

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 7

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

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

COALITIONS

Pet 60740 ***Page 792*** ***Non-UM Coalitions*** ***Support***

This petition requires approval by the General Conference of any non-United Methodist coalition joined by a general agency. Interim approval can be granted by the Connectional Table. This provision is important to ensure that such coalition participation reflects the majority view of United Methodists. Such assessment confirms that participation falls within UM doctrinal and ethical standards. Participation would be reviewed quadrennially to maintain accountability.

FAIR REPRESENTATION

As the membership makeup of the denomination changes, it is important that different regions are fairly represented on the general boards and agencies. This is especially true of those agencies that have a global reach in their mission. Currently, only about 10 percent of general board members are from central conferences, even though they make up 40 percent of the church membership. Representation of the U.S. jurisdictions is also not always reflective of the proportional membership of each jurisdiction. These imbalances unfairly privilege certain regions of the church while diminishing the voice of others. The following petitions would move the church toward more fair representation on boards and agencies. They would also provide that board and agency members be elected by the central conferences directly, rather than appointed by the U.S.-dominated Council of Bishops.

Pet 60929 ***Page 793*** ***Representation on General Church Bodies*** ***Support***

Pet 60930 ***Page 797*** ***Representation from Central Conferences*** ***Support***

Pet 60291 ***Page 799*** ***CC Membership (Except Bishops) on GBGM*** ***Support***

Pet 60945 ***Page 793*** ***Plan UMC Revised – Agency Membership Consolidation*** ***Consider***

This petition is an alternative to some of the language above and could be used instead.

Pet 60065 ***Page 802*** ***Connectional Table Membership*** ***AMEND and Support***

This petition requires fair representation among the jurisdictions. It should be amended to also include fair representation with the central conferences.

Pet 60815 ***Page 804*** ***General Church Council*** ***AMEND***

This petition keeps the basic structure of the Connectional Table the same, while it studies the creation of a new General Church Council to more faithfully model our worldwide connection. While not opposing the idea of a study, we believe the study should not be a reason to postpone creating a fairer and more balanced representation on the Connectional Table. In fact, it is essential that a more representative group consider ways to improve the structure and functions of the Connectional Table. This petition should be amended to indicate that it does not preclude steps taken by other petitions to rebalance the membership of the CT (delete the first paragraph).

GLOBAL STRUCTURE

These petitions 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 lessens the voices of African, European, and Filipino delegates in 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 might be well to refer these two petitions to Committee 3, Conferences, which is dealing with the bulk of the Global Structure petitions, so that they can all be dealt with together.

<i>Pet 60989</i>	<i>Page 784</i>	<i>Global Connectional Conference – Name Change</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<i>Pet 60990</i>	<i>Page 784</i>	<i>Global Connectional Conference – Name Change</i>	<i>Oppose</i>

INCLUSIVENESS

The RRC is in favor of fair treatment for all persons and including the diversity of God’s creation within the church. We have no objection to adding “gender” as a category of inclusion. However, we believe the category “sexual orientation” reflects an ideological concept that conceives of one’s identity being determined by whom one is romantically attracted to. While we acknowledge that different forms of sexual attraction exist, we do not agree that all forms of sexual attraction are equally commendable. The church should not commit itself to including persons in leadership (the implications of the last sentence in Article IV) who define themselves by and actively pursue attractions that are contrary to Scripture. In the same way, we oppose the use of a category called “gender identity” as a basis for inclusion. The understanding that one’s gender is fluid and can be changed, or that one’s gender is based on feelings rather than biology, is a misreading of God’s human creation. To include “gender identity” validates a questionable secular viewpoint regarding gender and causes harm to confused individuals who try to change their gender—often with tragic results. Any of these changes could overturn the church’s stance against same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

<i>Pet 60741</i>	<i>Page 785</i>	<i>Inclusiveness of Gender and Sexual Orientation</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<i>Pet 60742</i>	<i>Page 786</i>	<i>Definition of Status</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<i>Pet 60881</i>	<i>Page 786</i>	<i>Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<i>Pet 60943</i>	<i>Page 786</i>	<i>Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Oppose</i>

This last petition goes even farther down the road of a secular understanding of gender, adding the category “gender expression.” Gender is not like a set of clothes one can put on and take off at will. This petition further mandates that all the noted categories of people are eligible to serve as clergy, thus opening the door to same-sex weddings and ordination of practicing homosexuals.

Pet 60163	Page 785	Inclusiveness of Gender and Age	No Position
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We believe that there should be no discrimination in the church based on gender (male or female) or age. The only question we have about this amendment is whether it would nullify all mandatory retirement provisions in the *Discipline*. We believe it would, and this should be taken into consideration when deliberating on this petition.

Pet 60606	Page 785	Inclusiveness of Sex and Gender	Support
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We believe that there should be no discrimination in the church based on gender (male or female). Therefore, we support this petition. However, we wonder whether the second part of the amendment would outlaw gender-specific ministries, such as United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men. It might be well to delete the second part on adopt only the first part.

DIVESTMENT

Divestment of church money from companies not in keeping with United Methodist values is a legitimate tool for social advocacy. There are two caveats, however: 1) that divestment needs to be balanced with the fiduciary responsibility of the church in stewarding the church's and pensioners' resources; and 2) divestment is a blunt instrument that can cause more harm than it is designed to correct.

Pet 60174	Page 801	Avoid Investment in Production of Petroleum, Coal, and	Oppose
Pet 60200	Page 801	Avoid Investment in Production of Petroleum, Coal, and	Oppose
Pet 60304	Page 801	Socially Responsible Investments	Oppose

These petitions are similar to a group of petitions being handled in Committee 3, Conferences. They would forbid all investment of church funds in any petroleum company. While well-intentioned in terms of helping combat climate change, the financial penalty could be severe, jeopardizing the church's fiduciary stewardship. It also stigmatizes a whole industry in which many of our members earn their livelihood. Would the proponents of this policy be willing to forego the tithes and offerings of these members, potentially hurt by our investment decisions? The policy also potentially hurts developing countries, which depend upon coal and petroleum products for improving their economy and the lives of their people. This policy is a blunt instrument that would cause more harm than good. We should trust the boards involved to make sound investment decisions, balancing our social stances with their fiduciary responsibility in a way that causes the least harm.

Pet 60036	Page 800	Sustainable and Responsible Investments	Support
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This petition updates investment guidelines for all general boards and agencies. It clarifies and expands the issues of concern in investments, focuses on positive investment for social change, and identifies those businesses that are to be avoided. We believe these guidelines are sound and provide a way for us to trust our boards and agencies to make wise investments that coincide with our Social Principles.

GENERAL AGENCY STAFF

Pet 60575	Page 800	Eliminate Conflict of Interest	Support
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This petition makes full-time paid staff of any general church agency ineligible for service as a General Conference delegate. Since the General Conference exercises oversight of the general agencies, it is a conflict of interest for agency employees to vote on their own agency's provisions. Staff members are still welcome to express their viewpoints in a variety of ways with General Conference delegates. We would be open to allowing general agency staff to serve as delegates to jurisdictional conference (would require an amendment).

Pet 60545	Page 800	General Agency Staff	Support
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This petition sets essentially the same standards for all new general agency program staff that are currently in place for clergy. Many staff members are clergy and already bound by these standards. Lay program staff as leaders in the denomination ought to embody the same high standards of conduct. It is important that our program staff be active Christians in order to embody and promote the message and mission of the church.

NICENE CREED

Pet 60978	Page 785	Add Nicene Creed to Doctrinal Standards	Support
Pet 60979	Page 787	Add Nicene Creed to Doctrinal Standards	Support

These petitions would add the Nicene Creed to the *Articles of Religion* and *Confession of Faith* as part of our doctrinal standards. This would more deeply root our standards in the ancient faith

of the church, as articulated by the most widely accepted ecumenical councils. The elements of the Nicene Creed further define our faith congruently with the *Articles* and *Confession*, but go beyond them in some areas of specificity. The Nicene Creed focuses on the most bedrock articles of Christian faith. Having it as one of our doctrinal standards would reinforce our connection with historic and contemporary world Christianity. It has been requested that these two petitions be referred to Committee 5, Faith and Order, so that it can be dealt with there along with the implementing legislation.

PETITIONS

Pet 60584 Page 799 General Agency Petitions Support

This petition requires that any petitions coming from general boards and agencies must be passed by that board or agency by a two-thirds majority vote. This ensures that proposals bearing official weight as coming from institutional bodies would reflect broad support within the agency. It would encourage proposals and language that would be more broadly supported within the General Conference, creating less controversy.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Pet 60613 Page 788 Women's Ministry Sunday Support

This petition establishes an annual church-wide Women's Ministry Sunday that recognizes and encourages a wide variety of women's ministries in the local church. It is a complement to Petitions 60614 and 60844 in Committee 10, Local Church, which encourage a variety of women's ministries in addition to United Methodist Women. The church needs to encourage a variety of ministries to reach different audiences of women. Many forms of ministry can speak to the unique needs and circumstances of women. Since there is a Men's Ministry Sunday, there ought to be a comparable Women's Ministry Sunday.

Further information on these and other issues facing the 2016 General Conference may be found on the RRC website: www.methodistcrossroads.org