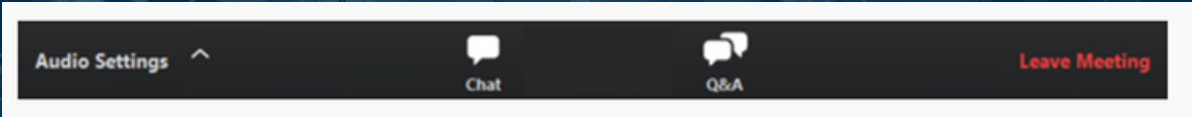


WELCOME!

You are in a webinar- you can see and hear the presenters, but we can not see or hear you.

Q&A:
Ask questions for the panel



MAY 29, 2024

Welcome to the Webinar! We will begin soon. Please use the Q&A feature if you have questions of our panelists.



Welcome to “Why Regionalization Matters.”

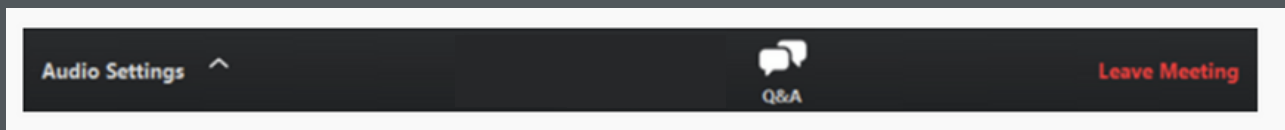
I am Martha Stokes, the Virginia Conference Lay Leader and a member of our delegation to the General Conference.

I am being joined in the webinar by other members of our Virginia delegation as we seek to help explain why regionalization matters, what it is – and isn’t, and how it is an essential step forward for the future of The United Methodist Church.

You will be hearing from Rev. Lindsey Freeman, Rev. Grace Han, and Rev. Jeff Mickle. We are extremely grateful that Rev. Brian Johnson is working behind the scenes to field questions and for the technical skills of Kim Johnson as she handles the administration of the webinar.

How Do I Ask Questions or Chat During the Live Webinars?

Q&A:
Ask questions
for the panel



These are part of the Zoom toolbar and may be hidden by "..."

At the end of our presentation we will offer a time for Q&A. We have collected the questions you provided at registration as our starting point. If you have additional questions please use the Q&A which should be at the bottom of your Zoom screen. It may be hidden behind the dot dot dot (...) if you are on a tablet or mobile device.

GOALS

01 WHY
Why are we gathered this evening?


02 CONTEXT
Why change is needed.

03 WHAT
What is Regionalization?

04 CAN & CAN NOT
What Regionalization Can and Can Not do.

05 WHAT'S NEXT?
Next steps for Virginia.

Q&A



Regionalization is the **most important structural change** to our denomination in a **generation.**



Purpose of Webinar and Gathering

At the recent General Conference session held April 23 – May 3 in Charlotte, NC, delegates passed 8 legislative petitions that would restructure the United Methodist denomination to be more contextual in different regions served by the church.

Worldwide regionalization is the most important structural change our denomination has seen in a generation!

One of the legislative petitions is an amendment to our constitution. You will hear more in the webinar about the next steps required for this amendment to take effect.

Regionalization stands as distinct from the other work of General Conference. It had been in development for many years, with the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, our denominational Connectional Table, and a team of clergy and laity from Central Conferences outside the United States collaborating on the petitions that were submitted. It received support from delegates from every region.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: 4 there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

New Revised Standard Version - Updated Edition
(NRSVUE)



Scriptural Foundations

Let me offer a scriptural foundation for this work toward regionalization and its importance.

We are a global church, beautifully diverse in geography, culture, language, and understandings. Keeping that in mind, it is important for us to always remember these words from Ephesians 4:1-6 in the New Revised Standard Version - Updated Edition (NRSVUE) of the bible.

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: 4 there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might gain all the more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to gain Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might gain those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not outside God's law but am within Christ's law) so that I might gain those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I might become a partner in it.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23



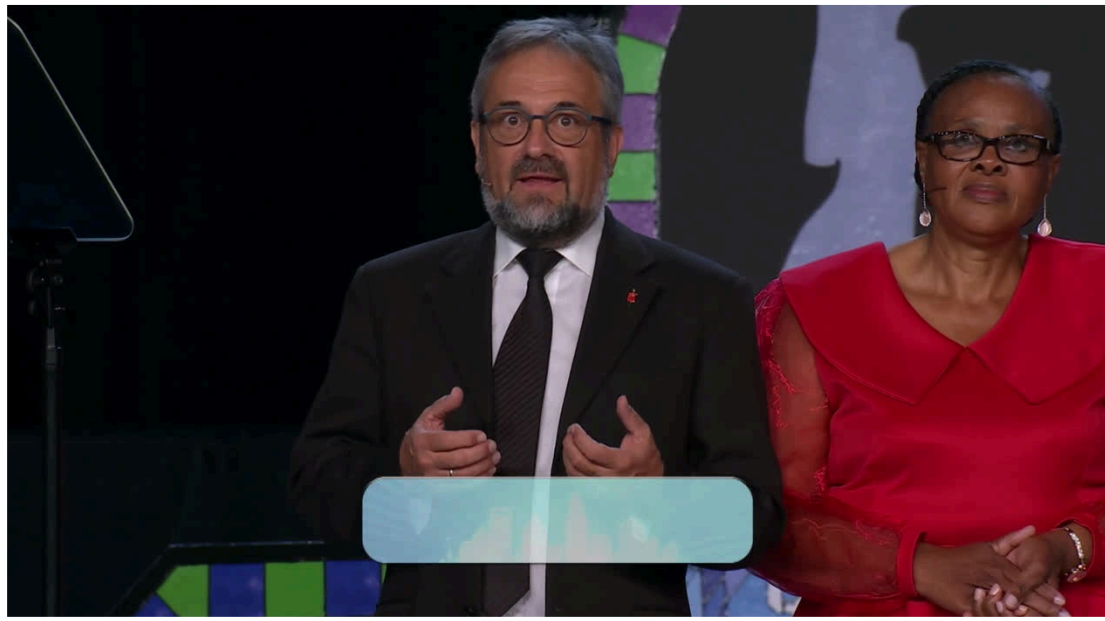
At the conclusion of the General Conference, the Council of Bishops acknowledged that regionalization will enable us to fulfill Paul's teachings as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might gain all the more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to gain Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might gain those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not outside God's law but am within Christ's law) so that I might gain those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I might become a partner in it.

It is also important as we begin this conversation, to hear about the need for this new structure from United Methodists outside the United States. Listen as two members of the Standing Committee on General Conference Matters – Bishop Mande Muyombo of the Congo Central Conference and Rev. A



WHY



FROM THE REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR CENTRAL CONFERENCE MATTERS

You can find this video online at <https://vaumc.org/regionalization/>

We played the first 3:15 of the April 24 General Conference Morning Plenary session which featured the report of the Standing Committee for Central Conference Matters.

The full 17 minute report has been posted to the <https://vaumc.org/regionalization/> webpage.

WHY WE NEED REGIONALIZATION



Setting the Context (Why we need regionalization) –Lindsey Freeman

I am Lindsey Baynham Freeman, and I serve as the head of our Virginia Delegation. I want to share some context and the missional need for regionalization. One thing that remains true within our United Methodist church is that we are worldwide! This is not an aspiration but something we celebrate as a current reality. It is who we are—and with time, we are becoming more and more so—counting before 2022, about 12.5 million members around the world .

A QUICK WORD ABOUT UMC STRUCTURE

FIRST: A QUICK LOOK AT OUR STRUCTURE

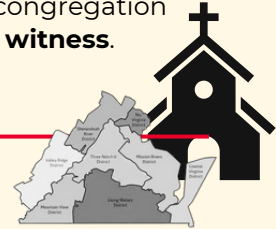


IT STARTS WITH YOU!

You are a committed leader within your local church faithfully participating in the life and ministries of your local congregation through your **prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.**

YOUR CHURCH IS PART OF A DISTRICT

The Virginia Conference has **eight districts** -- Coastal Virginia, Living Waters, Mission Rivers, Mountain View, Northern Virginia, Shenandoah River, Three Notch'd, and Valley Ridge.



YOUR DISTRICT IS PART OF AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Your church is one of approximately 875 churches in the **Virginia Annual Conference**. The United States has 54 annual conferences, supervised by bishops in 46 episcopal areas. There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops.



But first I want to take a quick walk through our UMC Structure.

[reads slides 10&11]

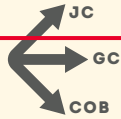


YOUR CONFERENCE IS PART OF A JURISDICTION

There are five US Jurisdictions -- North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern, and Western. Virginia is part of the **Southeastern Jurisdiction** or SEJ.

WE ARE A WORLDWIDE CHURCH

Outside the US, Annual Conferences are organized into seven **Central Conferences**. Together we all make up the United Methodist Church.

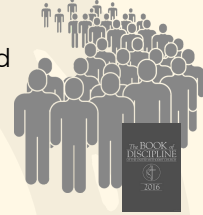


WE ARE GOVERNED BY THREE BODIES

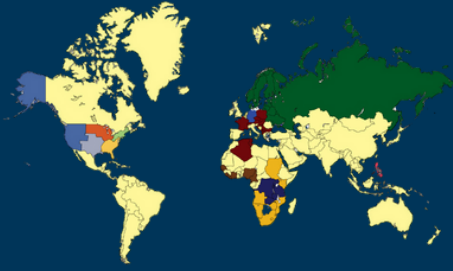
The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. Duties are divided among bodies that include the **Judicial Council**, the **General Conference**, and the **Council of Bishops**.

GENERAL CONFERENCE SETS POLICY

The General Conference meets every four years. Legislation is examined and voted upon by **persons elected** from Annual Conferences from **across the denomination**. The Council of Bishops presides over General Conference and the Judicial Council reviews passed legislation to determine its constitutionality, legality, or meaning.



A WORDLWIDE CHURCH

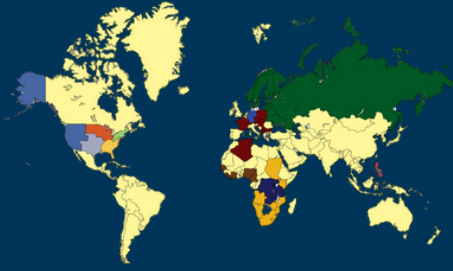


- Shift in Representation
- 7% to 44 % outside the US
- Being a Worldwide church is who we are!



Over the past 10 general conferences, there has been a significant shift for representation of delegates from outside the U.S. In 1980, only 7% of UM delegates were from beyond the U.S. In preparation for the 2020 conference, more than 44% of all delegates were from outside the U.S. This shows the growth of our church and how being a worldwide church is a key strength of our connection!

A WORDLWIDE CHURCH



Following the 2019 General Conference, **Central Conference delegates** came together to imagine an equitable structure of global regionalism for the UMC.

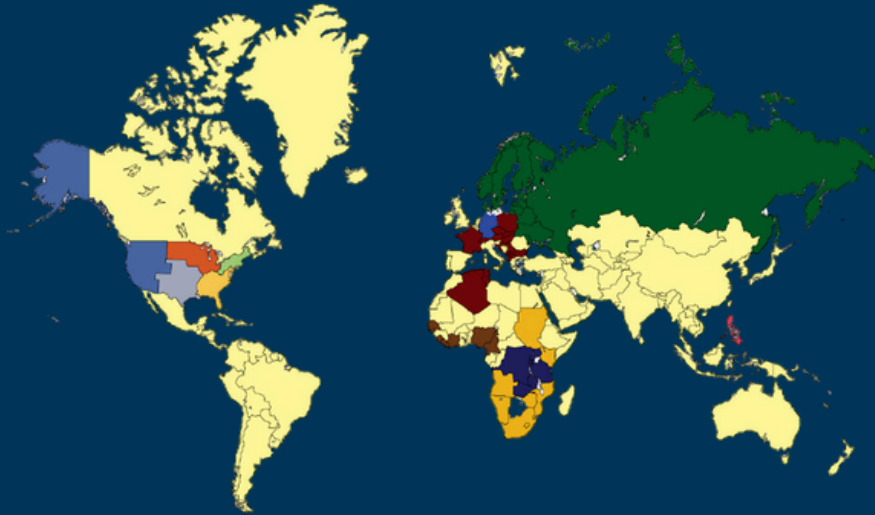
The goal was always to **remain connected and united in mission.**



CONTEXT

Following the 2019 General Conference, Central Conference delegates came together to imagine an equitable structure of global regionalism for the UMC. The first iteration of this concept was known as the Christmas Covenant. In the subsequent years with pandemic and seasons of division or disaffiliation, the proposal brought together the work of the Christmas Covenant, Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters and the Connectional Table to propose Worldwide Regionalization to the postponed 2020/2024 General Conference.

A WORDLWIDE CHURCH



Our global nature is one of our great **strengths!**

This legislation emerges from a missional need and focus to remain connected and united in our mission as the church in the world. In our history restructuring was viewed as a means to divide and in this new legislation, we are seeking unity, diversity and shared mission together.



WHAT IS REGIONALIZATION?



Grace Han introduces herself and our next section: What is Regionalization

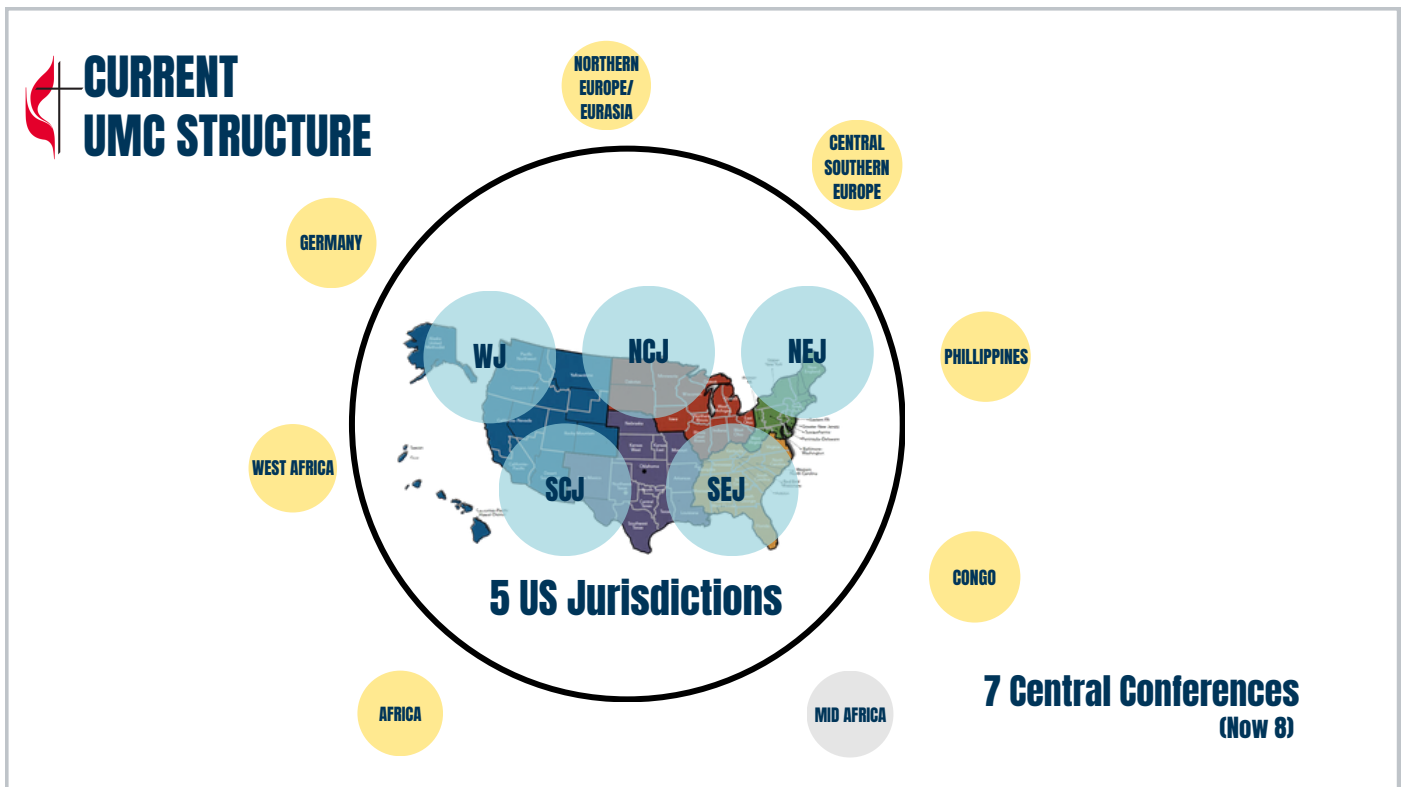
WHAT IS REGIONALIZATION?

Regionalization is a plan to **restructure** the denomination.



In short, worldwide regionalization is a plan to restructure the denomination

- Under the legislation, the U.S. and each central conference – church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines – would each become a regional conference
- Under this structure, we would remain united as a denomination, but allow for contextualization for more missional effectiveness



To understand this, we have to understand the current structure of the UMC

-GRAPHIC: Here's the current structure of the UMC

-5 jurisdictional conferences (us based), 7 central Conferences (outside the US)

(7 central conferences:

in Africa: Africa, Congo, West Africa

In Europe: Central and Southern Europe, Germany, Northern Europe and Eurasia

In Philippines: Philippines)

-now 8 (one approved at GC this year)

-this structure is based on US centric model when majority of the church was based

within the US and central conferences were seen as missional conferences

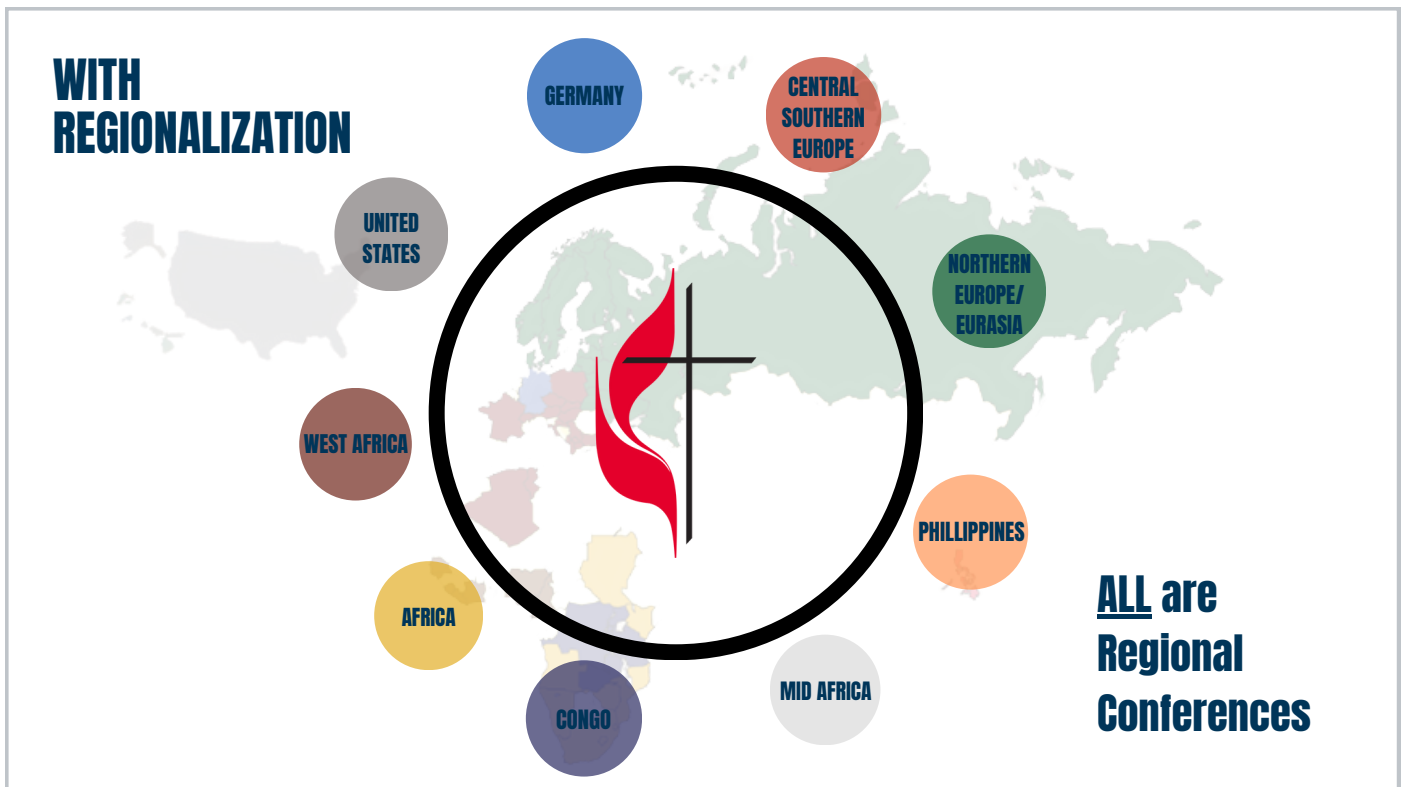
-central conferences currently have power to adapt sections of BOD as a special condition and mission of the church in the area required.

-for example: we have specific requirements for ordination in the book of discipline, including a seminary education. Now in Davos conference, which is part of the Philippine Central Conf, they have adapted that ordination requirement because the Davos conf is in a primarily rural area of the Philippines, and there are not always accredited seminaries in that area so to meets missional effectiveness, they have the ability to adapt the book of discipline.

The Constitution provides central conferences* with certain powers and duties, including: "To make ... such changes and adaptations of the General Discipline as the conditions

in the respective areas may require, subject to the powers that have been or shall be vested in the General Conference.” United Methodists in the United States do not have this power.

-jurisdictional conference (US based) cannot adopt BOD without GC approval—again that’s because we are based on a US model.



regionalization everything TURNS TO REGIONS!

- US becomes its own region, central conferences also become regions
- Eac region can adapt ministries and practices to respond to its unique regional needs
- Our denomination would remain connected and united in mission.
- but allow contextualization—which we’ve already seen is important in a worldwide denomination.
- you’ll also see that the US is no longer at the center of the denomination

8 REGIONALIZATION PETITIONS

1. Constitutional Changes
2. Changes in the Book of Discipline necessitated by constitutional changes
3. Enabling Legislation to update ¶2201 on the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters
4. Enabling Legislation to replace “central conference” with “regional conference” throughout the Discipline after ratification of constitutional amendments
5. Creates a new ¶507 to establish an interim US Regional Committee.
6. Enables the creation of an interim US Regional Committee
7. Create a Plan for Organization of a US Regional Conference
8. Update and Perfect Regional Conference Structure

How would that happen? And what are the specifics

-Regionalization included 8 different petitions

-they all passed at GC, all passed with overwhelming majorities.

(Petition 1—passed with 78.13%, 2 and 3 passed at 90%, 4 and 8 passed at 86%, these were not close votes)

They include the following:

Petition 1 (para 9-61)—all the constitutional amendments: Establishes regional conferences, renames central conferences, restructures the denomination

Changing language from “central conferences” to “regional conferences” (petition 4),

Creation of interim US regional committee (petition 6),

Plan to organize US regional conference (petition 7),

Update and perfect regional conference structure (petition 8)

(for grace notes: Petition 2—refers to Jurisdictional and Central Conferences)

Petition 3—refers to Standing Committee on Central Conferences (ie will change the name to Standing Committee on Regional Conference Matters)

-you can see that some of these are changes that happen right away, some of them will come step by step

For example, there’s an interim US regional committee

For example, petition which is a specific committee to ensure that the way we structure the regional conference is equitable.

WHEN?

Because this requires a constitutional Amendment, it **would not go into effect UNLESS** it is **ratified by Annual Conferences**

Requires **2/3 aggregate vote** of all voting Annual Conference members across the Connection.



Because this requires a constitutional Amendment, it would not go into effect UNLESS it is ratified by Annual Conferences

IMPLICATIONS

The United States Regional Committee would be assigned “all petitions pertaining to the operation, governance, witness and ministry of The United Methodist Church in the United States and which are adaptable by the central conferences.”

Some Examples:

- US Pensions/Retirement
- US Healthcare Plan
- US Episcopal Elections
- Protection for inclusion within the US



What are the implications?

-With no provision for US delegates to decide separately upon matters that affect only the US, much of the agenda of the General Conference is taken up by US only matters, wasting a lot of time and resources.

-slide of all the things we do at GC that is US based

-US clergy retirement plan changes (ex: changed from CRSP to Compass this year)

-US bishop elections (Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy)

-protection for inclusion within the US

(naming this is the first step, in a longer potential process)

-Exactly what Central Conferences may amend in BOD has remained unclear. This has led to both hesitations to amend and non-transparency about changes that have been implemented in Central Conferences

-Creating a US regional conference allows GC to focus solely on issues with worldwide impact

-Creating a single Book of Discipline that applies worldwide with clarity about which parts of it are amendable regionally promotes regional customization and full transparency about changes made. A General Book of Discipline is under works.

-this is a structural change, NOT a change in our theological beliefs

RECENTERING

Rather than centering the UMC on the United States, we recenter on **JESUS CHRIST** and are able to remain connected worldwide for mission and ministry.



- rather than centering US, center JESUS CHRIST
- keeps us connected



WHAT CAN REGIONALIZATION DO AND NOT DO?



Jeff Micke introduces the next section: Can & Can Not

WHAT WILL IT DO?

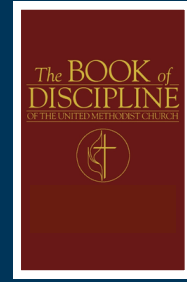
Regional Conferences would be allowed to **do the same thing** that Central Conferences have already been allowed to do for many decades



CAN & CAN NOT

In short, the answer to what regionalization allows a regional conference to do and not to do is this: Regional Conferences would be allowed to do the same thing that Central Conferences have already been allowed to do for many decades. (Slide says what is in bold.) For central conferences, the only thing that will change is the name. But for the United States, what will change is that we will add another layer to our organization. We will have charge conferences, district conferences, annual conferences, jurisdictional conferences, and, if regionalization passes, we will add another new layer called the regional conference, as well as continuing of course with the General Conference. The regional conferences all over the world will have the same duties, powers, and privileges as every other regional conference. It is a big change in our structure for the UMC in the US, but only a name change in structure for the UMC outside the US.

WILL NOT CHANGE



Chapter 1: **The Constitution**

Chapter 2: **The General Book of Discipline**

Chapter 3: **Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task**

Chapter 4: **The Ministry of All Christians**

Chapter 5: **Social Principles**



CAN & CAN NOT

In particular, regionalization allows the regional conference to adapt some parts of the Book of Discipline so that the church can be more contextual in the practice and ordering of its mission and ministry.

The parts of the Book of Discipline that cannot be adapted are Chapters 1-5, which covers pages 1 through 146 in the 2016 Book of Discipline)

That is, Chapter 1: The Constitution

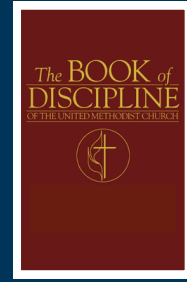
Chapter 2: The General Book of Discipline (which is only a space holder for this concept, which is being developed but it not yet approved)

Chapter 3: Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task

Chapter 4: The Ministry of All Christians

Chapter 5: Social Principles

None of this can be adapted or changed by any regional conference. Any of these items about our foundational belief, doctrine, ethics, and constitution can only be changed by the General Conference, or by a constitutional amendment which involves every annual conference member as well.



Chapter 6: **Organization and Administration**

where contextual variations are most impactful and important to advance the mission of Christ and the Church in that particular region of the world.



CAN & CAN NOT

The part of the Book of Discipline that can be adapted comes in Chapter 6: Organization and Administration, which covers pages 147 through 819 in the 2016 Book of Discipline. Not everything is adaptable, but the part that is adaptable has to do with our organization and administration. That is the area where contextual variations are most impactful and important to advance the mission of Christ and the Church in that particular region of the world.

CAN CHANGE

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 5

a) To establish and publish a regional Discipline with legislation and provisions pertaining to the regional, annual, district, and charge conferences within its boundaries, including qualifications and educational requirements of clergy and specialized lay ministries, and forms of organization according to the laws of the country or countries.



CAN & CAN NOT

The items that are specifically spelled out from within Chapter 6 that can be adapted by regional conferences are these things (quoted from Constitutional Amendment to paragraph 31, Article IV, number 5, which is part of what we will be voting on at our annual conference in a few weeks.

a) To establish and publish a regional Discipline with legislation and provisions pertaining to the regional, annual, district, and charge conferences within its boundaries, including qualifications and educational requirements of clergy and specialized lay ministries, and forms of organization according to the laws of the country or countries.

CAN CHANGE

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 5

b) To set standards of character and other qualifications for admissions of lay members



CAN & CAN NOT

b) To set standards of character and other qualifications for admissions of lay members. (Again, all of these are things that the central conferences already have the capacity to do.)

CAN CHANGE

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 5

c) To acknowledge annual conferences as the basic bodies of the church (paragraph 33) voting on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and therefore considering the requirements set forth in a regional Discipline regarding specialized lay ministry and license, ordination, or conference membership, as minimum requirements.



CAN & CAN NOT

c) To acknowledge annual conferences as the basic bodies of the church (paragraph 33) voting on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and therefore considering the requirements set forth in a regional Discipline regarding specialized lay ministry and license, ordination, or conference membership, as minimum requirements.

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 5

d) To establish and publish a regional hymnal and ritual of the Church, including ecclesial acts of marriage and burial, subject to the limitations of the first and second Restrictive Rules, but authorizing to interpret Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion so as to recognize the government of the country or countries.



CAN & CAN NOT

d) To establish and publish a regional hymnal and ritual of the Church, including ecclesial acts of marriage and burial, subject to the limitations of the first and second Restrictive Rules, but authorizing to interpret Article XXIII of the Articles of Religion so as to recognize the government of the country or countries.

(That has to do with allowing room for different marriage and burial laws within different countries, and the ritual of the Church can reflect those differing laws.)

CAN CHANGE

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 5

e) To allow the annual conferences to adopt structures adequate to their mission while upholding mandated structures.



CAN & CAN NOT

e) To allow the annual conferences to adopt structures adequate to their mission while upholding mandated structures.

CAN CHANGE

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 6

To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions arising from the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the regional Discipline enacted by the regional conference.



CAN & CAN NOT

Number 6:

(Also, just below these items, it continues with this new item of adaptability, in paragraph 31, Article IV, numbers 6 and 7)

6. To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions arising from the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the regional Discipline enacted by the regional conference.

Constitutional Amendment to ¶31, Article IV, number 7

To adopt rules or procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church and to provide the necessary means and methods of implementing the said rules; provided, however, that the ordained ministers shall not be deprived of the right of trial by a clergy committee, and lay members of the Church of the right of trial by a duly constituted committee of lay members; and to make changes in the chargeable offenses and their penalties.

A regional conference or a jurisdiction, if a regional conference has jurisdictions, shall appoint a committee on appeals to hear and determine the appeal of a clergy or lay member of the respective conference from the decision of a committee on trial.

Number 7

7. To adopt rules or procedure governing the investigation and trial of its clergy, including bishops, and lay members of the Church and to provide the necessary means and methods of implementing the said rules; provided, however, that the ordained ministers shall not be deprived of the right of trial by a clergy committee, and lay members of the Church of the right of trial by a duly constituted committee of lay members; and to make changes in the chargeable offenses and their penalties.

A regional conference or a jurisdiction, if a regional conference has jurisdictions, shall appoint a committee on appeals to hear and determine the appeal of a clergy or lay member of the respective conference from the decision of a committee on trial.

(So these are the specific things that the Constitutional Amendments will allow the regional conferences to do, within Chapter 6 of the Book of Discipline).



WHAT'S NEXT?



Grace Han introduces next section: What's Next?

What is next (process for next steps) and what changes to anticipate

NEXT STEPS

Because Regionalization requires a constitutional Amendment, this amendment must be ratified at **all Annual Conferences** in the UMC.



WHAT'S NEXT

Because Regionalization requires a constitutional Amendment, this amendment must be ratified at all Annual Conferences in the UMC

- Each AC will take a vote, and to be ratified, this must pass by a $\frac{2}{3}$ aggregate vote
- which means that each vote will count separately. Each voting member of Annual Conferences across the connection will vote, and it must pass by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority

NEXT STEPS

Because Annual Conferences meet at different times during the year, the ratification process (voting) will go on from **summer 2024 through November 2025.**

Virginia will vote on regionalization in **June of 2025.**

The outcome will not be announced until **spring of 2026.**



WHAT'S NEXT

“No more than 30 days before the process begins”

Because Annual Conferences meet at different times during the year, the vote will begin this summer through November 2025.

-will not be announced until Spring 2026

-for us here in VA, our vote will not happen until AC 2025

(this is because of wanting to make the voting and balloting process standardized across the ACs, will happen at AC)

IF RATTIFIED ...

- A US regional conference will be created.
- All Central Conferences will be changed to Regional Conferences
- A study undertaken to update and perfect new regional conference structures to ensure equity
- A team will look at the General Book of Discipline
- General Conference **would be more efficient and focus on truly global issues** (theology, global mission collaboration and shared witness) and US issues will be dealt with at US regional conferences.



WHAT'S NEXT

THEN:

- if ratified at all ACs (by Nov 2025), a US regional conference will be created.
- All central Conferences will be changed to regional conferences
- study done to update and perfect new regional conference structures to ensure equity
- General Book of Discipline – team that will look at this and aligned with our new structure
- GC would be more efficient and focus on truly global issues (theology, global mission collaboration and shared witness) and US issues will be dealt with at US regional conferences.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES



Wednesday, June 19, 2:00-4:00 PM

Open Q&A

Thursday, June 20, 5:30-6:15 PM

Regionalization presentation and Q&A

Friday, June 21, 7:30-8:15 AM

Regionalization presentation and Q&A



Slide: Opportunities to learn more at Annual Conference

Wednesday, June 19, 2-4 PM – Open Q&A

Thurs, June 20, 5:30-6:15 PM – Regionalization presentation and Q&A

Friday, June 21, 7:30-8:15 AM – Regionalization presentation and Q&A



Open space for Q&A: -Brian Johnson will field questions

FEEDBACK QUESTIONS



Feedback Questions (via poll)

- 1) How comfortable with Regionalization do you feel (1 not very, 5 very comfortable)
- 2) What additional opportunities or information do you need to prepare for the vote in 2025?

FIND MORE INFORMATION

vaumc.org/regionalization





THANK YOU!



MARCH 29, 2024