

## Amendment #1: Worldwide Regionalization

- **Why is this constitutional amendment necessary?** The short answer is to help us make disciples of Jesus Christ in our various contexts. Regionalization is about finding a better way for the church to serve its diverse membership while maintaining unity.

Regionalization will place every region of the church on equal footing. As Bishop Christian Alsted (Nordic-Baltic Episcopal Area) has noted, the United Methodist Church has been operating as a United States church with satellites around the world. Under regionalization, all regional conferences will be equal participants at the table.

The UMC is spread across different continents and cultures. What works in one region might not work in another. The idea behind regionalization is to create structures that allow for greater flexibility, so each region — like the U.S., Africa, or Europe — can govern and operate in ways that are more culturally relevant while still maintaining a shared core of Christian belief and mission. Regionalization allows each area of the church to focus on the issues and challenges it faces locally, without having to apply a one-size-fits-all approach.

Other areas of the UMC (currently called central conferences) already have the authority to adapt portions of The Book of Discipline for their context. Regionalization would allow United Methodists in the U.S., for the first time, authority to adapt portions of The Book of Discipline in the same ways that every other central conference has been able to do.

- **Are the changes based on society or scripture?** The psalmists and the prophets paint a vision of the day when all nations shall come to know God, and the New Testament shares this vision (Acts 2, 10-11; Revelation 7:9-10). The doctrine of the Incarnation (John 1:14) reminds us that God meets people where they are in order to draw them (us) into communion. The intent of this legislation is to allow us to meet people in their particular contexts so that we can live out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).
- **What are the arguments against regionalization?** What are the disadvantages? Opponents are concerned about increased division within the church, resulting from different policies and practices in various parts of the world.
- **What are the other central conferences already doing that the U.S. is not, and why?** The Germany Central Conference, Cameroon in the West Africa Central Conference, and the Laos Mission Initiative, among others, have developed their own hymnals. In addition, the Germany Central Conference, Tanzania in the Congo Central Conference, Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the Africa Central Conference, and Côte d'Ivoire in the West Africa Central Conference have all developed their own books of worship or core worship resources. Variations in resources and needs determine what is possible or practical in a given area.

Specific examples of central conferences both not adopting and adapting actions of General Conference are identified in this article: [Regionalization Part 1](#). If you would like to take an even deeper dive and look at a central conference supplement to The Book of Discipline, click here: [Supplement: Northern Europe and Eurasia](#)

- **How many times has this been asked of the General Conference?** What is the history of this amendment? This is the first request for ratification of an amendment addressing regionalization at the annual conference level. It is the result of several years of prayerful study and discernment.

The 2008 General Conference authorized the formation of a committee to examine the denomination's changing demographics. This international committee of twenty members met six times between 2009 and 2011 and traveled around the globe for listening sessions with United Methodists in the Philippines, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Europe, as well as the United States. The 2012 General Conference adopted some of the recommendations made by the study committee and referred other legislation to the Connectional Table for further consideration.

After the 2016 General Conference, a working group from the Philippines fleshed out a plan for regionalization in a proposal called the Christmas Covenant. The Standing Committee on Central Conferences, which has representation from every central conference, refined the Christmas Covenant into the legislation that passed at the 2020/24 General Conference.

- **How soon and by what process will the regional conference be organized; how many regions?** If ratified, an interim committee will be formed to handle the practical aspects of setting up the regional conferences. Ratification must occur before next steps can be taken.

Nine regional conferences would then make up the denomination:

- Africa: East Africa, Mid Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa
  - Europe: Central and Southern Europe, Germany, and Nordic-Baltic-Ukraine
  - Asia: Philippines
  - North America: United States
- **What will happen with jurisdictional conferences?** They will continue to have the powers and duties provided by The Book of Discipline, including election and assignment of bishops. A committee will be formed to study the future of jurisdictions.
  - **Will this shorten General Conference?** Perhaps. What will definitely happen is that matters that affect only the United States (like U.S. pensions) will no longer take any time on the floor or in the legislative sessions of the General Conference. Everything that is discussed at General Conference will matter to everyone in the room. This will give more time for more voices from more places, helping us live into our world-wide nature more equitably.
  - **Which portions of The Book of Discipline could be amended? Which portions could not?** A good explanation of the current and potential sections of the Book of Discipline can be found here: [The Book of Discipline Paragraph 101](#)
  - **How can we remain united across the world and regionalized?** We will be united by a common confession of faith, sacramental life, and our mission to make disciples that is rooted in the Gospel. Even when local contexts differ, our shared core will help us remain one in Christ. We will remain connected by cultivating a dynamic relationship between unity and diversity—where regional expression strengthens, rather than fragments, the Church's universal communion.

- **Would central conferences change the ruling on gay marriages & pastors serving in their context?** Central conferences will no longer exist. Regional conferences would have limited power to shape practices for their context while complying with both The Book of Discipline as amended and local civil law.
- **What do people in central conferences think about this step; does it help decentralize the U.S.?** The intent of the regionalization legislation is to put an end to imposing cultural views of one region of the world onto another.

While we do not presume to speak for all of the central conferences, we do note that this legislation originated outside of the United States (Philippines) and was refined by the Standing Committee on Central Conferences, which has representation from every central conference, before being adopted by General Conference. Rev. Emmanuel Sinzohagera, a General Conference delegate from Burundi stated, “It’s [regionalization is] really the beginning of the entire process. There are many issues to deal with. We need to start somewhere and that’s what I think the General Conference of 2024 has done, that maybe in the future we keep on reflecting on how we do our ministry in a better way.”

- **What happens if it is not passed?** If the amendment does not receive the required number of votes, then the constitution will continue to exist in its current form.

If regionalization does not pass, then the backup plan to de-centralize the U.S. passed by General Conference is for the United States Regional Committee to review U.S.-specific legislation 2-3 days in advance of General Conference (similar to the way the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters reviews legislation pertaining to central conferences), to reduce the burden on regular legislative groups and floor debate time. Learn more here: [Ask the UMC: Is Part 1 Decentering the U.S.?](#)

- **If regionalization doesn’t pass, will the U.S. lose its voice as it becomes a minority?** This is yet to be determined; we can only speculate. Projected membership numbers we have seen would indicate less than half of UMs would be from the U.S., but no other central conference in Asia, Europe, Africa, or the Philippines would have more than half of UMs, either.

If regionalization does not pass, then the United States will not be able to change anything in the Book of Discipline without getting the approval of General Conference which has delegates from four continents. In 2024, just over 44%, nearly half, of the total number of delegates elected were from outside the United States.