

Constitutional Amendments Overview

One of the important pieces of our work at annual conference this year will be voting on proposed amendments to the United Methodist Church's Constitution. These amendments, if ratified, will shape the future of our connectional church.

Let's begin by examining the four constitutional amendments that will be presented for your consideration. These amendments were passed by the General Conference and address various aspects of our church's structure and language."

- **Ballot 1: Regionalization** (various paragraphs of the Constitution)
 - Ballot 1 covers all the needed amendments for the creation of regional conferences throughout our connection. It would place the UMC in the United States on equal footing with other regions, establishing a U.S. regional conference. Regionalization would then provide greater autonomy and flexibility to United Methodist regions in the United States, Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, allowing them to adapt to their unique contexts and needs while still maintaining core beliefs and structures applicable to the global church. Regionalization will primarily affect our global connection, not our local context. However, it underscores our commitment to supporting and empowering our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. It will shift the way we relate to the global church.
- **Ballot 2: Protecting Membership for All** (§ 4 of the Constitution)
 - This amendment seeks to add “gender” and “ability” to the UMC Constitution’s membership protections. This would mean that a person cannot be denied membership in the UMC because they have a disability or because they are male or female. The removal of restrictive language could foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment within our congregations, reflecting our commitment to the Social Principles. This could lead to a broader range of people being involved in our churches.
- **Ballot 3: Racial Justice** (§ 5 of the Constitution)
 - This amendment strengthens our commitment to racial justice by explicitly recognizing the church’s role in combating racism, racial inequality, colonialism, white privilege, and white supremacy. The commitment reflected in the changes in Article V represents a significant step forward for the United Methodist Church in its pursuit of racial justice and calls us in our local annual conference to be agents of God’s transforming love. The proposed changes hold significant historical importance as they explicitly acknowledge systemic racism and commit us to actively combat it. These changes challenge the Church to claim its

prophetic witness as a redemptive and transformative force in both our community and in the wider society, dedicated to the principles of equity, dignity, and respect for all individuals.

- **Ballot 4: Educational Requirements for Clergy Members Voting for General Conference Delegates (§ 35 of the Constitution)**
 - This amendment aims to outline the educational requirements for clergy members of annual conference who are eligible to vote for clergy delegates to General Conference, ensuring those voting for clergy delegates have met the denominational standards for theological education. Passage would bring greater clarity and consistency to the voting process for clergy delegates while allowing for necessary contextualization within central and regional conferences. Passage would not dramatically affect our work in the TWK Conference, but bring further clarity to the requirements needed to vote to elect clergy delegates to General Conference.

It's important to understand how these amendments will be voted on. First, because these amendments come from General Conference, they cannot be amended by us. We can, however, discuss and debate them before voting.

We will then vote on each amendment, one at a time. But unlike other annual conference items up for a vote, constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority of every individual vote cast across the globe. Each individual vote counts toward the overall outcome of the aggregate vote count. This means that constitutional amendments are counted globally, not within annual conferences. Each delegate's ballot will be counted by the Council of Bishops, and once every delegate has voted, if the vote totals provide a two-thirds majority in favor of the amendment, it will be passed. Therefore, every individual vote counts.

As we prepare to vote on these important amendments, let us engage in prayerful discernment, seek wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, and consider how these changes will impact our church's mission and ministry. Remember that our collective decision will shape the future of the United Methodist Church. For further information and resources, please visit resourceumc.org. We encourage you to engage in thoughtful discussion and prayer as we move forward together. May God bless our deliberations and guide us in making faithful decisions.