

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY**  
**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 12**  
**MINISTRY & HIGHER EDUCATION/SUPERINTENDENCY**

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*  
*Priority petitions in bold italics*

**BISHOPS**

These petitions deal with various aspects of the ministry of the episcopacy.

It is currently nearly impossible for bishops to be held accountable for maintaining their conduct within the requirements of the *Discipline*. No bishop has ever been brought up on charges through the committee on investigation since the church was founded in 1968, despite the filing of substantive complaints. One major reason is that a bishop's colleagues and friends are the ones tasked with holding the bishop accountable. The Council of Bishops sees itself as powerless to foster accountability. Regional differences in the church mean that different standards are used for bishops in different parts of the U.S. and the world. A variety of proposals have been submitted to rectify this situation and enable greater accountability. This lack of accountability breeds cynicism and a sense of unfairness in our judicial system.

<b><i>Pet 60919</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1151</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61027</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1153</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

The two petitions represent two different proposals to revise the complaint process for bishops. Petition 60919 comes from the Western Pennsylvania Conference, while Petition 61027 is a slightly different approach submitted from Reynoldsburg, Ohio. These petitions are part of more comprehensive proposals including a number of other petitions, most of which are found in Committee 10, Judicial Administration. It may be well to refer these two petitions to that committee, so that the proposals can be dealt with in total. We suggest the committee take the best of all the proposals and combine them into one. Important principles for reforming the episcopal complaint process include: 1) placing the disposition and handling of complaints out of the hands of fellow bishops as much as possible, 2) ensuring that a representative group of laity and clergy will deal with complaints against bishops, 3) ensuring that bishops will be held accountable to a global body, rather than a body made up only from their jurisdiction or central conference, and 4) ensuring that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner without the possibility of lengthy delays.

Pet 60130	Page 1154	Complaints Against Bishops	Support
Pet 60520	Page 1155	COB to Process Complaints	Support

These petitions propose adding explicit timelines for dealing with complaints against bishops. This would be a substantial improvement in our process. Again, it may be well for these petitions to be referred to Committee 10, Judicial Administration, to be dealt with there, along with other proposals for strengthening episcopal accountability.

Pet 60912	Page 1085	Council of Bishops to Have Accountability Authority	Support
Pet 60913	Page 1150	Jurisdictional Administrative Process	Support
Pet 60915	Page 1150	Jurisdictional Administrative Process	Support
Pet 60916	Page 1150	Jurisdictional Administrative Process	Support
Pet 60914	Page 1157	Jurisdictional Administrative Process	Support

These petitions are paired with other petitions submitted by Western Pennsylvania found in Committee 10, Judicial Administration, that allow the Council of Bishops to impose an involuntary leave of absence or retirement upon bishops. Such process would enable the Council of Bishops to exercise a greater degree of accountability with regard to bishops. Again, it may be well for these petitions to be referred to Committee 10, Judicial Administration, to be dealt with there, along with other proposals for strengthening episcopal accountability.

Pet 60519	Page 1149	Remove Episcopal Term Restriction	No Position
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This petition would remove the permission to appoint a bishop to a third quadrennium in the same episcopal area, thus removing an implied 8-year term limit of appointment for bishops in one area.

### **CLERGY DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

While The United Methodist Church has clear doctrinal standards enumerated in ¶ 104 of the *Discipline*, it is not always clear that our clergy maintain their preaching and teaching within the boundaries set by these standards. Current questions for examination do not address a candidate's personal beliefs, only their knowledge about the church's teachings. These three petitions in different ways require that clergy candidates for ordination must affirm the content of our doctrinal standards as their own belief prior to being approved for ordination. Some combination of Petitions 60632 and 60650 would seem to be the most practical way of ensuring that the preaching and teaching of our clergy upholds the message contained in our doctrinal standards.

<b><i>Pet 60542</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1111</i></b>	<b><i>Affirmation of Core Christian Doctrine</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60632</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1112</i></b>	<b><i>Agreement with Doctrinal Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60650</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1126</i></b>	<b><i>Ability to Teach the Faith</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

### **CLERGY PENSION**

Many clergy are uncertain about the status of their retirement funds, should they choose to withdraw from the denomination. This paragraph writes in the *Discipline* what is currently contained in the pension plan document, giving reassurance to clergy about the status of their pension funds. Putting it in the *Discipline* makes the provision more widely known and also ensures that a change in that provision would be a very public one. Having this reassurance would enable clergy who no longer feel called to ministry, who are ineffective, or who by reason of conscience can no longer support the teachings and requirements of the denomination to more readily withdraw.

<b><i>Pet 60648</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1140</i></b>	<b><i>Clergy Pension Preserved</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
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### **COMPLAINTS**

The filing of complaints is one way to hold bishops, clergy, and laity accountable to strive for holiness of life. When complaints are not seriously addressed or are prematurely dismissed, the integrity of this accountability process is jeopardized. This petition aims to restore integrity to the complaint process by forbidding a bishop from dismissing a complaint where there is credible evidence that a violation of the *Discipline* has occurred. It may be well for this petition to be referred to Committee 10, Judicial Administration, which is dealing with a number of revisions to the complaint process.

<b><i>Pet 60547</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1143</i></b>	<b><i>Limit Dismissal of Complaints</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
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### **GLOBAL STRUCTURE**

These two petitions are similar amendments to the constitution that are part of a comprehensive plan to restructure the church at the global level. The ultimate aim of this plan is to create the U.S. as its own central conference that is able to adapt the *Book of Discipline* to the unique needs of our cultural situation. In reality, it is an attempt to structure the church in a way that diminishes the voices of African, European, and Filipino delegates in U.S. denominational affairs and would ultimately allow the U.S. part of the church to permit same-sex weddings and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. It is ironic that for many years the U.S. has had a determinative voice in how the central conferences operated, but now that the central conferences are able to have a strong voice in U.S. affairs, that voice is being rejected. The Renewal and Reform Coalition opposes this attempt to restructure the church in an effort to resolve our theological differences. It may be well to refer these two petitions to Legislative Committee 3, Conferences, which is dealing with the other Global Structure petitions.

<b><i>Pet 60213</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1078</i></b>	<b><i>Global Church Structure - Episcopacy</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60987</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1080</i></b>	<b><i>Global Connectional Conference – Episcopacy</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

### **GUARANTEED APPOINTMENT**

<b><i>Pet 60511</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1085</i></b>	<b><i>No Guarantee of Appointment</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60524</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1124</i></b>	<b><i>End Guaranteed Appointment for Elders</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

These petitions seek to end the requirement that every elder in good standing receive an appointment by the bishop. This provision is an important protection for women, ethnic minorities, and theological minorities who may otherwise be marginalized and forced from the denomination. Ending the guarantee opens the door to potential abuse of power by bishops and cabinets. Clergy give up much self-determination in what appointments they will serve. In return, they deserve protection from arbitrary and potentially punitive episcopal decisions. This is a sledgehammer approach to dealing with ineffective clergy. We already have a fair and equitable way to address clergy ineffectiveness that also protects clergy rights to fair process. This step is not needed.

### **HUMAN SEXUALITY**

The church's balanced, compassionate, and biblically faithful position on the practice of homosexuality has been reaffirmed by ten General Conferences over 40 years. Despite vociferous disagreement by some parts of the church, it still represents the majority opinion of the grass roots church membership worldwide. Changing the church's position to allow same-sex weddings and/or the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals would separate our church from 2,000 years of the church's consensus teaching and from 95 percent of world Christians today. It would also provoke separation of The United Methodist Church, forcing those who could not in good conscience live with the progressive position to leave the church. We oppose any efforts to remove or weaken the teachings and requirements of our church around marriage and sexuality.

<b><i>Pet 61033</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1087</i></b>	<b><i>Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61034</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1087</i></b>	<b><i>Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61035</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1087</i></b>	<b><i>A Third Way – Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61037</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1088</i></b>	<b><i>Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61038</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1088</i></b>	<b><i>Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61040</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1089</i></b>	<b><i>Amend Footnote</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

These petitions remove the affirmation of the denomination's current position from a footnote outlining qualifications for ordained and licensed ministry.

**Pet 61043**      **Page 1090**      **Candidacy**      **Oppose**  
 This petition would allow for non-marital “covenantal relationship” (include both same-sex and opposite-sex) for ordained and licensed clergy.

**Pet 60787**      **Page 1130**      **Deletion**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60788**      **Page 1131**      **A Third Way – Remove Prohibition**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60789**      **Page 1131**      **Unauthorized Conduct**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60790**      **Page 1131**      **Unauthorized Conduct**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60791**      **Page 1131**      **Unauthorized Conduct**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60792**      **Page 1132**      **Unauthorized Conduct**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60906**      **Page 1132**      **Unauthorized Conduct**      **Oppose**

These petitions would remove the prohibition against clergy performing same-sex weddings.

Pet 60802      Page 1078      Automatic Penalties      Support  
 Pet 60803      Page 1141      Automatic Penalties      Support  
 These petitions require automatic penalties to be imposed upon clergy who admit performing a same-sex marriage, without the need for a trial. They include constitutional amendments.

Pet 60641      Page 1133      Campus Ministry      Support  
 This petition requires all new campus ministers to teach students that celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage are God’s good boundaries for sexual behavior.

Pet 60804      Page 1142      Just Resolution      Support  
 Pet 60805      Page 1154      Complaints Against Bishops      Support  
 These petitions would include a minimum one-year unpaid suspension as a part of any just resolution reached where a clergy person or bishop has performed a same-sex wedding.

**Pet 60866**      **Page 1183**      **Same Sex Marriage in United Methodist Churches**      **Oppose**  
 This resolution encourages each local church and clergy person to decide whether or not same-sex weddings would be performed in the church. It requests that pastoral appointments be made in light of a match between the pastor’s and the congregation’s stance on this issue. But such a resolution has no authority to overrule the requirements of the *Discipline*, and it would create a “local option” approach that is foreign to our connectional way of living together as a community of faith.

#### **NUMBER OF BISHOPS**

As the U.S. membership declines, there is need for fewer bishops. At the same time, dramatic growth in central conferences requires additional bishops. Resources saved from having fewer U.S. bishops could provide the bishops needed outside the U.S. We need to more equitably distribute resources and power in line with regional membership. The current formula for determining the number of bishops should be revised to reflect current reality and the declining ability of U.S. churches to support the current number of bishops.

<b>Pet 60616</b>	<b>Page 1146</b>	<b>Number of Bishops</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Pet 60546</b>	<b>Page 1147</b>	<b>Formula for Distribution of Bishops</b>	<b>Support</b>
Pet 60554	Page 1147	Formula for Bishops	Support

These petitions revise the formula for the number of bishops to make it clearer and easier to understand. Currently, the smallest annual conference served by a solo bishop has about 34,000 members, while the largest has about 362,000 members. This wide discrepancy needs to be corrected. Petition 60616 bases the formula on annual conference membership, and would result in a reduction of about four U.S. bishops. Petition 60546 bases the formula on jurisdictional membership, and would result in a reduction of one U.S. bishop. Petition 60554 keeps the current formula, but adjusts the numbers, and would result in a reduction of two U.S. bishops.

<b>Pet 60617</b>	<b>Page 1147</b>	<b>Provisions for Episcopal Areas</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition would freeze the number of bishops while developing a new formula. The elements proposed for the formula guarantee that it will be more complicated and subject to manipulation than the current formula. We believe simpler and cleaner is better in this instance.

Pet 60619	Page 1145	Provisions for Episcopal Areas	Oppose
Pet 60620	Page 1146	Provisions for Episcopal Areas	Oppose

These two petitions would remove all formulas and allow the number of bishops to be set for both U.S. and central conferences based on factors other than membership. This nebulous approach is very subjective and open to manipulation to justify any number of bishops.

Pet 60043	Page 1146	Jurisdictional Membership Count	No Position
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This petition mandates the inclusion of professing members of unchartered new faith communities in the total membership numbers used to justify the number of bishops.

Pet 60556	Page 1145	Standing Committee Report	Support
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This petition requires a quadrennial report by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters analyzing the number of bishops and the need for bishops. It also requires that central conference bishops move in the direction of being allocated on the same formula basis as U.S. bishops.

### **ORGANIC JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION**

These petitions are part of a set of petitions being handled by Committee 3, Conferences, and we recommend that all three petitions be referred there to be dealt with together. This is a comprehensive plan to allow each jurisdiction to set its own standards for ministry, which would allow some jurisdictions to permit same-sex weddings and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. This plan would also allow local churches to affiliate with a different annual conference, annual conferences to affiliate with a different jurisdiction, and jurisdictions to change their boundaries to include churches that want to affiliate with them. The Renewal and Reform Coalition believes that allowing jurisdictions to set their own standards would lead to a slow-motion splintering of the church and would not resolve the conflict over the church's stance on sexuality and marriage. We oppose parts of the Organic Jurisdictional Solution that would allow that. Petition 61012 allows jurisdictions to adapt the *Discipline* to allow same-sex marriages. Petition 61010 implies that jurisdictions may authorize same-sex weddings.

<b>Pet 61012</b>	<b>Page 1161</b>	<b>Organic Jurisdictional Solution – Committee on Ordained Min</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61010</b>	<b>Page 1134</b>	<b>Organic Jurisdictional Solution – Transfer of Clergy</b>	<b>Oppose</b>

We do see merit, however, in giving congregations the flexibility to switch to a different annual conference with which they more closely align in theology and/or culture. We also favor giving annual conferences the flexibility to switch to a different jurisdiction for the same reason. We believe this move could lessen conflict and tension within annual conferences and lead to healthier functioning. It would assist congregations who feel theologically isolated and misunderstood in their current annual conference. Petition 61008 cares for the allocation of unassigned bishops based on changes in jurisdictional makeup.

Pet 61008      Page 1084      Organic Jurisdictional Solution – Assignment of Excess Bishops      Support

### **TERM LIMITS FOR BISHOPS**

The inconsistency of episcopal terms in different parts of the worldwide denomination sets up a situation of inequality among bishops between those with life tenure and those required to be reelected. Setting a common term for all bishops creates a more level power situation. Providing for a limited (rather than lifetime) term allows for the best episcopal leadership for any particular place at a certain time, rather than thinking that the qualities possessed by a bishop can serve all leadership needs for 16-20 years. We view the essential points as 1) providing the same term for all bishops worldwide, and 2) providing for a limited term, rather than a lifetime term. There is disagreement as to the advisability of having bishops stand for reelection, so we will lean upon the wisdom of the body for that aspect of the question.

***Pet 60066      Page 1082      Tenure of Bishops      Consider***  
***Pet 60510      Page 1082      Tenure of Bishops      Support***

Petition 60510 has the added feature of reducing the membership of the Council of Bishops to only active (or residential) bishops, with retired bishops resuming membership in an annual conference. This will make for a healthier functioning of the Council. We prefer this petition as the basis for making proposals for term episcopacy.

Pet 60548      Page 1084      Episcopal Term Limits      Consider  
 Pet 60600      Page 1084      Office of Bishop      Consider  
 Pet 60909      Page 1085      Episcopal Term Limits      Consider

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**

Pet 60917      Page 1161      Jurisdictional Administrative Process      Support

This petition aims to correct a gap in the administrative process noted by a recent Judicial Council decision. It provides for an administrative review committee at the jurisdictional level to ensure that the requirements of fair process are followed in the handling of administrative complaints against bishops. This petition should be referred to Committee 10, Judicial Administration, that is dealing with the rest of the Administrative Process proposals.

### **AFRICA UNIVERSITY**

Pet 60348      Page 1177      Africa University      Support  
 This petition encourages support for Africa University.

### **ANTI-SEMITISM**

Pet 60926      Page 1183      Confronting Twenty-First-Century Anti-Semitism      Support  
 It is important for us to make a strong statement against a resurgent anti-Semitism that is leading to the victimization and persecution of Jews.

**BAPTISM**

This petition removes rebaptism as a chargeable offense, while still opposing it. The charge is too vague, having no definition of what constitutes rebaptism. It is best to handle this issue in ways other than bringing a judicial complaint.

Pet 60649      Page 1132      Re-baptism      Support

**BLACK COLLEGE FUND**

Pet 60344      Page 1176      The Black College Fund      Support

This petition solicits support for the historic black colleges founded by the Methodist Church after the Civil War. That support continues to train black leaders for the future.

**CLERGY TRANSFER**

Given widening differences between annual conferences regarding standards and philosophy in approving persons for ordained ministry, it is important that proposed clergy transfers be acted upon by the conference board of ordained ministry and the clergy session. Transfers should not be the province of the bishop alone.

Pet 60193      Page 1134      Transfers      Support

Pet 60194      Page 1156      Transfers      Support

**ECUMENICAL FUNDING**

Given that The United Methodist Church has at times in the past borne an outsized proportion of the denominational funding of the National Council of Churches (in recent times as much as one-third), and in a time of diminishing denominational resources, it is important to place a reasonable limit on the level of funding we provide to the NCCUSA.

Pet 60598      Page 1170      Ecumenical Funding      Support

**EDUCATION OF CLERGY**

Pet 60189      Page 1118      Requirements for Deacons      Oppose

Pet 60191      Page 1125      Requirements for Admission to Full Connection      Oppose

These petitions eliminate minimum educational requirements for deacons and elders, allowing each annual conference to set its own requirements. Such a move undermines our connectional system and risks allowing clergy into the system who do not have an adequate theological education. When clergy are supposed to be freely acceptable in any annual conference based on the approval of one annual conference, this proposal will undermine confidence and trust in the connectional system.

Pet 60184      Page 1091      License for Pastoral Ministry      Oppose

Pet 60185      Page 1093      Categories of Local Pastor      Oppose

Pet 60187      Page 1096      Provisional Membership      Oppose

Pet 60203      Page 1126      Educational Requirements for Elders      Oppose

Pet 60192      Page 1129      The Itinerant System      Oppose

These petitions allow each annual conference to determine educational requirements for licensed local pastors, injecting inconsistency into the connectional system. These petitions also allow annual conferences to determine which seminaries a candidate for ordained ministry may attend. They may unfairly limit which schools candidates may attend, or they may open the door to candidates attending schools that do not provide a good grounding in Wesleyan theology and ministry practice.

**FAIR REPRESENTATION**

Pet 60951      Page 1159      Plan UMC Revised – OCUIR      Support  
 This petition gives more equitable representation to the jurisdictional and central conferences. It might be well to refer this petition to Committee 7, General Administration, which is dealing with the other petitions related to Plan UMC.

**MARRIAGE**

Pet 60639      Page 1130      Marriage Within the UMC      Oppose  
 This petition removes the pastor as an agent of the state in signing marriage licenses after a wedding. This would require couples to have two weddings—one civil and one religious. This closes a door of potential evangelism in working with unchurched couples seeking to be married.

Pet 60582      Page 1161      District Committee on Marital Covenants      Oppose  
 This petition creates a district bureaucracy charged with supporting marriages and granting church dissolution of marriages (similar to a Roman Catholic annulment process). While well-intended, this effort duplicates existing resources that couples and clergy may draw upon to support marriages, and it creates a process in which the church gets involved in approving a couple's divorce.

**SEMINARIES**

Pet 60197      Page 1156      AC BOM Approves Education      AMEND and Support  
 This petition would allow an annual conference Board of Ministry to approve the school, college, or theological seminary that clergy are permitted to attend. This would allow the annual conference to tailor its recommendations for the unique needs of clergy in that conference. The first strike-through needs to remain, with the addition of "or," to read "listed by the University Senate or approved by the Conference Board of Ministry." This amendment would prevent an annual conference from disapproving a school that is listed by the University Senate.

Pet 60731      Page 1165      AC Support for Non-United Methodist Seminaries      Support  
 This petition requires the University Senate to "recognize the input of annual conference boards of ordained ministry, bishops, and cabinets" in determining the list of approved non-UM seminaries. It would allow the Board of Ordained Ministry, bishop, and cabinet to jointly approve a non-UM seminary within the bounds of the annual conference to train candidates related to that conference. This gives greater flexibility in setting the list of approved seminaries, enabling the conference to tailor its recommendations for the unique needs of clergy in that conference.

Pet 60587      Page 1167      Doctrinal Commitment by Seminary Faculty      Support  
 Pet 60590      Page 1168      Christian Faculty

These petitions require that future full-time faculty at UM schools of theology must be Trinitarian Christians. Petition 60587 requires them to affirm in writing their personal agreement with basic United Methodist doctrines. Petition 60590 is less definitive in what constitutes being a committed Christian or being committed to the historic Christian faith. This provision would ensure that faculty members are teaching from a heart agreement with Christian doctrine, enabling a better formation of future clergy. Doctrinal affirmations by faculty do not threaten a school's academic accreditation, and these requirements are so basic that they would not impinge on academic freedom.



- Pet 60671      Page 1168      UM Ethos in Schools of Theology      No Position  
 This petition would aim to reinforce United Methodist ethos in UM schools of theology by requiring that the resident bishop or a designee serve on the search committee for new faculty members, deans, or presidents. There is some question how effective this provision would be in promoting United Methodist ethos at those schools.
- Pet 60025      Page 1168      Doctrinal Review of UM Seminaries      Support  
 This petition requires the University Senate to quadrennially evaluate how well each UM school of theology defends, promotes, and teaches the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church. This would ensure that our seminaries are forming future clergy in line with UM doctrines.
- Pet 60670      Page 1166      Duties and Responsibilities of the Division of Ordained Min      Support  
 This petition would require the division to monitor the community life of UM schools of theology to encourage openness to various forms of evangelical and charismatic perspectives, as well as other diverse theological perspectives that fall within the boundaries of our doctrinal standards. This provision would ensure true diversity at our schools of theology, since some of them appear at times inhospitable to evangelical and charismatic thought.
- Pet 60024      Page 1166      Doctrinal Guidance for Seminarians      Support  
 This petition would intend to offer students the opportunity within their coursework to assess their own personal agreement with United Methodist doctrinal standards prior to seeking ordination. This would allow students to make an informed decision about their agreement with UM theology and their own "fit" within the UM ministry.
- Pet 60557      Page 1167      Seminary Focus      Support  
 This petition would prohibit UM schools of theology from providing coursework or degree programs explicitly designed to train religious leaders for non-Christian faith communities. This allows the schools of theology to focus on their primary task, supported by UM funds, to train Christian clergy and leaders.
- Pet 60585      Page 1169      UM Studies at Non-UM Seminaries      Support  
 This petition would allow UM elders to teach denominational studies courses at local non-UM seminaries. This would facilitate non-UM seminaries being able to accommodate UM students with an authentic experience in the UM coursework.
- Pet 60586      Page 1169      Online Course at Non-UM Seminaries      Support  
 This petition would allow online courses to be offered at non-UM seminaries on the same basis for approval as online courses offered at UM seminaries. This would give greater opportunity for students to pursue degree programs while holding down a job (which would lessen student indebtedness). Non-UM schools and UM schools should be evaluated on the same basis for the approval of such online courses.
- Pet 60934      Page 1171      Study of Number of UM Seminaries      Support  
 This petition directs GBHEM to conduct a study to determine the optimum number of UM seminaries in the United States to be supported by the church and to make recommendations for reduction or merger, if needed. Based on the declining number of students enrolled in

M.Div. programs at UM seminaries, it may be that there are more schools than the church can adequately support. Consolidating financial support among fewer schools might lead to more effective schools and a more effective use of the church's resources.

**UNIVERSITY SENATE**

The University Senate is an important gatekeeper in the system of preparing persons for ministry. They determine what schools are approved for students to attend, they evaluate United Methodist colleges and seminaries, and they make recommendations on other aspects of United Methodist educational institutions.

Pet 60228      Page 1164      Membership of University Senate      Support  
 This petition revises the membership of the University Senate to reduce the conflict of interest posed by United Methodist-related school executives evaluating each other's institutions. A more objective, outside perspective is needed to ensure fair and rigorous evaluation.

Pet 60669      Page 1165      University Senate Support for Doctrinal Standards      Support  
 This petition requires that members of the University Senate affirm their agreement with the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith. As gatekeepers of theological education, it is important that the Senate acts to guard our doctrinal standards in their evaluation of seminaries.

**APPROVALS FOR MINISTRY**

These petitions raise the level of approval required for licensing and ordination to a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote.

Pet 60355	Page 1091	Three-Fourths Majority Vote – Licensing	No Position
Pet 60356	Page 1094	Three-fourths Majority Vote – Associate Membership	No Position
Pet 60358	Page 1098	Three-fourths Majority Vote – Provisional Membership	No Position
Pet 60366	Page 1119	Three-fourths Majority Vote – Full Membership Deacons	No Position
Pet 60370	Page 1126	Three-Fourths Majority Vote – Full Membership Elders	No Position

**DEACONS**

These petitions expand a deacon's authority and ability to preside over the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Pet 60636	Page 1117	Deacon & Sacraments	No Position
Pet 60637	Page 1117	Sacramental Authority of Deacons	No Position
Pet 60638	Page 1118	Deacon & Sacraments	No Position

**MINISTRY STUDY**

The petitions that implement the recommendations of the Ministry Study are comprehensive and interesting. They may make the process of progressing toward ordination easier and more attractive to some. The Renewal and Reform Coalition has not taken a position on this series of recommendations, but urges careful examination of them with attention to possible unintended consequences. Frequent changes in our process and requirements for ordination are not good for the church or for the people who are involved in preparation for ministry.

Pet 60480	Page 1086	Review of Certified Lay Ministry Candidates	No Position
Pet 60484	Page 1086	Deepening the Theology of Ordination	No Position
Pet 60485	Page 1092	Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments	No Position
Pet 60486	Page 1093	Education for Local Pastors	No Position
Pet 60487	Page 1094	Removing "Five-Year" from Course of Study	No Position
Pet 60507	Page 1098	Reshaping Ordination Process	No Position
Pet 60488	Page 1114	Removing Minimum Age Requirements	No Position
Pet 60489	Page 1116	Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments	No Position
Pet 60508	Page 1117	Reshaping Ordination Process – Deacons	No Position

Pet 60497	Page 1118	Reshaping Ordination Process – Provisional Deacons	No Position
Pet 60498	Page 1120	Reshaping Ordination Process – Deacons	No Position
Pet 60499	Page 1122	Reshaping Ordination Process – Elders	No Position
Pet 60500	Page 1123	Reshaping Ordination Process – Authority of Elders	No Position
Pet 60490	Page 1129	Relation between Ordination and the Sacraments	No Position
Pet 60501	Page 1132	Reshaping Ordination Process – Support for Elders	No Position
Pet 60492	Page 1135	Group Mentoring for Local Pastors	No Position
Pet 60491	Page 1135	Group Mentoring for Certified Candidates	No Position
Pet 60493	Page 1136	Periodic Clergy Assessments	No Position
Pet 60494	Page 1137	Requirement for Lifelong Learning and Coaching	No Position
Pet 60502	Page 1139	Reshaping Ordination Process – Appointments in Retirement	No Position
Pet 60495	Page 1163	Review of Certified lay Ministry Candidates	No Position
Pet 60509	Page 1170	Create 2017-2020 Study of Ministry Commission	AMEND

This last petition needs to be amended to remove a bias toward changing the church's position on marriage and sexuality. Remove the first full paragraph in the second column on page 1170.

*Further information on these and other issues facing the 2016 General Conference may be found on the RRC website: [www.methodistcrossroads.org](http://www.methodistcrossroads.org)*