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ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017

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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF GREATER NEW JERSEY
LEGISLATION FAQ'S



PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS APPROVED AT THE 2016 GENERAL CONFERENCE

What is a Constitutional Amendment in the United Methodist Church?

A: A Constitutional Amendment is any piece of legislation that proposes a change to Part I of our Book of Discipline (Paragraphs 1-59), otherwise known as the Constitution.

How is a Constitutional Amendment adopted?

A: Constitutional Amendments must first garner a 2/3 majority vote of the General Conference. If it passes that hurdle, it then goes to every annual conference in the world for ratification. If at least 2/3 of all of the voting members of all of the annual conferences in United Methodism approve it, the amendment is adopted. (Changes to our first and second Restrictive Rules (Pars. 17 & 18) require an even higher threshold of 3/4.) For instance, there are currently 131 annual conferences in United Methodism. Even if an amendment is approved by 88 annual conferences (2/3 of the 131 conferences), it might not be adopted because the aggregate number of individual votes do not amount to 2/3. For argument's sake, say that each annual conference had 1,000 voting members, all of whom cast a vote. A Constitutional Amendment would then need to get 2/3 of the aggregate votes of all 131,000 voting members across the connection (i.e. 87,333 votes from around the world). Not until all annual conferences have met, voted, and reported their results will the Council of Bishops tally and certify those results and announce whether each proposed Amendment passed or failed.

How will we vote on the proposed amendments during the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference session?

A: The text of each proposed Constitutional Amendment and a rationale have been provided for you on pages 45-48 of your Pre-Conference Journal. There will be a brief presentation of each amendment and then you will fill out a written ballot where you can vote on each of the five proposed amendments individually.

Are we allowed to propose changes to the Amendments?

A: No. Voters across the connection must vote on exactly the same language approved by the General Conference in order for the results to be valid.

AMENDMENT I

The amendment states that "The United Methodist Church will work collaboratively with others..." Will a list of approved partners for collaboration be developed?

A: No. There is no way to make such a worldwide comprehensive list.

Are there any groups with whom the UMC should not collaborate?

A: The Book of Discipline Par. 2533.3 points out the need for the UMC not to connect with groups whose purpose is opposed to our social principles.

Why is this Amendment needed?

A: At present, Par. 5 declares UMC's support racial justice, but the Constitution currently makes no statement regarding gender justice.

AMENDMENT II

Do clergy still have the final say as to who can become a member of the church?

A: Yes. See Judicial Council Decisions 1032, 1041 and 1044.

Does this addition address the homosexuality issue?

A: No.

How does this affect UMW and UMM?

A: It does not because UMW and WMM are cared for in the last sentence.

Why is this Amendment needed?

A: Similar to the first Amendment, this one focuses on gender equality.

If “age” is added to Constitutional Amendment 2, doesn’t that eliminate the mandatory retirement age for clergy, bishops and agency staff since the Constitution takes precedence over other sections of the Book of Discipline?

A: No, the mandatory retirement age, along with other paragraphs which set diversity standards, are not eliminated by this amendment. Certainly, there could be a challenge sent to the Judicial Council on this issue, but, historically, the Judicial Council has looked to the legislative history/intent of the legislation, and in this case, we believe they would find that the elimination of the mandatory retirement age, along with other paragraphs of required diversity, are not intended to be eliminated.”

AMENDMENT III

Can an Annual Conference continue to use their current pre-Conference nomination processes?

A: Yes.

Can an Annual Conference develop its own process for the nomination of delegates from the floor of Annual Conference?

A: Yes.

Why is this Amendment needed?

A: The existing language states that there must be a “fair and open process”, but does not really define what that means. This would preclude bishops from appointing delegates without an election, which has been the practice in some annual conferences outside of the United States.

AMENDMENT IV

Does this affect GNJAC?

A: No.

Why is this Amendment needed?

A: Some Episcopal Elections in Central Conferences were being held at special sessions instead of the regularly scheduled session.

AMENDMENT V

The amendment states that General Conference can adopt provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its members accountable. Have provisions been adopted which would go into effect when/if this Amendment is certified as being passed?

A: Yes. Following the adoption of this Amendment, the General Conference approved a petition which changed Par. 413.3 to authorize the Council of Bishops to take up a Complaint against a Bishop from the College of Bishops with a 2/3 vote by the Council. This can be done even after a Just Resolution has been reached.

Why is this amendment needed?

A: As the Constitution now exists, the Council of Bishops have no authority to hold its own members accountable. Jud. Council Decision 1275 specifically stated: "There is no provision for anyone other than the Committee on Investigation [Par. 2706.5(c)(1)] to dismiss a judicial complaint against a bishop. The power to refer a matter as an Administrative Complaint or a Judicial Complaint is granted to the president or secretary of the College of Bishops as the ones with whom the complaint is originally filed (Par. 413.2). Paragraph 413.3(d) permits the president or secretary of the College of Bishops to refer or not to refer the matter as Administrative Complaint or a Judicial Complaint. If the matter is not referred, it is effectively dismissed."

STUDENT MINISTRY PLAN

Why do we need a Student Ministry Plan?

A: In January 2017, the GNJ Camping Board and GNJ contracted with Ministry Architect to guide GNJ in a visioning and planning process to identify a strategic direction for ministry with students and the role and purpose of camping ministry and all other GNJ student ministries. Fruitful and sustainable ministry with young people calls for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that leverages the resources available. The Student Ministry plan is based on GNJ's commitment to equip our congregations and leaders to raise up a new generation of enthusiastic disciples of Jesus Christ.

Can this be done by the agencies? (not equipped to raise money and supervise staff)

A: No. Agencies are not equipped to raise funds, develop and monitor long term program, and supervise staff.

Who was involved in drafting the Student Ministry Plan?

A: The Next Generation Ministry Plan emerged out of extensive work done by Ministry Architects and key conference staff that included:

- a conference-wide survey to begin assessing needs and opportunities
- a full assessment of GNJ students, campus and camping ministries
- listening session with over 200 clergy, laity and youth from GNJ
- an initial report presented to the GNJ Camping Board and other GNJ leaders for directional feedback
- three separate visioning sessions on Students, Campus and Camping ministries with over 50 in attendance
- Two feedback sessions on the executive summary with elected conference leadership and staff

What is the rationale to modify the purpose of the GNJ Camping Ministries Board to Next Generation Ministry?

A: The Next Generation Ministry Board, as a Vital Mission Partner, will provide leadership to develop, fundraise and coordinate a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable 21st century student ministries throughout Greater New Jersey that will develop new generations of enthusiastic disciples that will connect, engage and lead in their congregations and community. The proposed structure also provides added opportunities for securing new funding sources beyond Shared Ministry so that we can better steward resources.

Will the Next Generation Ministry plan include resources an initiative aimed at young adults not attending college?

A: Not yet. Initially the focus will be on students (youth grades 6-12), college campus ministry and camps ministry. As these are operating successfully we will expand to young adults not in college.

How will the Next Generation Ministry Plan be funded?

A: GNJ will review one-year grant requests from the GNJ Next Generation Ministries to support the development of youth, campus and camping ministries which will decrease over time as other funding opportunities outside of Shared Giving are identified. The plan also calls for the sale of the “Tannery Falls” property in Aldersgate to raise the seed monies to reinvigorate GNJ camping ministries.

What is the Tannery Falls property?

A: The Tannery Falls property is a 125-acres piece of land adjacent to Aldersgate, donated to the GNJ Camping Ministry Board in 2005. This location has never been used to support any of the programs at Aldersgate.

How will selling the Tannery Falls property at Aldersgate impact GNJ camping ministries?

A: The Tannery Falls property has never been used to support any of the programs at Aldersgate. The proceeds from the sale of this property will provide the seed monies to reinvigorate GNJ camping ministries.

Does the legislation proposes the sale of GNJ camps – Aldersgate and/or Pineland Center?

A: No. As outlined in the plan, the Next Generation Ministry board will provide leadership and coordination to reinvigorate GNJ camping ministries so that both GNJ camps are mission-focused, debt free and generate revenue beyond expenses. After three years, the Next Generation Ministry board will evaluate the progress made and discern next steps. Any recommendation to sell property must go through the Disciplinary requirement of approval by Annual Conference or between Annual Conference sessions, the GNJ Board of Trustees, the cabinet and the bishop. The commitment is to develop a successful camping experience.

Are we contemplating eliminating the 501c3 separate organization and folding the properties into the Annual Conference?

A: No. The Students Ministry plan, as proposed, reframes and expands the scope of work of the GNJ Camps and Retreat Ministries Board into Next Generation Ministry to lead, develop, fundraise and coordinate GNJ students, campus, camping and retreats ministries. The board will remain a separate nonprofit 501c3 corporation.

Is it possible for a camp site to be viable if it is summer-only?

A: If passed by the annual conference session, the Next Generation Ministry Board will continue to work with our consultant, Ministry Architects, to develop a comprehensive business plan that includes year-round programs for people of all ages. Currently, Pinelands Center is available year-round, and we have seen a significant increase in the past two years of groups using the facilities for retreats and other events outside the summer months.

Will trying to retain two sites ultimately mean that both will fail because of a divided focus?

A: No. If passed by the annual conference session, the Next Generation Ministry Board will set a plan to reinvigorate GNJ camping and retreats ministry at both of our current sites implementing innovative camping and retreat experiences. After three years, a comprehensive evaluation will be done to assess progress and determine next steps.

PROPOSED 10 YEAR INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE PLAN

What led to the commitment on intercultural competence?

A: GNJ's commitment to Intercultural competency is rooted in our United Methodist beliefs in the sacred worth of all people and Jesus' call to make disciples of all nations. Reclaiming these beliefs proactively responds to the increasingly racially divided context in which we live and prepares spiritual leaders to lead congregations and communities as they "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

Will all GNJ conference staff and elected leadership undergo intercultural competency training?

A: Yes. Intercultural competency will require a deep and systemic change within GNJ. To facilitate this change and create long-term sustainability, all staff will participate in intercultural competency training. Resourcing GNJ staff with cultural competency training is critical to living out our mission to equip transformational spiritual leaders for the transformation of the world. We recognize that the success of this mission is directly tied to our ability to communicate, equip and engage laity and clergy of a myriad of cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Will laity and clergy receive intercultural competency training?

A: Yes. GNJ is partnering with the General Commission on Race and Religion of the United Methodist Church to provide intercultural competency training for laity and clergy. This resourcing will not be programmatic but systematic: wherein intercultural competency principles will be integrated across our entire system of resources rather than stand-alone events. This approach of wide-scale integration will facilitate systemic change and deep understanding.

What are the benefits of hosting pulpit exchanges as a strategy to develop intercultural competence in GNJ clergy?

A: Pulpit exchanges are the temporary "swapping" of pulpits between cross-racial clergy leaders. Pulpit exchanges have their roots in the civil-rights movement as Caucasian and African-American pastors shared pulpits to combat "the most segregated hour in America: Sunday at 11:00 a.m." and call on the prophetic witness of the church to seek justice and reconciliation. These exchanges create opportunity for bridge-building between diverse peoples, increased cultural literacy and understanding and newfound missional partnerships and impact.

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey will facilitate these exchanges but also encourages local congregations to begin engaging one another as they follow the direction of the Holy Spirit.

My congregations' leadership would benefit from intercultural competency resourcing now, what are my next steps?

A: While it will take some time for the Resource Team to modify and incorporate intercultural competence elements to the different resources currently being offer by GNJ, you can benefit from a resource provided by the General Commission on Race and Religion – Vital Conversation Series. The Vital Conversations project creates a framework for these important conversations with the help of insightful stories, practical resources, and personal commentaries, sharing what is learned so that United Methodists may engage in the work of transforming the church and the world. The entire series may be found here: <http://www.gcorr.org/vital-conversation-resources/>

NEW STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN

Why are we preparing for another strategic plan when the first is not completed?

A: The present strategic plain is through 2018 and we want to pick up on the good work, learnings, and accomplishments of the present plan. This will require approving a new plan at the 2018 Annual Conference Session.

SHARED MINISTRY APPOINTMENT FORMULA

Why is there a proposed new shared ministry formula?

A: Since the merger in 2002, the percent apportioned for Shared Ministry has risen from 15.7% to 17.2%. Given the current method use to set how much a church will be apportioned for Shared Giving, the percentage could continue to increase with increasing budgets. This even continued when GNJ reduced the budget because there are fewer and smaller congregations resulting in lower combined church budgets. The new formula set the percentage at 16.3% and with a goal of decreasing to 15.6% or just under the percent at the time of merger. This will result in a lower apportioned amount for all churches.

What are some of the benefits of moving to a fixed percentage Shared Ministry formula?

A: The new Shared Ministry formula takes into consideration several present realities affecting our local congregations such as consolidation and reduced budgets which in the past would result in an allocation of the total GNJ Shared Ministry budget among fewer and smaller congregations. The new formula will prevent automatic percentage increases and will require GNJ to set budgets that are within a fixed percentage of the Shared Ministry Base.

Will the new Shared Ministry formula decrease Share Giving to all GNJ congregations?

A: Yes. All GNJ congregations will experience a shared ministry percentage reduction in 2018. The apportioned percent goal is to be reduced from the proposed 16.3% to 15.6% within the next five years. This will result in more monies available to local congregations for mission in the community.

BUDGET

How is the amount we are apportioning churches for shared ministry reduced by \$900,000?

A: The reduction is a combination of reduced spending and developing new sources of income. The reduced spending includes better efficiencies, budgeting closer to actual expenditures and holding even on several budget items. Our congregations are reducing spending and the GNJ budget will need to do the same. We have already seen that these strategies have produced surpluses in the past and our surplus is at an appropriate level and will grow as appropriate under this new budget but will not be excessive.

There are also new sources of income. The first is the increase in the giving rate from 78% to 87% which has increased our income. Over the last four years the income has increased by more than \$500,000 because of the increase to 87%. We anticipate the giving rate to grow to 92% in the next few years.

Another area of new income is through shared services. Our Vital Mission partners are beginning to reimburse GNJ for accounting, administration, office rental, fundraising and communication.

The combination of budget reductions and increased income allows us to reduce the Shared Ministry apportionment by \$900,000.

If shared ministry was reduced by \$900,000, why did some churches receive an increase in 2018?

A: The shared ministry formula base has not changed from the previous formula so any increases reflected in a church's 2018 assessment reflects an increase of expenses from the previous year; a marker of increased missional vitality. Churches who are receiving an increase are growing their ministry.

Will we pay 100% General Church apportionments under the new budget plan?

A: Yes. Full payment of apportionments is budgeted for 2018.

What is the basis for the assumptions built into the budget?

A: The Council on Finance and Administration is putting forth five year projected budgets to serve as targets for GNJ so that Shared Ministry apportionments to congregations are reduced by \$900,000 to leave more money for congregational mission. It is being done through sources of increased income and budget reductions in a way that does not reduce GNJ mission but continues to grow the mission. The budget assumptions are based on:

1. Past income and spending. For instance, the giving rate on Shared Ministry has gone from 78% to 87% since 2011. We anticipate it will continue to increase to 92% over the next couple of years. Other conferences across the country and the Northeast Jurisdiction have giving rates on apportionments as high as 95% and higher.
2. We have begun and will continue to receive more money through shared services.
3. We are using greater efficiencies and spending less to save the conference money. For instance, in each department, there are expenses that are not increasing, and we are decreasing. This is a result of better budgeting and spending. We have also experienced some underspending because people are being good stewards and where this has occurred consistently we are budgeting what the actual history has been. All of this will realize a 5% savings.

It seems the retiree health care costs will decline, how is that happening?

A: Retiree health care benefits are not being reduced, only the contribution from Shared Ministry. This is being projected in future budgets, and each year the Annual Conference will review and approve budgets. CFA put forth five-year projections to serve as targets for GNJ to work toward. Like any target, things change, and so as things change, the five-year budgets will be modified to reflect current realities.

How are we comparing the surplus which has been replenished because some areas historically under-spend be sustained when that under-spending is taken out of the budget?

A: Per Annual Conference legislation in 2015, the GNJ reserve is to be 10% of the Annual Conference approved budget. Because we are making reductions to the budget, the reserve account will be sufficient for the next several years, but if we are not maintaining the 10%, CFA will propose budgets to ensure we maintain 10%. At this point, for several years there will be a surplus because we are reducing the budget.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF CEMETERIES

How will GNJ manage cemeteries connected to closed churches going forward?

A: The proposed legislation calls for the creation of the GNJ Cemetery Association which will have overall responsibility for the cemeteries currently under the care of the Conference and any additional cemeteries acquired by the Conference in the future.

In addition, CFA will conduct a study of all churches with cemeteries to assess the physical and financial condition. Also, the newly formed association will work to incorporate other United Methodist cemeteries to be a part of the Association to assure that we are being good stewards and protect GNJ from inheriting cemeteries with no perpetual care funds.

Why does GNJ need to create a separate legal entity to care for these cemeteries?

A: The proposed legislation calls for the creation of a Cemetery Association. This management model, as a separate incorporated association, is effectively used by other religious organizations. Also, given the significant legal and ethical liability associated with these cemeteries, the formation of a separate association will provide additional protection for the Conference.

How will cemeteries under the association be funded?

A: Presently there are funds within the trustees to fund cemeteries under GNJ care. The new association will create a plan for funding cemeteries that includes existing perpetual care funds, selling cemeteries (GNJ recently sold a cemetery to another cemetery association) and giving cemeteries to historic groups that care for cemeteries (this occurred just recently). The new association will be charged with creating a budget and funding plan that will be included in future reports to the Annual Conference.

STATEMENT OF RELATIONSHIP

Why do we have relationship statements with Vital Mission Partners?

A: Vital mission partners, nonprofit corporations, extend the mission of GNJ. They include the Camping Board, A Future With Hope, United Methodist Communities, The Centenary Fund, and The United Methodist Stewardship Foundation of Greater New Jersey. Because they are in relationship with GNJ and extend the mission of GNJ, having a relationship statement defines the relationship, the work of the Vital Mission Partner, and potentially protects GNJ's liability for the work done by the Vital Mission Partners.



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and grow vital congregations to transform the world

