



Progressive Jurisdiction Legislation

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

Version 2.2

Updated March 10, 2015

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: Allow for the Creation of a Progressive Jurisdiction**
2 **Empowered to Adapt the *Book of Discipline*.**

3 **Division Two, Section VII, Article 1 (¶37)**
4

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

9 *Southeastern—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South*
10 *Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia.*

11 *North Central—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South*
12 *Dakota, Wisconsin.*

13 *South Central—Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico,*
14 *Oklahoma, Texas.*

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

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

22 This Progressive Jurisdiction shall be empowered to make such changes and adaptations
23 of the General Discipline as the jurisdiction chooses, subject to such powers that have been or
24 shall be vested in the General Conference. The Progressive Jurisdiction may appoint a judicial
25 court to determine legal questions arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted,
26 or new sections of the jurisdictional Conference Discipline enacted by the Progressive
27 Jurisdiction. The Progressive Jurisdiction shall be entitled to the same ratio of representation at
28 General Conferences as other jurisdictions, but delegates from the Progressive Jurisdiction shall
29 not vote on matters otherwise adaptable by their jurisdiction. Enabling legislation passed by
30 General Conference to implement this amendment shall become effective and begin to be
31 implemented when the Council of Bishops shall certify the amendment’s ratification. The
32 jurisdictional realignments needed to implement this paragraph shall not be subject to the
33 consent of the annual conferences required in the provisions of ¶¶16.12 and 39.
34 Notwithstanding other constitutional provisions, the Progressive Jurisdiction shall be
35 responsible for funding its own programs and episcopal expenses.



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

5
 6 ***Rationale:** This amendment allows for the creation of a Progressive Jurisdiction that has*
 7 *the explicit permission to adopt certain provisions regarding marriage and human*
 8 *sexuality that differ from the General Discipline.*
 9

10 **NON-CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES**

11 **Define the Progressive Jurisdiction and the Process by which It Is** 12 **Organized.**

13
 14 ¶538. The Progressive Jurisdiction – There shall be an Progressive Jurisdiction for those
 15 annual conferences in The United States that decide on a principled dissent
 16 from standards and practices related to marriage, human sexuality, and gender
 17 issues. Other provisions notwithstanding, the Progressive Jurisdiction shall
 18 function as other jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church except for the
 19 following provisions:

- 20 1. The jurisdiction shall be empowered to make such changes and adaptations
 21 of the Book of Discipline as the mission of the jurisdiction require, especially
 22 concerning the organization and administration of the work on local church,
 23 district, annual conference, and jurisdictional levels, provided that no action
 24 shall be take that is contrary to the Constitution (¶¶1-61), General Rules,
 25 Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task (¶¶101-104), The Ministry of
 26 All Christians (¶¶120-142), and The Preface and Preamble to the Social
 27 Principles. Subject to these restrictions, the jurisdiction may delegate to a
 28 constituent annual conference the power to make one or other of the
 29 changes and adaptations referred to in this paragraph, upon request of such
 30 annual conference.
- 31 2. The jurisdiction shall be free to adapt the ordination standards in ¶304.3
 32 that prohibit self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being certified as
 33 candidates for ministry, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The
 34 United Methodist Church. Bishops elected by the jurisdiction shall meet the
 35 qualifications expected of all other United Methodist bishops, including
 36 compliance with ¶304.3. The jurisdiction shall also be free to adapt ¶613.19



- 1 to allow the expenditure of annual conference funds to promote the
- 2 acceptance of homosexuality.
- 3 **3.** The jurisdiction shall be free to permit clergy and churches of its annual
- 4 conference to perform whatever marriage ceremonies it chooses to permit,
- 5 and such clergy shall not be subject to charges under ¶12702.1(b).
- 6 **4.** The jurisdiction may appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions
- 7 arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections
- 8 of the *Progressive Jurisdictional Conference Discipline* enacted by the
- 9 jurisdiction.
- 10 **5.** The jurisdiction shall develop its own logo which may be an adaptation of
- 11 The United Methodist Cross and Flame, pending approval by The General
- 12 Council on Finance and Administration. Churches and annual conferences
- 13 of the jurisdiction shall use the logo of the jurisdiction and indicate their
- 14 jurisdictional affiliation on signage and letterhead.
- 15 **6.** While annual conferences of the jurisdiction shall be entitled to the same
- 16 ratio of General Conference delegates as those in other jurisdictions, these
- 17 delegates shall be restricted from voting on changes to parts of the
- 18 Discipline that the jurisdiction is empowered to adapt.
- 19 **7.** The jurisdiction shall have the following representation on general church
- 20 agencies:
 - 21 a. The jurisdiction is entitled to proportional representation on the
 - 22 General Council on Finance and Administration, the General Board
 - 23 of Pensions and Health Benefits, the General Board of Global
 - 24 Ministries, the General Commission on Religion and Race, the
 - 25 General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the General
 - 26 Commission on United Methodist Men, the General Commission on
 - 27 Archives and History, the General Commission on Communications,
 - 28 the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, the United
 - 29 Methodist Publishing House, and United Methodist Women.
 - 30 b. The jurisdiction is not entitled to representation on the General
 - 31 Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Discipleship, the
 - 32 General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, or affiliate bodies
 - 33 of these general agencies.
 - 34 c. The jurisdiction shall be entitled to one representative on the
 - 35 Connectional Table.
- 36 **8.** Assessment of general church apportionments to the annual conferences of
- 37 the jurisdiction shall take the following factors into consideration:
 - 38 a. The jurisdiction shall be responsible for funding its own programs
 - 39 and episcopal expenses.



- 1 b. The jurisdiction shall share in general church support of Central
- 2 Conference bishops through The Episcopal Fund.
- 3 c. The jurisdiction shall not participate in the budgets of those
- 4 agencies to which it is not entitled representation except as
- 5 negotiated with the General Council on Finance and Administration
- 6 and in keeping with the provisions of ¶806.9. The jurisdiction is
- 7 encouraged to participate in The Advance.
- 8 d. As the jurisdiction is not bound by the body of the Social Principles,
- 9 it does not participate in the budget of the General Board of Church
- 10 and Society. The jurisdiction may enter into agreements with the
- 11 board for shared services and develop funding agreements as
- 12 negotiated with the General Council on Finance and Administration.
- 13 e. As the jurisdiction bears the weight of determining its own
- 14 standards for ministry and ministerial education it shall not be
- 15 required to fund the Ministerial Education Fund or the work of the
- 16 General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The jurisdiction
- 17 may enter into agreements with these agencies for shared services
- 18 and develop shared funding agreements as negotiated with the
- 19 General Council on Finance and Administration. The jurisdiction is
- 20 also encourage to develop alternative means of supporting
- 21 ministerial students who are candidates from its annual
- 22 conferences.
- 23 f. The jurisdiction may enter into agreements with the General Board
- 24 of Discipleship for shared services and develop funding agreements
- 25 as negotiated with the General Council on Finance and
- 26 Administration.
- 27 g. The jurisdiction shall participate in Africa University Fund, the Black
- 28 College Fund, the General Administration Fund, and the
- 29 Interdenominational Cooperation Fund.
- 30 h. In any funding agreement with the jurisdiction entered into by an
- 31 agency of the general church shall adhere to the provisions of
- 32 ¶806.9.
- 33 ¶1539. The following process is enacted to implement amended ¶37 creating a Progressive
- 34 Jurisdiction in the United States. The secretary of the General Conference shall work with the
- 35 bishops to ensure that voting on the ratification of these constitutional amendments begins
- 36 with the regularly scheduled annual conference sessions after September 1, 2016 and is
- 37 completed by August 31, 2017, with the Council of Bishops certifying the outcome of the
- 38 amendment ballots by December 31, 2017.



- 1 1. The Progressive Jurisdiction shall encompass the entire United States of
2 America and overlap geographically the five standard jurisdictions.
- 3 2. In anticipation of the approval of the relevant constitutional amendments,
4 the 2016 General Conference shall (subsequent to approving the
5 amendments by the required two-thirds vote) elect a seven-person team to
6 represent the vision of the Progressive Jurisdiction, consisting of three
7 laypersons, three clergypersons, and one bishop. Nominations shall be
8 taken from the floor of General Conference at least 24 hours prior to the
9 election being held. Each nominee shall certify his/her commitment to the
10 general principles contained in the description of the Progressive
11 Jurisdiction in amended ¶ 37.
- 12 3. In the ten months following General Conference, the team shall write and
13 approve a vision and mission description for the Progressive Jurisdiction,
14 including a one-page summary. These documents shall be the initial guide
15 for decision-making by bishops, annual conferences, clergy, congregations,
16 and church institutions about a decision whether or not to affiliate with the
17 new jurisdiction. The descriptive documents shall be publicly released at
18 the time when the Council of Bishops certifies that the relevant
19 constitutional amendments have been ratified.
- 20 4. Episcopal Affiliation—a) No more than 60 days following the certification of
21 the constitutional amendments the Progressive Jurisdiction, each active and
22 retired United Methodist bishop serving The United States of America may
23 elect to relate to the new jurisdiction described in ¶ 37 and in the
24 descriptive documents (¶ 538.9(b)). These jurisdictional choices shall be
25 canvassed by the Council of Bishops and made public at the conclusion of
26 the 60 days. Bishops shall relate to both the new jurisdiction and their
27 former geographical jurisdiction until the transition is completed. b)
28 Following the 60 days, the College of Bishops for the new jurisdiction may
29 convene and begin ordering the work of their new jurisdiction. The College
30 of Bishops for the Progressive Jurisdiction shall oversee the implementation
31 of the new jurisdiction and serve as a clearinghouse of information for
32 annual conferences, clergy and congregations desiring to affiliate with the
33 jurisdiction.
- 34 5. Annual Conference Affiliation—a) Within eight months of the certification of
35 constitutional amendments, votes shall be held by secret ballot in each
36 annual conference in the U.S. as to whether or not to join the Progressive
37 Jurisdiction. A simple majority vote of annual conference members shall
38 suffice. The vote of each annual conference shall be announced before the
39 adjournment of that conference. b) Annual conferences voting to affiliate



- 1 with the Progressive Jurisdiction shall elect a jurisdictional delegation,
2 consisting of the same number of delegates who were elected to the
3 previous jurisdictional conference. If clergy are elected who later dissent
4 from the jurisdictional affiliation of their annual conference, these clergy
5 become ineligible to serve. Lay members elected become ineligible to serve
6 if the local church to which they belong votes to dissent from the
7 jurisdictional affiliate of the annual conference. Annual conferences shall
8 elect sufficient numbers of reserve delegates to ensure a full delegation.
9 Jurisdictional legislation may also be proposed by annual conferences.
- 10 6. *Congregational Affiliation*—a) Congregations will automatically continue to
11 belong to the annual conference to which they previously belonged unless
12 the congregation takes action to change affiliations. Congregations who
13 dissent from the jurisdictional affiliation of their annual conference under
14 this paragraph will have until December 31, 2018 to indicate, by majority
15 secret ballot vote of a duly called special church conference, their decision
16 to be placed in an annual conference of either the Progressive Jurisdiction
17 or the geographical jurisdiction to which they previously belonged.
18 Congregations voting to leave their annual conference shall remain part of
19 their former annual conference until the conclusion of the
20 organizing/reorganizing conference of the new annual conference. b)
21 Churches wishing to change jurisdictional affiliation after the process
22 described may do so under the provisions of ¶ 41 of the Constitution.
- 23 7. *Clergy Affiliation*— a) Clergy shall have until December 31, 2018 to notify
24 their bishop of their desire to serve in a jurisdiction other than the one
25 selected by their annual conference. Their bishop shall forward the names
26 of these clergy to the college of bishops of the receiving jurisdiction.
27 Conference membership will continue in the former conference until a
28 transfer to another annual conference is complete. b) Subsequent to their
29 original affiliation, clergy may elect to transfer from an annual conference in
30 one jurisdiction to an annual conference in another jurisdiction under the
31 provisions of ¶347.1.
- 32 8. *Organizing Jurisdictional Conferences*—a) The colleges of bishops of the
33 respective jurisdictions shall call a special organizing or reorganizing
34 jurisdictional conference for each jurisdiction. The conferences shall take
35 place during February 2019. In the event that no annual conference in a
36 particular jurisdiction votes to join the Progressive Jurisdiction, and further
37 that no annual conferences from geographically contiguous jurisdictions are
38 added to that jurisdiction through processes elsewhere described, and
39 further that no bishops of that jurisdiction exit to join the Progressive



1 Jurisdiction, the college of bishops in that jurisdiction may forgo holding a
2 special session of that jurisdictional conference. b) At the
3 organizing/reorganizing conference for each jurisdiction, the annual
4 conference maps of each jurisdiction shall be redrawn so as to provide
5 coverage for the entire geographical area assigned to the jurisdiction. The
6 Progressive Jurisdiction shall create a map of annual conferences that
7 covers the entire United States. Such annual conferences shall encompass
8 any and all churches seeking to transfer to an annual conference in the
9 Progressive Jurisdiction. Where possible, coverage shall be attained by
10 widening the boundaries of existing conferences. Provisional annual
11 conferences and missionary conferences may be formed as needed. Bishops
12 shall be assigned to their respective episcopal areas as elsewhere set forth.
13 New bishops shall be elected as needed under the provisions of ¶ 404. For
14 the purposes of this transition, bishops shall begin their new residential
15 assignment on April 1, 2019. c) Each jurisdictional conference shall create a
16 system for assisting clergy desiring to change annual conference affiliation
17 in obtaining membership status in a new annual conference, in obtaining an
18 appointment in the new annual conference, and/or in obtaining a
19 transitional appointment. Clergy may continue to serve in a conference
20 other than the one where their membership is held until a suitable
21 appointment is found in their new annual conference. d) Following the
22 remapping of annual conferences in each jurisdiction, each annual
23 conference shall draw or adjust its districts to serve all the territory within
24 its boundaries.

25 **9. Institutional Affiliation**—Any church-related institution that is affiliated
26 with, but not owned by, an annual or jurisdictional conference may choose
27 to change their affiliation and relationship to the church following the
28 organizing of the new jurisdictions and the redrawing of annual conference
29 boundaries. The institution, by its own internal processes, may choose to
30 continue affiliation with the successor annual or jurisdictional conference
31 with which it was previously affiliated, change its affiliation, seek affiliation
32 in both jurisdictions at the same time, or remove its church affiliation
33 entirely. An institution’s request to affiliate with a different annual or
34 jurisdictional conference is contingent upon approval by that conference.

35 **10. Congregational Property**—The trust clause of each local congregation’s
36 property shall be held and administered by the annual conference with
37 which the local church chooses to affiliate (¶2501, 2503). All assets and
38 liabilities previously incurred by a local congregation shall remain with that
39 congregation, regardless of affiliation.



- 1 **11. Annual Conference Assets and Non-Pension Liabilities** -- Annual conferences
2 that vote to enter the Progressive Jurisdiction by a margin of at least
3 seventy-five percent will do so with their conference properties, assets and
4 liabilities intact. Those who opt into the Progressive Jurisdiction by a margin
5 less then seventy-five percent shall divide conference assets and liabilities
6 proportionately with annual conferences receiving the exiting
7 congregations. Assets shall be divided based on the amount of annual
8 conference apportionments paid by the exiting congregations over the
9 previous five full years. Liabilities shall be divided based on the percentage
10 of annual conference apportionments assessed to each congregation,
11 averaged over the previous five full years.
- 12 **12. Annual Conference Pension Liability** – Each annual conference with at least
13 one exiting congregation and unfunded pension liability shall elect
14 representatives to a Joint Distributing Committee who will allocate the
15 pension liability with any receiving annual conference(s) under the
16 provisions of ¶1509.
- 17 **13. Jurisdictional Property** – If over fifty percent of the aggregate number of
18 professing members in a jurisdiction leaves to join the Progressive
19 Jurisdiction, properties held by the jurisdiction shall be divided with the
20 Progressive Jurisdiction proportionate to the number of professing
21 members.
- 22 **14. Arbitration** -- Disputes over the division of assets and liabilities shall be
23 settled in binding arbitration by the Judicial Council. Each annual or
24 jurisdictional conference shall present its case in written and oral form, and
25 the Council shall make the final determination of an equitable division of
26 assets and liabilities. The expenses of any special meetings or travel
27 incurred by the Council for such purposes shall be borne by the bodies
28 engaging in arbitration.
- 29 **15. General Conference 2020** is encouraged to review the effect of the
30 reorganization enabled by this paragraph and consider remapping the
31 geographic jurisdictions in accordance with the constitutional provisions of
32 ¶15.12.
33

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