

# Regionalization FAQs

## What is regionalization?

Regionalization is a plan to **restructure the United Methodist Church** with the goal of making us more just and equitable at the worldwide level while also enabling us to be more missionally effective and contextually adaptable in our various regions throughout the world. In this new structure, current Central Conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines will become regional conferences and the US becomes its own regional conference. Each region will then be able to adapt its ministries and practices to best respond to its unique needs for missional effectiveness.

## When does regionalization go into effect?

**Regionalization is not yet approved!** Because regionalization requires constitutional amendments, this legislation goes back to each Annual Conference across the denomination, and it must be ratified by  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote of all voting delegates.

- This voting process will begin this summer and run through November 2025.
- Virginia will vote at our 2025 Annual Conference (**June 2025**).
- Reporting on the outcome is anticipated in the spring of 2026.

## Why do we need regionalization?

The UMC is a **worldwide church** and is becoming even more so, but our structure remains US-centered.

Our current structure is based on a US-centered model from when the majority of the church was based within the US and central conferences were seen as missional conferences.

- Under regionalization, we would remain UNITED in mission and theology, but CONTEXTUAL in practice.
- With regionalization, **General Conference would be more efficient** and focus on worldwide issues, and US issues would be dealt with at the US regional conference.

## What new opportunities arise from regionalization?

Instead of insisting there is one forum (General Conference) in which all connectional matters must be discussed, it creates and allows conversations to happen in the forums that make the most sense. Matters of **worldwide ministry can happen at General Conference**, while matters pertinent to a specific region can happen at the appropriate regional conference.

## Will each region be authorized to alter the Book of Discipline?

**Yes and No.** Under regionalization, regions can customize **sections** of the Book of Discipline that focus on Order and Practice.

## So, what can and can not change in Book Of Discipline?

**WHAT WILL NOT CHANGE:** Parts I-V of the Book of Discipline (which focus on Mission and theology)

- I. The Constitution (§1-61)
- II. General Book of Discipline (§101)
- III. Doctrinal Standards and our Theological Task (§102-105)
- IV. The Ministry of All Christians (§120-143)
- V. Social Principles (§160-166)

**WHAT CAN CHANGE:** Part VI of the BOD (Order and Practice)

- Criteria for ordained and licensed ministry
- Criteria for specialized lay ministries
- Criteria for admission of and care for lay members
- Organization of the regional, annual, district, and charge conferences
- Hymnal and ritual (marriage)
- Judicial administration

## Does this mean each region will have their own, unique Book of Discipline?

**Yes and No.** We will be **united by a General Book of Discipline** that will outline our theology and mission. Each region will have a version of the Book of Discipline. It will not be unique because it will share much with every other region. It will have parts that have been adapted for its own particular region.

## Is regionalization new?

**No,** contextualization is nothing new. Central Conferences (outside the US) currently have the power to adapt the BOD as needed to address the special conditions and mission of the church in the area required.



## What changes would we likely see?

It would allow us as a global denomination to remain **united in mission and ministry** and would allow for each region to customize ministry for their specific context. General Conference would be much **more efficient (and less expensive)**, and we could focus on worldwide issues, issues of theology, global missional collaboration, and shared witness.

## What about differences WITHIN regional conferences?

*For example, what about a clergy person or church that is traditional within the US regional conference?*

*What about LGBTQ persons in central conferences? How does regionalization account for those differences?*

The same GC that passed regionalization was sure to create space and protections for churches and clergy holding different beliefs and practices from their Bishop, DS, or Annual Conference. **Regionalization will help keep those protections in place because at our highest level of church governance, we will focus on being global missional partners.** Adopting regionalization means we are embracing the value of diversity within unity, and affirming the value of differences among us.

## How will regionalization affect my local church?

On a day-to-day level, **nothing changes** in the local church. We keep doing the work of making disciples for the transformation of the world. On a worldwide scale, our relationship with different parts of the world becomes **more equitable and just**.

## How will regionalization affect apportionments?

It is expected that we will **save costs** related to General Conference. There will also be an addition of costs related to a new regional conference meeting in the US. It is anticipated that the **overall impact** will mean total apportionments **will remain unchanged**.

## How will regionalization affect our itinerant system?

There will be **no impact** on the itinerant system.

## Will regionalization affect control/ownership of any property or assets?

Regionalization **will not affect** property or assets.

## Will there be a new US regional body and meetings, in addition to annual conferences and general conferences?

Yes. A US regional conference will be created which will deal with matters specific to the U.S.

## Will regionalization diminish our connectional system?

No. Regionalization will **decentralize the US** and **create a more equitable worldwide structure** in the UMC.

**Regionalization has wide support from the worldwide church.** In fact, regionalization legislation was first initiated by Central Conference delegates to promote an equitable structure of global regionalism for the UMC.

## Is regionalization a precursor to churches having to comply with same gender weddings?

No. **Regionalization does not speak specifically to any particular issue.** Regionalization is a structural change that allows each region to address specific missional issues in their own contexts.

## What are some Scriptures or theological basis I can use to explain regionalization to my church?

*I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-3)*

- We are a global church, beautifully diverse in geography, culture, language, and understandings.
- 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.

## Are there other resources available?

**YES! There is a website dedicated to resources around regionalization: [vaumc.org/regionalization](http://vaumc.org/regionalization)**

This website includes information about regionalization including:

- The delegation's regionalization webinar video, slides, and notes
- A video of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters introducing regionalization to the General Conference
- Links to denominational resources

If you have specific questions, you can email [VAUMCGC@gmail.com](mailto:VAUMCGC@gmail.com).

