

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CENTRAL CONFERENCE MATTERS

Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)

Priority petitions in bold italics

ADAPTABILITY

Pet 60665 ***Page 908*** ***Amending Social Principles to Meet Special Conditions*** ***Oppose***

This petition permits central conference to amend the Social Principles to fit their cultures and situations. We oppose this proposal because it would lead to further distance between the U.S. church and the central conferences. The Social Principles should be broad enough “principles” that they would cover every cultural situation. If not, they are too specific. The Social Principles should hold true for the entire denomination (that is why they are in the *Book of Discipline*, rather than the *Book of Resolutions*).

AFRICA BISHOPS

The central conferences of Africa need more bishops in order to equalize the burden of the number of members per bishop, along with the distance of travel within some countries. The Standing Committee has proposed postponing the addition of more bishops until 2020. Since additional bishops were first proposed in 2008, this would be a 12-year wait, in which time the urgent need for bishops will get only greater. We believe some bishops can be added now, and the SCCCM can still pursue its study to determine what additional areas need more bishops. It is evident that there is an urgent need for at least two bishops now, one in the Congo Central Conference and one in Nigeria.

Pet 60560 ***Page 913*** ***New Nigeria Episcopal Area*** ***Support***

Pet 60566 ***Page 913*** ***Additional Bishop in the Congo Central Conference*** ***Support***

Pet 60975 ***Page 914*** ***Episcopal Areas in Africa*** ***No Position***

This petition asks for two new episcopal areas now, with three more in 2020. We support the addition of at least two bishops now and at least three more by 2020. We encourage the SCCCM to use this petition as a framework for negotiating any proposals for new bishops that may be discussed in this committee meeting. Other proposals may be coming forward that need to be incorporated into the discussion.

Pet 60274 ***Page 911*** ***Comprehensive Plan for Africa*** ***AMEND and Support***

It makes sense to engage in a more comprehensive study of the need for episcopal oversight in Africa. However, we do not believe that such study should postpone yet again the meeting of urgent needs for new bishops. Therefore, the petition should be amended to grant at least some new bishops in 2016, with the rest contingent upon the results of the study.

ANNUAL CONFERENCES

As the membership in Africa continues to grow, effective resourcing and supervision will require additional annual conferences within existing episcopal areas. Some needs are obvious, while other needs will need to be assessed by the Standing Committee.

Pet 60696 **Page 914** **Creation of Additional Annual Conference in Cote d'Ivoire** **Support**
 Cote d'Ivoire is the largest annual conference in West Africa, nearly double the size of the North Georgia Annual Conference in terms of membership. The need for an additional annual conference is evident.

Pet 60275 Page 911 Rwanda as Provisional Annual Conference
 Pet 60335 Page 913 Establish Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference
 Pet 60334 Page 913 Establish Kenya Missionary Conference
 Pet 60692 Page 914 Create Uganda Annual Conference

The merits of these particular proposals should be evaluated by the Standing Committee.

EPISCOPAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Pet 60918 **Page 908** **Jurisdictional Administrative Process** **REFER**
 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. Legislative Committee 10, Judicial Administration, is handling the bulk of these petitions. Petition 60918 should be referred to LC 10, so that all the petitions related to the proposal can be handled together. This petition may not make sense apart from the companion proposals found in Legislative Committee 10.

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. Imbalances among the jurisdictions and central conferences unfairly privilege certain regions of the church while diminishing the voice of others. We support proportional representation on the Standing Committee, while maintaining minimum assured representation from all areas of the church. We would ultimately like to see the Standing Committee composed of more central conference members than U.S. members.

Pet 60555 **Page 910** **Standing Committee Membership** **Support**
Pet 60273 **Page 910** **General Provisions** **Support**

These two petitions adjust the membership of the Standing Committee. The two are complementary and should be combined. The number of members should be proportional to the membership of each jurisdiction and central conference as proposed by Petition 60555. This petition may need to state that each jurisdiction or central conference is entitled to a minimum of one member. We agree that members of the Standing Committee should be elected by the jurisdictional and central conferences, rather than named by the bishops, a change proposed by Petition 60273. The language on the number of members from central conferences in 60273 is unclear and should be clarified and made more specific. The Standing Committee should consider both proposals and work to ensure proportional membership among the jurisdictions and the central conferences, along with the election of members.

Pet 60195 Page 909 Organization of Annual Conferences Consider
 This petition increases the minimum number of clergy required to organize an annual conference. The purpose of this petition is to discourage the formation of multiple annual conferences with very few members. An annual conference needs a certain number of members in order to properly resource the congregations of the annual conference and to be a viable annual conference.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Pet 60290 Page 911 Southeast Asia and Mongolia Provisional Central Conference Consider
 This petition calls for the formation of a new provisional central conference covering Laos, Mongolia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Members of the Standing Committee should determine whether the congregations in the area proposed can form a viable central conference and whether the powers and duties assigned are in line with the requirements of the *Discipline*.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Pet 60972 Page 914 Financial Support for African Universities No Position
 This petition asks for financial support for the many other universities and schools of theology found in African annual conferences, in addition to Africa University. It may be time to commission a study on the best way to support the education of African leaders going forward, since there are many schools that are related to The United Methodist Church in Africa, not just one. There is merit also in considering the universities and schools of theology in the central conferences of Europe and the Philippines, as well. A comprehensive approach that is more systematic and sustainable and that would reach more students in their home countries is called for.

Pet 60973 Page 914 UMC Television Station No Position
 This petition calls for financial support to begin a television station in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo. This matter might be more properly addressed as an Advance Special designation. That would call for a referral of this petition to the Board of Global Ministries.

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