

# VAUMC General Conference Delegation Endorses Christmas Covenant Regionalization Plan

## Overview:

The Christmas Covenant is a proposal for regionalization and contextualization as a way forward for the UMC. The VAUMC General Conference Delegation unanimously supports the Christmas Covenant as the wisest and most hopeful way forward for the United Methodist Church. At the 2023 Annual Conference the General Conference Delegation will make a short presentation on this matter and move that the Virginia Annual Conference endorse the Christmas Covenant and the larger goal of regionalization. This is important because if a regionalization plan passes at General Conference 2024, Annual Conferences will have to vote to ratify resultant constitutional amendments. We, the General Conference delegation, ask VAUMC 2023 to learn about this plan and vote to affirm the delegation's discernment in advance of the 2024 General Conference.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### 1) What's the difference between the Christmas Covenant and the "Protocol" (Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation)?

**Answer:** The "Protocol" legislation is effectively dead. Many of the groups who originally supported it have withdrawn their support (or left the United Methodist Church) or found it no longer viable. The Christmas Covenant is new legislation that seeks to restructure the UMC through regionalization to help the denomination address issues of global inequality, racial equity, and LGBTQ inclusion on a contextual basis so that our church can find a path forward. The Christmas Covenant emerged from the church outside the United States and includes plans from the Connectional Table (a General Church connectional body) for regionalization.

Learn more: [christmascovenant.com/pageecc](https://christmascovenant.com/pageecc) and [umnews.org/en/news/protocols-day-has-passed-some-negotiators-say](https://umnews.org/en/news/protocols-day-has-passed-some-negotiators-say)

### 2) What does "regionalization" mean?

**Answer:** The Christmas Covenant (and other similar regionalization plans) would create regional conferences throughout the United Methodist Church. The United States would become a regional conference, and US-centric issues would be handled at the US regional conference level. This would free the General Conference to focus on truly global issues - issues of theology, global missional collaboration, our shared witness, and more. Each region - in the US and elsewhere around the globe - could adapt its ministries and practices to best respond to its unique regional needs.

### 3) How does Regionalization address LGBTQ+ inclusion?

**Answer:** In short, by creating a "US Regional Conference," the General Conference would no longer be required to deal with such US-centric issues. Regional Conferences would have flexibility to address the mission and ministry within their specific contexts, including matters of LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the General Conference could focus on issues that impact global United Methodism.

### 4) Does Regionalization cost more money?

**Answer:** No. Regionalization would streamline the work of future General Conferences resulting in millions of dollars in savings per quadrennium.

[more on reverse](#)

## 5) What does the VAUMC General Conference delegation think of Regionalization as a way forward?

**Answer:** Having studied the legislative options, the General Conference Delegation has unanimously endorsed the Christmas Covenant as a plan to move forward as the United Methodist Church, especially with regard to the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons. We also believe that regionalization is an essential step towards becoming a truly global church, in which the voices of all United Methodists around the world are valued equally by our structure.

## 6) What about the global church?

**Answer:** All current Central Conferences (non-US conferences) would become Regional Conferences. The General Conference would no longer be overly weighted toward US-centric issues; each Central Conference would have some regional autonomy to set policies regarding a variety of matters that are important to their missional context.

## 7) Who is recommending the Christmas Conference?

**Answer:** Regionalization in general and Christmas Covenant legislation specifically has been written and is being brought forward by Central Conference representatives (i.e. global voices) seeking to address long-standing geographic and racial inequities in governance of the church by placing the US church on equal footing with the church as a whole. It has been endorsed by the Connectional Table and Wespath. **Learn more:** [umc.org/en/content/connectional-tables-us-regional-conference-legislation-now-available](http://umc.org/en/content/connectional-tables-us-regional-conference-legislation-now-available)

## 8) Isn't this adding a layer of bureaucracy?

**Answer:** Just the opposite. This allows the United Methodist Church in the United States to organize itself in ways that are unique to the United States, without having to bog down the General Conference with those issues. For example, decisions about clergy pension funds and church property laws in the United States are separate issues with different civil laws than are found in other countries. Regionalization would allow these sorts of issues to be addressed locally, allowing our General Conference to focus on subjects of global importance.

## 9) What is needed to pass this legislation?

**Answer:** These legislative packages would require amendments to the UMC Constitution which will necessitate Annual Conference votes for approval. If regionalization legislation is passed by the General Conference, two-thirds of all United Methodist Annual Conference members around the world must vote in favor of these amendments in order for them to become church law - which means that every single vote matters. This is why the VAUMC General Conference Delegation is inviting you to become aware now and begin your support by endorsing this path forward.

## 10) Why should I support regionalization?

**Answer:** Regionalization would allow for 'contextualized governance' for each region subject to the legal, regulatory, cultural, and business practices of that region. Adapting governance to the requirements of law and practices of individual regions support strong governance as well as risk mitigation for all regions. **Regionalization helps the UMC adapt its governance to meet the specific needs of regions and the denomination as a whole. It's cheaper, more efficient, better able to respond to the needs of churches around the globe, more inclusive of global voices, and presents a real possibility for holding our diverse church together amid real regional differences in the practice of ministry.**