters of enlistment and recruitment; to create dialogue with
13 seminaries serving the jurisdiction; to enable ethnic ministries in the
14 jurisdictions-; to recommend to the jurisdictional conference any changes and
15 adaptations to ¶304.3, ¶341.6, ¶2702.(a-b) of *The Book of Discipline* in keeping
16 with the special conditions and the mission of the church of that jurisdiction.
17 Pursuant to ¶525, these recommendations must be adopted by a 2/3 majority
18 of the jurisdictional conference and become effective January 1 following the
19 session of jurisdictional conference unless otherwise specified.

20
21 ***Rationale:*** *This addition gives the responsibility of recommending any adapted*
22 *clergy standards to the Jurisdictional Committee on Ordained Ministry.*
23

24 **Change #5: Defining the Processes Associated with Fluid Jurisdictional**
25 **Boundaries**

26
27 **¶538. Annual Conferences Changing Jurisdictional Membership**
28

29 The following process is enacted to implement the constitutional amendments to ¶¶ 37
30 and 39 in which annual conferences are empowered to join a new jurisdictional
31 conference.

- 32
33 1. Following each regularly-scheduled jurisdictional conference, the jurisdictional
34 delegation of each annual conference may meet to bring recommendation to their
35 annual conference session concerning the conference’s future jurisdictional conference



1 membership, as well as an alternate choice of jurisdiction should the jurisdiction of first
2 choice dissolve under the provisions of this paragraph.

3 2. A change in jurisdictional affiliation may be enacted by two-thirds majority vote
4 of a duly called annual conference session. Votes on jurisdictional affiliation must be
5 made at least 18 months prior to the next regularly scheduled jurisdictional conference.

6 3. Annual conference secretaries shall report the result of votes on jurisdictional
7 membership to the college of bishops of all jurisdictions and to the General Council on
8 Finance and Administration within 30 days of the vote.

9 4. Annual conferences shall participate in the jurisdictional conference session of
10 the jurisdiction they are entering but shall otherwise participate in the conference of
11 previous membership and remain under the supervisory plan of that college of bishops
12 until September 1 of the year of jurisdictional conference when bishops assume office.

13 5. Any jurisdictional conference that falls below 300,000 members, as certified by
14 the General Council on Finance and Administration, is dissolved effective September 1
15 of the year of the next regularly scheduled jurisdictional conference. There shall be no
16 jurisdictional conference session for those jurisdictions which are dissolving. Annual
17 conferences that otherwise would have participated in a dissolving jurisdiction shall
18 attend the jurisdictional conference of their alternate choice. The colleges of bishops of
19 the receiving jurisdiction(s) shall meet as necessary to develop an equitable plan for the
20 division of any jurisdictional properties, assets, and liabilities.

21 6. Bishops displaced from their jurisdiction by the provisions of this paragraph may
22 be transferred to another jurisdiction for episcopal service under the provisions of
23 amended ¶49 or may be assigned to other duties in a plan approved by the Council of
24 Bishops. These duties may include, but are not limited to, staff responsibilities in a
25 general church agency, bishop in residence at a seminary or other church-related
26 educational institution, or appointment within an annual conference as assistant to a
27 bishop, district superintendent, or local church pastor. In all cases bishops shall retain
28 their title, salary, and benefits, although their salaries and benefits from the Episcopal
29 Fund may be adjusted under the provisions of ¶408.

30 7. Bishops not serving in a college of bishops shall nevertheless choose a
31 jurisdictional conference to which to be henceforth accountable under the provisions of
32 ¶¶ 412, 413, and 523.

33
34 ***Rationale:*** *This new paragraph defines the process whereby annual conferences may, in*
35 *an orderly fashion, reconsider their jurisdictional affiliation. The process for dissolving*
36 *jurisdictions that fall below the minimum membership is also defined.*
37



1 **Change #6: Creating a Jurisdictional Judicial Court to Rule on the**
2 **Application of Adaptations Made to the *Discipline***

3
4 **¶1539 Jurisdictional Judicial Court**

5
6 A jurisdictional conference that adapts and edits the *Discipline* as provided in
7 amended ¶127.7 shall establish a judicial court, which in addition to other duties
8 that the jurisdiction may assign to it shall hear and determine the legality of any
9 action of the jurisdiction taken under the adopted portions of the *Discipline* or
10 of a decision of law by the presiding bishop of the jurisdictional conference
11 pertaining to the adapted portions of the *Discipline*, upon appeal by the
12 presiding bishop or by one-fifth of the members of the jurisdictional conference.
13 Further, the judicial court shall hear and determine the legality of any action of
14 an annual conference taken under the adapted portions of the *Discipline* or of a
15 decision of law by the presiding bishop of the annual conference pertaining to
16 the adapted portion of the *Discipline*, upon appeal of the presiding bishop or of
17 such percentage of the members of the annual conference as may be
18 determined by the jurisdictional conference concerned.

19
20 ***Rationale:*** *This change adds language to the jurisdiction conference section of*
21 *the Discipline as is nearly identical to ¶1537.3 pertaining to central*
22 *conferences, which have the ability to make limited adaptations of the*
23 *general discipline. A jurisdictional judicial court would have authority to*
24 *interpret the adaptations made by the jurisdiction in the same way that*
25 *the central conference judicial court has authority to rule on the*
26 *application of any central conference adaptations.*
27

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