

RATIONALE STATEMENT FOR AND AGAINST FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church

Amendments III, IV, V, VII, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, and XXXII are all part of the Worldwide Nature of the United Methodist Church proposal. The amendments allow the General Conference to create similar structures for all of our worldwide church. Each Annual Conference would belong to a Regional Conference. In the United States a Regional Conference would be able to organize sub-units called Jurisdictional Conferences. Many of the amendments would change nomenclature for areas outside the United States of America from “central” conferences to “regional” conferences. The rationale coming from General Conference for these amendments is identical for each.

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment allows the General Conference to create similar structures for all of our world-wide church. Each Annual Conference would belong to a Regional Conference which would be able to organize sub-units called Jurisdictional Conferences.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

These amendments are a ‘package’ of proposed constitutional changes which are premature and flawed. The regional conferences are not defined and the power to define and set the boundaries of regional conferences shall be determined by a simple majority vote of the General Conference. (That opens a door to the possibility of more than one regional conference in the U.S.) There are no provisions to limit the establishment of additional bureaucracy in the regions.

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church requires a two-thirds majority for passage of amendments to ensure that fundamental revisions of our doctrine, polity and missional structure are not made without clear understanding of the new directions being proposed. Passage of these amendments eliminates this protective standard and allows future General Conferences to enact comprehensive changes by a simple majority.

[You will also note that IV and X are in direct conflict with each other. Amendment IV says ‘there **shall** be regional conferences’ and Amendment X says ‘there **may** be...’]

Amendment I – Inclusiveness of the Church

Proposed constitutional amendment I emphasizes the wideness of God’s mercy and the availability of the ministry of the Church to all. Amendment I revises language in Division One, ¶ 4, Article IV specifying that The United Methodist Church is in ministry to all. Additionally,

more detailed language about “race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition” is replaced with all persons.

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment emphasizes the wideness of God’s mercy and the availability of the ministry of the church to all.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

The proposed amendment leaves the decision about readiness for membership solely with the person seeking membership in the church. This is inconsistent with the practice and tradition in Methodism in which the pastor had a role to play in determining readiness for membership.

Amendment II – Ethics and Conflict of Interest

RATIONALE FOR:

“This proposed amendment requires the adoption of ethics and conflict of interest policies to ensure accountability and fiduciary integrity.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

The mandatory language in the Constitution is too broad. It would require every group in each local United Methodist Church to impose ethics and conflict of interest policies. Groups would include, but not be limited to UMW, UMM, UMYF, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, all “groups” in ministry at a local UMC. Not every “group” needs an ethics and conflict of interest policy.

Amendment VI – Paragraph 15

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment allows for representation in the General Conference at other than proportional levels during a transitional period for the admission of an annual conference into the United Methodist Church.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

This amendment allows arbitrary assignments of representation at General and Jurisdictional Conference for up to two quadrennia and may create a ‘class system’ of representation for new conferences and bodies joining The United Methodist Church.

Amendment VIII – Paragraph 16.1 and 16.14

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment would add “gender” to those categories of persons protected in this list of duties of General Conference.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

None

Amendment IX – Paragraph 23 (Representation at Jurisdictional Conference)

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment would ensure a minimum basis of support for the election of bishops at jurisdictional conferences.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

None

Amendment XV – Paragraph 32

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment allows definition of the lay and clergy membership of the annual conference by the General Conference without going through the constitutional amendment process. This portion of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Section VI, Article I of the Constitution) has been amended 16 times since 1968.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

Definition of clergy membership of the annual conference should be housed in the constitution. Therefore, any alteration of that definition should be intentional and held to the same process as any constitutional change. Approval of this amendment would enable the definition to be changed at General Conference by a simple majority vote. The amendment also drops the required number of years as a professing member (laity) from two years to one year.

Amendment XVII – Paragraph 33

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment would make supporting constitutional changes to allow reinstatement of legislation adopted by the 2004 General Conference and subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Judicial Council to allow lay persons on the committee on investigation to vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

The traditional relationship between laity and clergy in which laity cannot vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy should remain. There is currently no provision for lay members of the Committee on Investigation to attend the Clergy Session of Annual Conference and, if those persons are not currently lay members of Annual Conference representing their local congregations, would require the conference to support their attendance.

Amendment XIX – Paragraph 35 (Annual Conferences section of the BOD)

This Amendment would expand the ability to vote for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates to “...associate members, and those provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements and local pastors who have completed the Course of Study or an M. Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election.”

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment would allow all clergy members to participate in the election of clergy delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

This amendment will give the right to vote for ordained Elder and Deacon delegates to persons who:

- Have not been ordained (except associate members before 1996 Book of Discipline)
- Have not been examined by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (except for Associate members)
- Have answered some, but not all of the historical questions asked of those who are ordained including:
 - Whether they believe our doctrines are in harmony with Scripture and if they will teach and maintain them.
 - Whether they approve of our Church government and polity and if they will support and maintain them.

Amendment XXII – Paragraph 37

RATIONALE FOR:

“The proposed amendment formally recognizes that the Baltimore-Washington Conference has been appointing pastors, superintending the congregations and integrating the congregations of Bermuda into the life of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The General Board of Global Ministries and the Baltimore-Washington Conference recognize these churches as United Methodist congregations.”

RATIONALE AGAINST:

None