

# A Hybrid Way Forward

for the  
United Methodist Church



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## Hybrid Way Forward Legislation v. 2.2

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This legislation offers a synthesis of the three [models](#) being considered by the Commission of a Way Forward as described by the United Methodist Council of Bishops:

Like the branch model, this plan allows multiple expressions of our church to take root while staying connected. In harmony with the Local Option, individual churches and conferences could place themselves under separate rules on human sexuality by the means prescribed. Elements of the accountability model are also present that would enforce the current standards for those that continue to live under them. The stated values of the Way Forward Commission are honored: Mission, Unity, Space, and Contextuality.

This approach of this plan is unique in that it follows a structural solution using processes and categories already present in our polity. It spares us the necessity of constitutional amendments which add the additional burden of two-third majority support for adoption and supermajority ratification votes around the globe. Simplicity both enhances the likelihood of passage and greatly speeds the timeline for implementation.

This "[Platypus Plan](#)" is inspired by the unique relationship that the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (Iglesia Metodista Autònoma Afiliada de Puerto Rico) has with our general church and agencies. Granted autonomy in the 1990's, Puerto Rico continues as part of our United Methodist pension program and sends representatives to our program agencies, Council of Bishops, and General Conference. This plan can be enacted through straightforward changes to the 570 Paragraphs at General Conference 2019.

# Why a Hybrid Approach?

The solutions currently under consideration divide the church, are unlikely to pass, necessitate moral compromise, or are nearly impossible to enact. Plans likely to be recommended by the Council of Bishops are significantly less likely to be approved by General Conference. Rather than create winners and losers, we a fair and sustainable approach.

## Minimizing Harm

While much discussion focuses on future of general church agencies, too little has been said about the impact of potential solutions on the annual conferences and local churches of our connection. Some models would ease tensions at General Conference only to hand conflicts over human sexuality down to the local level.

Our divisions run right through our American annual conferences, the financial breadbasket of our denomination. These bodies fund 99% of the global work of the UMC. Apart from dollars and cents, local relationships are the face of the United Methodist connection for most of us. The reason any given congregation or clergy is United Methodist is because the conference to which they belong is tied to General Conference. Unlike the UMC as a whole, our annual conferences (named the “basic unit” of our church in our Constitution) have properties, membership, assets, and liabilities. Any solution that can mediate our divisions must allow sorting at this level. And this is where the reorganization gets most complex and risky. We’ve spent too little time talking about how this might work.

The most painful type of sorting would be at the level of the local church. Most United Methodists agree that the local church should be spared, wherever possible, the task of voting on whether homosexual practice is compatible with Christianity. The best way to shield congregations would be for key votes to be taken at the level of the annual conference. (Ideally these votes would be about what structure to affiliate with rather than selecting a position on homosexuality.) Most congregations would, by default, follow the decision of their conference and be spared the worst potential harm schism can offer.

But some churches will need to leave their existing conference in order to move forward. A mechanism is needed by which congregations and clergy can dissent and join another body. Local churches will at least need to be notified that they have the opportunity to make a vote of dissent from the direction of their conference. Even “deciding whether to decide” would cause a certain amount of trepidation. A closely divided congregational vote could cause an exodus from the losing side.

Because of the inevitable pain involved, solutions should be considered that minimize harm. This leads us to consider what might be the least invasive denominational reorganization available to us, a true solution that creates the least disruption and that can be accomplished under our current constitution.

If a few relatively homogeneous American annual conferences could be pulled out of our jurisdictional system, they would be free from the ministry standards of the UMC and untethered from the geographic borders prescribed in our constitution. Conferences so conceived could stretch out their borders to receive those congregations and clergy who cannot authentically fulfill their vision of ministry in the conference they are in. These conferences would be a home for those most dissatisfied with the current situation and become a vehicle for peace.

True, these autonomous conferences would no longer be in full connection with the United Methodist Church as they are now. But neither must they be separate. Custom participation could be negotiated in a

comprehensive suite of shared services offered by our current general agencies. (They could receive pensions through Wespath, ministry resourcing through Discipleship Ministries, and offer disaster response through Relief Ministries, etc.) Use of the UMC name, full participation in the general agencies, and seats at General Conference could be part of a concordat agreement that defines their relationship with the general church.

# Opting for the Possible

We actually have a structure allowing such an arrangement within our present polity. It is called the affiliated autonomous conference/body/church. We currently allow them outside the U.S. and it would only take a simple majority vote at General Conference to allow them in the U.S.

We would need to pair this new status with a simple mechanism allowing congregations and clergy who wish it to transfer to an affiliated autonomous body. Autonomous conferences could elect their own bishops and invent their own system for deploying clergy. The Wesleyan Covenant Association could start one or more of these structures for their churches and clergy who want more structural autonomy from the UMC. Progressive conferences could find the liberty in affiliated autonomous bodies to pursue their own vision of ministry without restriction. These bodies would leave their jurisdictional conference but stay connected at the General Conference level.

Puerto Rico is an example of a conference that left the Northeastern Jurisdiction to become an affiliated autonomous body. They still participate in our National Hispanic Plan and send their bishop, at their own expense, to participate in our Council of Bishops. They operate under their own ministry rules, but have a concordat for shared ministry with the UMC. Delegates for Puerto Rico attend our General Conference, but they also have their own that meets every six years.

The solution we are looking for is **minimalist**, requiring changes primarily from those demanding it. The solution should be **doable**. If we can't achieve it under our current constitution, it likely won't pass. If constitutional amendments pass at General Conference it will be over a year before we know if they have been ratified by the annual conferences around the globe. This adds extensively to the timeline. The solution should be **definitive**. It should set a new course so that everyone understands the road ahead. It is time to put this debate behind us.

Having this network of autonomous, Progressive conferences also means that we have a destination for those clergy and churches that decide in the future that conducting same-sex weddings is essential for their ministry. Transfers would replace trials. That is good for all of us.

What follows is model legislation that would enable autonomous bodies tightly affiliated with The United Methodist Church within the United States. There are many facets of this model that can and will be debated:

- The conditions under which affiliated autonomous bodies may use the United Methodist name and insignia.
- The extent to which affiliated autonomous bodies must participate in supporting the general agencies financially.
- Representation at General Conference and on general boards and agencies.
- Representation by bishops of affiliated autonomous bodies in the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church.
- Transfer procedures between standard conferences and affiliated autonomous bodies.
- Provisions allowing congregations and clergy to form their own affiliated autonomous body.
- Accountability measures aimed at restoring obedience to United Methodist ministry standards.

Section V. Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated United Churches, Covenanting Churches, Concordat Churches

~~¶ 570. Churches located outside the boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences and~~ which have entered into relationship with or have agreements with The United Methodist Church, including that of sending representatives to General Conference of The United Methodist Church are described as follows:

## 2. Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches

a) A self-governing Methodist church in whose establishment The United Methodist Church or one of its constituent members (The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church or its predecessors) has assisted and which by mutual agreement has entered into a Covenant of Relationship (in effect from 1968 to 1984) or an Act of Covenanting (see ¶ 573) with The United Methodist Church.

b) Each affiliated autonomous Methodist church shall be entitled to ~~two delegates, one clergy and one layperson,~~ an equal number of lay and clergy delegates to the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in accordance with ¶ 2403.1b and in keeping with their concordat agreement with the United Methodist Church. They shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of delegates, including membership on committees, ~~except the right to vote.~~ ~~Such a church having more than 70,000 full members shall be entitled to one additional delegate. At least one of the three delegates shall be a woman.~~ The bishop or president of the affiliated autonomous Methodist churches may be invited by the Council of Bishops to the General Conference.

¶ 571. *Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches, and Affiliated United Churches-1.* Certificates of church membership given by clergy in one church shall be accepted by clergy in the other church.

2. When the requirements of such a Methodist church for its ordained ministry are comparable to those of The United Methodist Church, clergy may be transferred between its properly constituted ministerial bodies and the annual and provisional annual conferences of The United Methodist Church and their ordination(s) recognized as valid, with the approval and consent of the bishops or other appointive authorities involved in compliance with ¶ 347.

3. A program of visitation may be mutually arranged by the Council of Bishops in cooperation with the equivalent leadership of the autonomous Methodist church, affiliated autonomous Methodist church, and/or affiliated united church.

4. The Council of Bishops, in consultation with the General Board of Global Ministries, shall work out plans of cooperation with these churches residing outside the boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences. The General Board of Global Ministries shall serve as the agent of The United Methodist Church for a continuing dialogue looking to the establishment of mission priorities with special

This widens Section V of “The Conferences” to include the new category of U.S.-based affiliated autonomous conferences.

This removes the prescribed number of delegates allowed for affiliated autonomous bodies and allows representation to be defined by the concordat agreements. The right to vote is also made possible. A provision is eliminated that allows for more representation for larger bodies. No bodies currently qualify for this extra delegate. The gender specification is also eliminated as we do not currently place gender ratios on General Conference delegations and instead simply encourage diversity.

reference to matters of personnel and finance.

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#### Concordat Agreements

##### ¶ 574. Concordat Agreements-

1. With the exception of The Methodist Church of Great Britain and the provisions of ¶576, such concordats may be established by the following procedure:

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#### AFFILIATED AUTONOMOUS CHURCHES WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES

¶576. There may be affiliated autonomous churches formed from United Methodist conferences and congregations within the boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences. These autonomous bodies shall enter this relationship with the United Methodist Church through the Standard Concordat in ¶576.5 The provisions of this paragraph shall take precedence over, and shall not be limited by, any other provisions of the *Discipline* that are not in the Constitution.

##### 1. Existing annual conferences becoming affiliated autonomous bodies.

- a. An annual conference in the United States may become an affiliated autonomous body when that conference votes by simple majority to seek this status under the terms of the standard concordat agreement in ¶576.9. The annual conference shall notify the president of its college of bishops of its decision at least 30 days before a regular or specially called session of its jurisdictional conference. The jurisdictional conference shall reallocate the territory of the former annual conference among the remaining annual conferences. The existence of the autonomous affiliated body shall be effective upon the adjournment of the jurisdictional conference.
- b. All assets and liabilities pertaining to that annual conference, including past and present pension liabilities, shall remain the property of that annual conference or its legal successor in the affiliated autonomous body.
- c. The newly autonomous body shall continue under the supervision of the college of bishops of the jurisdiction for at least twelve months following the session of the jurisdictional conference and until supervisory leadership is in place under its constitution.
- d. During the twelve-month transition period and following, any congregation of the newly autonomous body shall have the right to remain in the existing jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church by a two-thirds vote of its charge conference or a simple majority vote of a church conference. Supervision of the congregation shall transfer to the cabinet of the annual conference assigned to cover their location by the jurisdictional conference upon written acknowledgement to the autonomous body by the receiving cabinet.

The standard concordat later described is established under a different process than described in this paragraph. This language is necessary for the logical cohesion of the *BOD* Section.

This new ¶576 contains the nuts and bolts of the Affiliated Autonomous Status that will help the UMC navigate our divisions while staying together at the same table.

The provisions in this paragraph take precedence when they conflict with other processes described in the *BOD*. Examples would be transfer procedures for clergy and congregations.

This is the process to be followed for existing annual conferences taking on the new affiliated autonomous status.

Unlike previous versions, no annual conferences will be required to divide their assets.

This 12-month interim process is intended to help guarantee the right of congregations of newly autonomous conferences to rejoin their jurisdiction should they elect to do so.

2. Forming new affiliated autonomous bodies in the United States.

Any seventy or more clergy in full connection and seventy or more United Methodist congregations with an aggregate membership of at least 15,000 may form an affiliated autonomous body by the following procedure:

- a. Those organizing the affiliated autonomous body shall develop a vision and mission statement describing the nature and work of the body in light of the standard concordat agreement in ¶576.9.
- b. The organizers shall select a United Methodist college of bishops to supervise the body until such time as supervisory leadership is in place under its own constitution. If no selection is made, the college of bishops supervising the territory where most of the congregations are located shall be the default. Notice shall be given to the president of the college of bishops and the college shall include the body in its plan of oversight. The bishop placed in charge shall have the right to assemble a transitional cabinet should the bishop deem that necessary.
- c. An organizing assembly shall be held at which time the constitution, Discipline, and provisional leadership for the newly organized body is approved. It shall be the body's own responsibility to develop its Discipline and establish itself as a legal entity. Existence of an affiliated autonomous body shall become effective at the adjournment of the organizing assembly.
- d. Local churches seeking to form the affiliated autonomous body shall vote to do so by a two-thirds vote of the charge conference or a simple majority vote of a church conference. Such vote shall be taken both to approve a change of affiliation and to approve the terms of the standard concordat (¶ 576.9). The bishop and district superintendent shall facilitate the change of affiliation and shall preside over a charge or church conference in a timely manner when requested by the congregation's pastor or church council.
- e. Upon decision to form an affiliated autonomous body, the provisions of the trust clause shall be released to the new body, and its provisions administered according to the governing documents of the new body.
- f. Local churches forming the new body shall continue to pay their apportionments in full to the conference they are exiting for a period of six months following the effective date of the new body and 50% of its apportionments to the exited conference for an additional six months.

3. Local churches seeking to join any existing affiliated autonomous body formed under ¶576.1 or 576.2 shall be granted a change of affiliation upon a two-thirds vote of the charge conference or a simple majority vote of a church conference. Such vote shall be taken both to approve a change of affiliation and to approve the terms of the standard concordat (¶ 576.9). The bishop and district superintendent shall facilitate the change of affiliation and shall preside over a charge or church conference in a timely manner when requested by the congregation's pastor or church council.

Groups of congregations and clergy may form their own affiliated autonomous bodies. This provision will be helpful to Progressives living in areas governed by traditionalist majorities. It may also be used by traditionalists and others who desire more organizational autonomy.

The trust clause stays in place but is transferred to the new affiliated autonomous bodies.

Such a request to join an existing affiliated autonomous body shall also require the approval of the receiving body by whatever means are provided in its governing documents. Upon decision to form an affiliated autonomous body, the provisions of the trust clause shall be released to the new body, and its provisions administered according to the governing documents of the new body.

4. Transfer of the affiliation of a local church under ¶ 576.2d-e shall be effective upon written acknowledgement to the cabinet of the annual conference from the supervisory leadership of the receiving body that the transfer to them is accepted. The congregation shall continue to pay apportionments in full to the conference they are exiting for a period of six months following the date of that acknowledgement and 50% of apportionments to the exited conference for an additional six months.

5. Identifying annual conferences for the affiliated autonomous status.

a. Before January 31, 2020, each annual conference in the U.S. shall vote approving one of the following two statements:

i. “United Methodist positions on ministry found in ¶304 ‘Qualifications for Ordination’, ¶341 ‘Unauthorized Conduct’, and ¶2702 ‘Chargeable Offenses’) of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (2016)* will be maintained, supported, and upheld in their entirety in our annual conference and its subsidiary units.”

ii. “Our annual conference will not maintain, support, and uphold the entire ministry standards of The United Methodist Church found in ¶ 304 ‘Qualifications for Ordination’, ¶341 ‘Unauthorized Conduct’, and ¶2702 ‘Chargeable Offenses’ of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (2016)*.”

b. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall canvass the votes of each annual conference. Those returning a majority vote for the second option, failing to respond, or responding without clearly expressing their vote shall be placed on a list of conferences ideally suited for the affiliated autonomous status. This list shall be made available to the colleges of bishops in the United States.

c. Beginning January 1, 2021, the General Council on Finance and Administration shall neither receive fund from nor send funds to the conferences listed under ¶576.3.b except by the terms of the standard concordat agreement in ¶576.9. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall also prohibit the use of the United Methodist name and insignia by these conferences except under the terms of the standard concordat.

d. Annual conferences who are not placed on the list in ¶576.3b may nonetheless vote to enter the affiliated autonomous status under the provisions of ¶576.1.

e. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall

Transfers must be approved by the receiving body.

This is a key accountability piece that is designed to return integrity to United Methodist ministry rules. Those conferences with moral objection to the positions of the UMC are encouraged to take the new status offered.

offer and facilitate a timeline allowing newly affiliated autonomous bodies to continue uninterrupted financial participation in the connectional ministries of The United Methodist Church and may grant a one-time twelve month delay to the restrictions in ¶1576.3c upon request by an annual conference entering the affiliated autonomous status.

6. Other disciplinary provisions notwithstanding, a clergy member may transfer to any affiliated autonomous body formed under this paragraph upon the clergy member's request and upon acceptance by the affiliated autonomous body. Release by the United Methodist bishop shall not be required for these transfers.
7. When one or more annual conferences votes to become an autonomous affiliated body after the adjournment of the jurisdictional conference, the jurisdictional college of bishops shall call a special jurisdictional conference within 180 days of being notified of the annual conference's action. The jurisdictional conference shall adjust its annual conference boundaries at the special conference as necessary to provide coverage for the geographic territory of the withdrawing annual conference(s).
8. The Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy shall monitor the changing landscape of U.S. annual conferences and bring recommendation to General Conference related to reorganization of the jurisdictional conferences that may be warranted based on the effects of this paragraph.
9. THE STANDARD CONCORDAT BETWEEN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AND AFFILIATED AUTONOMOUS BODIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

The United Methodist Church approves this standard concordat agreement that defines its relationship to entities in the United States that assume affiliated autonomous status under ¶1576 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. This concordat become effective upon its approval by the chief legislative body organizing under the terms of ¶1576 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*:

1. Though we may not think alike, we choose to love alike. This concordat defines the continuing connectional relationship of otherwise autonomous bodies branching forth from United Methodism in The United States.
2. Affiliated autonomous bodies may use "United Methodist Affiliated Congregation/Conference" as a secondary moniker to the name they select for themselves. The General Council on Finance and Administration will develop an insignia for use by United Methodist affiliated autonomous bodies. This insignia may be used at the discretion of the autonomous body.
3. The affiliated autonomous body adopting this standard concordat is entitled to representation at The United Methodist General Conference by the same formula approved for standard United Methodist annual conferences. The minimum size for representation to the United Methodist General Conference and general agencies shall be seventy clergy in full connection and seventy congregations consisting of at least 15,000

This guarantees clergy the right to transfer unencumbered to an affiliated autonomous body.

This is the section that defines the terms of the relationship between affiliated autonomous bodies and The United Methodist Church.

There will be a special insignia and designation for affiliated autonomous bodies that reflects their connection with the UMC.

Full representation is granted affiliated autonomous bodies at General Conference. This plan does not radically alter the current makeup of General Conference.

- aggregate members.
4. Each affiliated autonomous body is entitled to one liaison representative with voice and vote to each of the general agencies of The United Methodist Church and shall pay a fair share apportionment in support of the work of that agency. The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church shall calculate a custom apportionment that reflect the fact that the autonomous body funds its own supervisory leadership.
  5. Affiliated autonomous bodies shall set its own geographic borders which may overlap those of continuing United Methodist conferences and other affiliated autonomous bodies organized under ¶576 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.
  6. The affiliated autonomous body agrees to report its membership statistics to the General Council on Finance and Administration as requested.
  7. Affiliated autonomous bodies may organize themselves together with other autonomous bodies under a common Discipline.
  8. Affiliated autonomous bodies are eligible to receive United Methodist congregations by transfer as described in ¶576. Congregations leaving United Methodist annual conferences shall not be entitled to a share of the assets or liabilities of the annual conference they are exiting.
  9. Affiliated autonomous bodies agree to release any congregation wishing to join a United Methodist conference to the jurisdictional conference in which they are located. Local churches seeking to take such action shall vote to do so by a two-thirds majority vote of a church conference. Such a request to join a United Methodist conference shall also require the approval of that conference by their cabinet. Congregations leaving an affiliated autonomous body shall not be entitled to a share of the assets or liabilities of the body they are exiting.
  10. Affiliated autonomous bodies agree to release congregations to other affiliate autonomous bodies organized under ¶576 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* upon a two-thirds vote of the charge conference (or equivalent structure) or a simple majority vote of a church conference requesting such a change, and upon approval of the receiving body.
  11. The affiliated autonomous body shall fund their own bishop (s).
  12. United Methodist bishops may transfer to an affiliated autonomous body upon request. It is recommended that the compensation of transferring bishops remain consistent with the salary and benefits provided to bishops of The United Methodist Church. Retired bishops and clergy may transfer to an affiliated autonomous body without affecting their pensions from The United Methodist Church.
  13. The affiliated autonomous body may send its bishop(s) to The United Methodist Council of Bishops at its own expense. While not part of the United Methodist

Affiliated autonomous bodies has representation to all UM general agencies and pay a fair share toward their support.

The geographic flexibility of affiliated autonomous bodies is what will help bring a peace to sharply divided annual conferences. There can be a Progressive body that stretches across the Southeastern United States, for instance.

Bishops can re-affiliate with the affiliated autonomous bodies.

episcopacy, these bishops will have voice in the council and may participate in the United Methodist episcopal pension plan at the expense of the affiliated autonomous body.

14. Institutions related to the United Methodist Church may also choose to develop missional ties with affiliated autonomous bodies so long as governing control remains vested with the United Methodist Church. If such an institution vests its governing control with an autonomous body or bodies, the relationship with The United Methodist Church shall be renegotiated in a spirit of common mission.

15. This standard concordat expires eight years after its adoption by an affiliated autonomous body and may be renewed or customized at any point upon vote of the main legislative bodies of both parties.

This provision deals with UM related institutions.

This eight-year period gives our general church a season to adjust to the new reality. Individual concordat agreements can be negotiated at any time during the eight years.

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## Questions and Answers

### ***Is there any precedent for this plan?***

Yes. The Puerto Rico Annual Conference left the United Methodist Church to become autonomous in the 1992. But they are still remarkably connected. The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (*Iglesia Metodista Autonomo Afiliada de Puerto Rico*) has its own General Conference every six years and holds “annual” conference every two years. They remain connected to the United Methodist Church through concordat. They send delegates to the United Methodist General Conference and send their bishop to our Council of Bishops at their own expense. They are granted one liaison representative to each of the program agencies of the UMC with voice and vote (see ¶705.4). They are part of the United Methodist pension program. This synthesis plan is inspired by the unique relationship between *Iglesia Metodista Autonomo Afiliada de Puerto Rico* and the UMC.

### ***How does this not require constitutional amendments?***

Affiliate autonomous conferences would no longer be under the UMC constitution. We already allow UMC conferences outside the United States to become autonomous. All that is required is a simple disciplinary change that would allow this inside the United States.

### ***How can we maintain a united episcopacy when we are so divided?***

The Council of Bishops is a forum for conversation. It already contains bishops from autonomous bodies. This plan divides the funding for bishops to avoid violations of conscience. Although bishops of autonomous bodies may attend the Council of Bishops, they do not have a vote and are not part of the United Methodist episcopacy.

### ***Why would affiliated autonomous conferences be given proportional representation at General Conference?***

This solution represents a minimalist approach providing an immediate release valve on tensions so that the entire church does not blow up. Any plan that would lurch our ministry rules to the left or to the right should be avoided. The ministry rules of the UMC should reflect the needs of the majority of the people at the table. This plan allows dissent for the minority while keeping us in continued conversation.

We currently allow delegates from autonomous bodies to participate in General Conference. This is true of the ten delegates of the autonomous concordat churches who have seats at General Conference. There are also matters that our Central Conference delegates vote on at General Conference that can be changed under their individual Central Conference disciplines.

Of course, the concordat could specify that those delegates representing AA conferences refrain from voting on matters not affecting them. But this is not recommended. "Status quo" is a time-honored standard in difficult negotiations. The Way Forward solution need not be a power grab for either side. Progressives are free to demonstrate how well the local option approach works in their AA conferences and use that data to influence General Conference in the future. Keeping everyone at the table gives us options for the future. The AA status may actually become the preferred status for all U.S. conferences. Jurisdictionalism has not served the American UMC particularly well.

Our constitution gives General Conference the right to designate the representation for affiliated churches. It is currently set at two delegates per affiliate body, but this is not mandated constitutionally.

### ***What would be the timeline for implementation?***

- 2019: Plan is approved by General Conference in St. Louis.
- 2020: Those conferences seeking immediate relief would vote and communicate their desire to take the new status at Jurisdictional Conference 2020. Jurisdictional conferences would remap their annual conferences accordingly.
- New AA conferences may form at any time by the method prescribed. GCFA would communicate deadlines for being assigned representation in general church agencies and General Conference.
- 2024: General Conference would take a new look at the shape of our jurisdictions and recommend updates by the methods prescribed in our constitution.

### ***Doesn't this plan just continue the fighting?***

Any plan that continues the UMC will continue the fighting. Methodists have always come together and disagreed at General Conference. This will be true until Christ returns. This synthesis model begins to draw the venom from our wounds, releases some of the pressure, and keeps us in conversation with one another. Our connectionalism would gradually and organically evolve. This solution does not attempt to solve all our problems, but it hopefully puts us in a better place to work on them together.

### ***What would be the long-term effects of this legislation?***

There are around a dozen American annual conferences that have indicated that they will not uphold United Methodist standards related to ministry and sexuality. These conferences would be encouraged to move into the affiliated autonomous status where they can set their own rules and elect their own bishops.

Other conferences might take the affiliated autonomous status for other reasons. For instance, an annual conference that does not feel it has been well-served in its current jurisdiction might take the new status as a way of selecting its own bishop.

Congregations and clergy that find themselves in the minority may elect to start their own affiliated autonomous body. Progressives United Methodists in the Southeast, for instance, might create a new affiliated autonomous body that stretches across their jurisdiction.

There are a number of United Methodist congregations looking for greater organizational autonomy. They want to experiment with new ways to deploy clergy and be in ministry together. These congregations would be free to band together and create their own conference, an autonomous body affiliated with The United Methodist Church.

When conferences choose to become autonomous, they will exit their jurisdiction. This may lead to the need to restructure or reinvent our system of jurisdictional conference in 2024.

This legislation was drafted by Chris Ritter with the help and input of friends from different points on the ideological spectrum within United Methodism. It is offered in support of the important work of The Commission on a Way Forward assembled by The United Methodist Council of Bishops.

Inquires may be made to  
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