

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY**  
**GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016**  
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*Offered by:*

***Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)***

***The Confessing Movement***

***within The United Methodist Church***

***Good News***

***Lifewatch***

***Renew Network***

***Transforming Congregations***

***UM Action***

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# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 1

### CHURCH AND SOCIETY A

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*

*Priority petitions in bold italics*

#### **FAMILY**

Support for the family as one of the basic building blocks of both church and society is important. We believe the Board of Church and Society ought to devote significant resources to supporting and advocating for the family.

***Pet 60576***      ***Page 195***      ***GBCS Staff***      ***Support***

#### **PERSECUTED CHURCH**

Support for persecuted Christians around the world lets them know they are not alone, that their suffering is not unnoticed. We need to give voice to our brothers and sisters who are suffering for Christ.

***Pet 60550***      ***Page 195***      ***GBCS Advocacy for Persecuted Church***      ***Support***

Pet 60462      Page 239      Readopt Resolution      Support

This resolution supports International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church.

#### **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

It is important to advocate for religious freedom and human rights. Because we believe all persons are created in the image of God and have infinite value, we espouse basic rights for all. Freedom gives the best climate in which human flourishing and Christian conscience can grow.

***Pet 60846***      ***Page 295***      ***Freedom of Conscience and Religion***      ***Support***

Pet 60840      Page 293      Principle of Religious Freedom      Oppose

The first resolution is a solid defense of freedom. The second resolution has some good points, but Point 4 would limit believers' conscience rights by forcing participation in such objectionable activities as same-sex weddings.

***Pet 60450***      ***Page 282***      ***Eradicating Modern Day Slavery***      ***Support***

One of the greatest affronts to human rights is the slave trade. When people are abducted or tricked into forced servitude, they have lost all their rights. It is imperative that the church be a voice in forefront of eradicating sex trafficking and forced labor. We recommend amending #11 to add "life-affirming" reproductive health care to mitigate abortion as a solution.

Pet 60701      Page 192      Basic Freedoms and Human Rights      Oppose

This resolution undermines biblical authority and rejects a traditionalist reading of Scripture. It engages in superficial interpretation of difficult biblical passages without truly wrestling with the deeper issues.

Pet 60697      Page 192      Basic Freedom for All People      Support

Pet 60472      Page 261      Korea: Peace, Justice and Reunification      AMEND and Support  
 This petition calls for peace and justice to return to the Korean peninsula, with the eventual reunification of North and South Korea. We recommend adding a statement acknowledging and condemning the human rights abuses perpetrated by North Korea in its persecution of Christians and those who dissent from the government's perspective. It must be acknowledged that, as long as the North pursues its oppressive approach, peace and justice, let alone reunification, will be only a dream.

### **AFRICA**

As the Board of Church and Society assumes a more global focus, we believe significant resources ought to be directed to advocacy on behalf of the poor in Africa, where many of the world's poorest people live. Systemic injustice still prevents many Africans from reaching their potential, and many would benefit from programs to pull them out of poverty into self-sufficiency.

Pet 60578      Page 196      GBCS Focus on Africa      Support

### **BIBLICAL AUTHORITY**

Pet 60227      Page 189      Preamble to Social Principles      Support  
 This petition makes some additions to the Preamble to the Social Principles that reinforce the Bible as our "true rule and guide for faith and practice." It does so, however, in a winsome way, giving room for disagreements about biblical interpretation.

### **CHURCH AND SOCIETY BOARD STRUCTURE**

Bringing the board's structure into a new focused and representative model will help the board more effectively address the needs and concerns of church and society.

Pet 60668      Page 197      Reduce Board Size of GBCS      Oppose  
 While this petition would reduce the board's size in keeping with other general agency boards, it would also eliminate any proportional representation on the board from larger jurisdictions and minimizes representation from the central conferences.

Pet 60961      Page 195      Permissiveness in AC Structure – GBCS      Support  
 This petition gives greater flexibility to annual conferences in how they structure their church and society responsibilities.

Pet 60577      Page 196      GBCS Priorities      Support  
 This petition makes the General Conference responsible for setting priorities for the board, rather than simply allowing the board to set its own priorities without the input of General Conference.

Pet 60728      Page 196      Responsibilities of GBCS      Support  
 This petition designates actual priorities for the board to pursue in its work.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Pet 60702      Page 189      Global Good Stewardship      Consider  
 This petition removes mandatory governmental intervention in greenhouse gas emissions in favor of a call to voluntary cooperation, with a focus on clean water and malaria control as urgent needs in the Global South.

Pet 60710      Page 190      Global Climate Stewardship      Oppose

This petition calls for divestment from all fossil fuels industries in an effort to reduce climate change. 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 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.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Pet 60176      Page 267      To End the "War on Drugs"      Oppose

This new resolution proposes that we end the "war on drugs" by "ending drug prohibition." The legalization of recreational use of addictive drugs would only open the door to more addiction. While sentencing reform is undoubtedly needed, and the emphasis should be on prevention and treatment of users, blanket drug legalization goes too far.

Pet 60463      Page 287      Criminal Justice      AMEND or Oppose

This new resolution combines several old ones into a comprehensive overview of restorative justice. It calls for the de-criminalization of drug use, prostitution, and consensual sexual activity (without clarifying that such activity must be between adults). We recommend amending the second paragraph on page 289 to delete these activities from the list to be decriminalized (or in the case of sexual activity, add the word "adult"). Prostitution, for example, is a primary driver of human trafficking and slavery and should continue to be criminalized.

### **HUMAN SEXUALITY**

Pet 60795      Page 194      Justice and Law      Oppose

We agree that it is appropriate for the church to speak out against violence targeting LGBTQ persons. The insertion of LGBTQ concerns in this paragraph of the Social Principles seems out of place, as it would be the only particular issue addressed in a more generalized statement. These concerns about violence are already mentioned in ¶ 161F.

Pet 60895      Page 230      Military Service Regardless of Sexual Orientation      Oppose

This petition asks for the readoption of Resolution 5062, which calls for U.S. military service to be open to all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. Since that has been accomplished, the petition wants to amend the resolution to call for other countries to follow the same policy. We believe each nation needs to determine the feasibility of this step based on the culture and beliefs of that nation.

### **ISLAM**

Pet 60231      Page 269      Our Muslim Neighbors      Oppose

This new resolution has the laudable purpose of trying to lessen tensions and suspicion toward Muslims in the U.S. However, the petition romanticizes Islam, failing to take a realistic perspective. It also is too U.S.-centric and does not consider the perspectives of Africans and Filipinos, who live as neighbors with Muslim majorities in some areas who are persecuting Christians. Many of the commonalities the resolution draws between Muslims and Christians in the U.S. do not apply to other countries where United Methodists live. The resolution also undermines the urgency of presenting the Gospel to Muslims.



Pet 60758	Page 246	Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land	Support
Pet 60860	Page 247	Saying No to Violence in Middle East Conflict	No position
Pet 60861	Page 297	Prerequisites for Peace in Judea and Samaria	Support

These three petitions take a more balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **PUERTO RICO**

Pet 60971	Page 199	Release Puerto Rican Political Prisoner	Oppose
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This petition calls for the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera from prison. Convicted and sentenced to a long prison term in the 1980's due to terroristic activities while pushing for Puerto Rican independence (a goal desired by only a minority of the Puerto Rican people), Rivera was unwilling to renounce the use of terrorism to achieve his political aims. All the others imprisoned with Rivera have been released on clemency, after they renounced terrorism. Rivera was a leader of the Puerto Rican terrorist group FALN that was responsible for murder, robbery, and other violent activities. Unless he is willing to renounce violence, we believe it would be inappropriate to release Rivera during this time when the world is suffering a new wave of violent terrorism. It would send a mixed message about our commitment to fight terrorism and provide for the safety and security of our people.

### **WAR AND PEACE**

While there are a variety of views within the broader church and within United Methodism itself toward the use of war, The United Methodist Church has never been a pacifist denomination. While viewing war as an extreme last resort, most United Methodists would allow for the use of war to defend one's country and freedoms.

Pet 60847	Page 296	Justice, War, and Defending the Innocent	Support
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This new resolution defines and explains the Just War tradition and applies it to our understanding of war today in terms of defending the defenseless and limiting the excesses of armed conflict on both a personal and national level.

Pet 60703	Page 194	War and Peace	Support
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This petition removes a one-side pacifist view of war and replaces it with a more nuanced understanding of war as a last resort.

Pet 60345	Page 229	Prayer and Support for Members of the Armed Forces	Support
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This petition amends and readopts Resolution 5061, which calls for prayerful support for members of armed services and veterans, who have made great sacrifices to protect their country and bring peace.

*Further information on these and other issues facing the 2012 General Conference may be found on the RRC website: [www.umgc2012.org](http://www.umgc2012.org)*

## LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 2 CHURCH AND SOCIETY 2

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

### **ABORTION**

Abortion is a controversial subject within both our church and society. As Christians, we should lean toward protecting and preserving life whenever possible. Scripture lifts up the personhood of the unborn (e.g., Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44). The early church consistently spoke against abortion and infanticide, which was a common practice among the Romans. Increasingly early pre-term deliveries and pre-natal surgeries are demonstrating that the developing child is a separate life from the mother and in need of care and advocacy. While acknowledging that there are difficult and exceptional cases to consider, we believe United Methodism does best when it advocates on behalf of the lives of unborn children and supports the lives of women in crisis pregnancies.

<b><i>Pet 60698</i></b>	<b><i>Page 313</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60743</i></b>	<b><i>Page 314</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60744</i></b>	<b><i>Page 315</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60746</i></b>	<b><i>Page 315</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60747</i></b>	<b><i>Page 316</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60908</i></b>	<b><i>Page 316</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

These petitions contain proposed language changes to ¶ 161J in the Social Principles that would more specifically define the circumstances under which abortion might be morally justified. The most important change would add the word “physical” in the phrase “conflicts of life with life” to clarify that the circumstance envisioned is a life-threatening one, not a lifestyle decision. Amendments include advocating that, “whenever the unborn child may be capable of surviving outside his or her mother’s womb, every reasonable effort should be made to preserve both lives.” With the increasing advancement of medical technology, babies are viable outside the womb at an earlier point in the pregnancy. This means that late-term abortions have the potential of delivering a viable baby. Such children’s lives should be preserved whenever possible. Amendments also commit the church to diminishing the high abortion rates and ground sexuality education in Christian teaching. Other amendments call for replacing the mother’s “well-being” with “physical health.” Such a broad term as “well-being” could cover any reason to justify abortion, from economic concerns to problems with family or the father to simple convenience. The taking of a life ought to be justified by more severe circumstances. Other amendments advocate for laws in civil society protecting the right of health care professionals not to participate in abortion. Persons who entered the health care field to save lives should not be compelled to take them. The committee should take all of the proposed amendments it can accept and combine them into one petition for approval.

<b><i>Pet 60745</i></b>	<b><i>Page 315</i></b>	<b><i>Abortion</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
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This petition decries the targeting of unborn children with disabilities for abortion. The rising trend of aborting babies with disabilities contradicts our declaration that people with disabilities are of equal and sacred worth.



<b>Pet 60249</b>	<b>Page 327</b>	<b>Responsible Parenthood</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 60748</b>	<b>Page 331</b>	<b>Deletion</b>	<b>Support</b>
Pet 60749	Page 331	Responsible Parenthood	Support
Pet 60750	Page 331	Responsible Parenthood	Support
Pet 60751	Page 331	Responsible Parenthood	Support
Pet 60752	Page 331	Responsible Parenthood	Support

The resolution on “Responsible Parenthood” has been used to justify continued advocacy in favor of abortion. The resolution rejects the belief that life begins at conception, allows for abortion when the pregnancy poses serious problems concerning the health or mental capability of the mother or child, advocates for legalized abortion with the only restriction being preventing gender selection abortions, believes that women have “a right to control their own bodies” (which includes the right to abort their unborn child) despite the evidence that the child is not part of the woman’s body, but is a separate life growing within her, opposes parental consent requirements for minors obtaining abortions, classifies abortion as a “reproductive health service” (which euphemistically characterizes the ending of a pregnancy as reproductive health), and calls upon United Methodist-related health care institutions to offer “a full range of programs ... for reproductive health services” (including by implication, abortion). These positions are contrary to the more binding statement found in the Social Principles ¶ 161J, which offers only reluctant approval of abortion and lists a number of circumstances in which we oppose abortion. Either this resolution should be deleted entirely (by approving Petition 60748) or statements on abortion should be edited out of the resolution. There is enough good material on true family planning that the resolution would be helpful without any mention of abortion. We state in the Social Principles that abortion is not an acceptable means of birth control, so abortion ought not to be included in a resolution on family planning. Alternatively, the non-bolded petitions above offer some suggested amendments to the older version of Resolution 2025 that could be adopted. However, those amendments do not cover all the problematic passages in the newly revised version of Petition 60249.

**Pet 60755      Page 332      Readopt Resolution      Support**

This petition readopts an important resolution raising concerns about the deliberate targeting of unborn baby girls for abortion, which is a widespread problem in much of the world.

**Pet 60837      Page 325      Withdraw from Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice      Support**

This petition mandates withdrawal from RCRC, which is a pro-abortion lobbying coalition. It supports legal abortion and opposes all restrictions upon it. This is contrary to our United Methodist position on abortion, since we explicitly affirm the value of unborn life, oppose partial birth abortion, gender selection or eugenics abortion, and we favor parental notification and consent for abortion in young girls (which RCRC opposes). RCRC’s “Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship” even promotes the use of religious rituals to bless abortion clinics for doing “God’s work” and “holy work.” RCRC’s positions are so different from United Methodist positions that we should not be part of this coalition. Our involvement with RCRC has not influenced them to moderate their position. It has only allowed them to attach our United Methodist name to their secular policy agenda.

**Pet 60838      Page 356      Deletion      Support**

This petition deletes Resolution 3204, Support for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. It essentially gives unqualified support to RCRC. We should not support a coalition that

has views so different from our United Methodist understanding (see above under Petition 60837).

- Pet 60681      Page 317      Ministry to Those Who Have Experienced Abortion      Support  
This petition advocates for the church to continue ministry to all women in crisis pregnancy situations, including those who terminate a pregnancy. The church should offer compassionate, non-judgmental ministry to all.
- Pet 60707      Page 322      Children as God’s Gift      Support  
This petition reminds us that children are a gift and blessing from God. It expresses concern about the declining birthrates in some countries that burden aging populations and may even lead to depopulation of some areas.
- Pet 60252      Page 359      UM Response to US Hospital Mergers      Oppose  
This petition expresses concern about the merger of hospitals in the U.S. that could be depriving persons of access to emergency contraception and abortion services. We believe the concern over abortion access should be left out of this resolution. Hospitals are not needed for contraceptive services, and we should not be lobbying for greater access to abortion.

#### **ADOPTION**

- Pet 60885      Page 317      Adoption      Oppose***  
Adoption can provide a safe and healthy environment for children lacking parents or family to care for them. While acknowledging that adoption by non-traditional families can sometimes be superior to a foster family situation, we believe that it is preferable to place children in healthy heterosexual families. Children flourish best when they have parents of both genders. Same-sex adoptive couples by definition deprive children of a parent of one gender. The children are thus lacking in modeling and experience in relating to the parent of one gender.
- Pet 60398      Page 326      Adoption in a Global Context      Support  
This petition strengthens a good resolution encouraging adoption.

#### **EUTHANASIA AND SUICIDE**

- Pet 60690      Page 325      End of Life Options      Oppose***  
This petition calls upon the UM Church to support the “Death with Dignity Movement.” This movement favors the ability of persons to end their own lives, often with the assistance of a doctor. Suicide is not the answer to end-of-life suffering. We do not have the right to actively end our own lives—a role that belongs only to God. The introduction of assisted suicide opens the door to all kinds of abuse, as the nation of Belgium is learning, where many elderly persons are having their lives ended without their informed consent or without adequate safeguards. This petition runs counter to existing statements in our Resolutions opposing suicide.
- Pet 60848      Page 396      Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia      Support***  
This new resolution effectively lays out a life-affirming Christian approach to end-of-life issues. It stresses the “sacredness and importance of all life ... including for the very sick, the terminally ill, the depressed and despairing, the disabled and mentally impaired.” We need to advocate on behalf of life, not open the door to more intentional death in society.

- Pet 60470      Page 356      Faithful Care for Persons Suffering and Dying      Support  
This petition rewrites an existing resolution with a focus on providing the best physical and spiritual care for persons who are suffering and dying. This nuanced and balanced resolution can provide effective guidance and advocacy for the provision of effective care.
- Pet 60454      Page 388      Suicide: A Pastoral Response      Support  
This petition is a comprehensive resolution on suicide and the church's ministry. It is balanced and biblically grounded, with compassion and care for all persons.
- Pet 60794      Page 317      Suicide      Oppose  
This addition to the Social Principles singles out suicide among LGBT youth, rather than focusing on all youth suicide. There are many risk factors accounting for youth suicide, and we should not focus on just one of them. We would accept this petition if the second half of the first sentence were removed.

**GENDER**

- Pet 60793      Page 302      Gender      Support***  
This petition is a cautious and compassionate response to gender confusion in our society. It advocates loving and godly counsel that emphasizes the sacredness of the human body.

**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. It is important to maintain clear lines of accountability to what our church has taught for 44 years and continues to require today. We oppose any efforts to remove or weaken our church's standards. Instead, we support efforts to strengthen accountability to our church's standards.

- Pet 60882      Page 302      Sexual Orientation      Oppose***  
This petition adds "sexual orientation" as a "gift from God," implying that God creates people with various sexual orientations. This claim is not proven by science and is contrary to our scriptural understanding.
- Pet 60819      Page 302      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60820      Page 303      A Third Way - Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60821      Page 303      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60823      Page 304      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60826      Page 305      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60830      Page 307      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60831      Page 307      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60833      Page 308      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60834      Page 308      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60883      Page 310      Human Sexuality      Oppose***
- Pet 60903      Page 310      Human Sexuality      Oppose***

**Pet 60977**      **Page 312**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 61041**      **Page 312**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**

The above petitions all in different ways delete the sentence that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Petitions 60830 and 60903 also permit pre-marital sexual relations and potentially even polygamy.

**Pet 60824**      **Page 304**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60827**      **Page 306**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60828**      **Page 306**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60829**      **Page 307**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**

These petitions delete the “incompatible” statement and also insert “agree to disagree” language.

**Pet 60825**      **Page 305**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
This petition relegates our definition of marriage to a “tradition” rather than to Scripture and makes it more open to same-sex marriage.

**Pet 60835**      **Page 309**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60944**      **Page 311**      **Human Sexuality**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60836**      **Page 309**      **Human Sexuality**      **Support**

These three petitions all attempt to rewrite ¶ 161F in a more balanced and general way. Petition 60835 leaves out all mention of homosexuality, while affirming sexual relations only within monogamous marriage between one man and one woman. Petition 60944 is more explicit in giving persons rights based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, but leaves out all mention of the church’s stance on homosexuality and does not affirm that sexual relations are only within marriage. Petition 60836 is the same as 60835, with an added sentence enumerating the sexual expressions that are contrary to God’s design (sex before marriage, adultery, polygamy, and same-sex relations). We thus prefer 60836, if the decision is made to rewrite ¶ 161F. Otherwise, we encourage keeping the language as it is now. It seems that it would weaken our stance on sexuality to rewrite the paragraph and not mention the most controversial aspect of sexuality that we are dealing with.

**Pet 60822**      **Page 304**      **Human Sexuality**      **Support**  
This petition adds some crucial theological understandings to the basis for our position on sexuality and its place within marriage.

**Pet 60884**      **Page 313**      **Sexual Harassment**      **Oppose**  
This petition adds to the categories under which we oppose discrimination – “gender identity” and “sexual orientation.” While we oppose sexual harassment, we also oppose using the categories added. Including “gender identity” as a category is an implicit affirmation that a person’s gender is based on one’s own feelings, rather than biological reality, and that gender can be changed (all of which we do not accept). Opening the door on discrimination related to sexual orientation creates legislative enactments that contradict our stance that same-sex relations are contrary to God’s will.

**Pet 60778**      **Page 322**      **Equal Rights**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 60887**      **Page 322**      **Right to Marry**      **Oppose**

These petitions endorse same-sex marriage and civil unions, contradicting our position against these in other places in the *Discipline*. Even when the laws or values of the societies surrounding our churches differ from our church's values, our church should not spread any confusion about how it understands marriage.

**Pet 60892**      **Page 327**      **Adoption in a Global Context**      **Oppose**

This amendment to an existing resolution adds support for policies enabling single persons, unmarried cohabiting persons, and same-sex couples to adopt children on an equal basis with heterosexual married parents. While acknowledging that adoption by persons in non-traditional families can sometimes be superior to a foster family situation, we believe that it is preferable to place children in healthy heterosexual families. Children flourish best when they have parents of both genders. Single adoptive persons and same-sex adoptive couples by definition deprive children of a parent of one gender. The children are thus lacking in modeling and experience in relating to the parent of one gender. Unmarried cohabiting couples often lack the long-term stability and safety of married heterosexual couples. We believe preference in adoption should be given to qualified monogamous heterosexual married couples.

Pet 60832      Page 308      Human Sexuality      Support

This petition opposes forced education in public schools that "normalizes sexual lifestyles that are in contrast to the traditional teachings of the Church." The petition calls for parental notification and consent prior to such instruction. Public school students should not be compelled to experience instruction that violates biblical moral values.

Pet 60451      Page 385      Global Health and Rights: Eradicating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence      AMEND and Support

This strong and comprehensive resolution addresses the problem of violence against girls and women, with many specifics and concrete recommendations. Amendments are needed to #8: add "life-affirming" reproductive health-care services; and #10: "Provide comprehensive sexuality education consistent with Christian sexual ethics."

Pet 60777      Page 321      Equal Rights      Support

This petition clarifies wording and includes strong condemnation against "violence, coercion, ridicule, stigmatization, or marginalization directed toward individuals who self-identify as either homosexual or former homosexual or as LGBT or ex-gay." It is important to include protections for persons who have left homosexual practice alongside those who continue in it. Both are subject to victimization.

Pet 60897      Page 332      Church to Be in Ministry to Persons of All Sexual Orientations      Support

The amendments to this resolution strengthen it by adding biblical content and linkages to similar statements in our *Discipline*. The ministry described here is congruent with our position on the practice of homosexuality.

Pet 60801      Page 332      Prohibit Homosexual Marriage      Oppose

While this petition takes a traditional viewpoint toward marriage and sexuality, it improperly attempts to use a resolution to legislate church law. The prohibitions contained in the petition

are already stated in the legal parts of the *Book of Discipline*. These amendments to Resolution 2041 are not needed.

Pet 60893	Page 333	Readopt Resolution	Oppose
Pet 60899	Page 333	Opposition to Homophobia and Heterosexism	Oppose

The first petition readopts the resolution as is, while the second rewrites the resolution. We object to being characterized as homophobic or heterosexist simply because we uphold biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality. This is not the way to foster dialog within our church, with mutual respect for differing opinions. The traditional biblical stance is not born out of prejudice, but out of respect for the way God created us to live and his wisdom for how we are to best experience human flourishing.

Pet 60841	Page 395	Reducing Harm for LGBTQ Children and Youth	No Position
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There are many good suggestions in this resolution. However, we oppose the use of the categories “gender identity” or “gender expression.” These are an implicit affirmation that a person’s gender is based on one’s own feelings, rather than biological reality, and that gender can be changed (all of which we do not accept). We further question the statistic that 40 percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ. We believe this petition could be rewritten in a way that honors traditional views about homosexuality and transgenderism, while still accomplishing the goal of reducing harm.

Pet 60898	Page 398	Rights of All Persons	Oppose
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This resolution exaggerates the level of religion-based persecution of LGBTQ persons. Its statements and recommendations are overly broad and would in effect indict The United Methodist Church’s current opposition to same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexuals. It does not balance the need for ensuring civil rights with the need to ensure religious freedom. Finally, its triumphalist tone is out of place when addressing as sensitive and complex an issue as this.

Pet 60845	Page 395	Holiness and the Human Body	Support
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This petition is a new resolution that outlines historic Methodist beliefs about the sanctity of the human body. This includes proper understanding of the role of sex, but the resolution goes beyond that to caring for the body and appreciating the impact that our lifestyle choices have on our bodies and on the lives of others. This positive statement is a good start toward a more comprehensive theology of the human body.

## **MARRIAGE**

Marriage has always been the joining of a man and woman in a covenantal relationship. Christian marriage takes on the added significance of showcasing the image of God through complementary genders (Genesis 2) and symbolizing the union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5). In the face of attempts by secular society to reinvent or redefine marriage according to human whim, the church needs to stand fast on the eternal truth of God’s word and its teaching on marriage. We oppose any attempt to redefine marriage, such as the four petitions below.

<b><i>Pet 60783</i></b>	<b><i>Page 300</i></b>	<b><i>Definition of Marriage</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60784</i></b>	<b><i>Page 301</i></b>	<b><i>A Third Way - Marriage</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60785</i></b>	<b><i>Page 301</i></b>	<b><i>Marriage</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60786</i></b>	<b><i>Page 301</i></b>	<b><i>Equality in Marriage</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

**PERSECUTION**

**Pet 60709      Page 320      *Solidarity with Persecuted Christians*      **Support****

It is important to make a public statement in our Social Principles of standing with our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

The ability to practice our faith without hindrance from civil authorities is one of the bedrock freedoms in a free society. In the U.S., our religious freedom has been recently called into question by court decisions legalizing same-sex marriage. These petitions aim to protect religious freedom generally and also specifically in relation to our beliefs about marriage and sexuality. They protect The United Methodist Church's ability to believe and promote our biblically-based beliefs.

**Pet 60704      Page 317      *Protections for Religious Adoption Agencies*      **Support****

This petition advocates legal protection for religious adoption agencies who, because of religious conviction, only place children with married heterosexual parents.

**Pet 60853      Page 321      *Protections for Religious Believers and Others*      **Support****

This petition advocates for legal rights of religious believers and others to espouse traditional, male-female marriage and the value of chastity.

Pet 60309      Page 383      Religious Freedom: Grounded in Love      Support

This petition is a good resolution explaining and defending the need for religious freedom in general. It has good biblical grounding and clear definitions. It needs a clarifying amendment regarding participation in same-sex weddings being a religious freedom issue.

Pet 60942      Page 399      Religious Liberty      Oppose

This petition has some good statements about religious liberty, but it goes too far in promoting same-sex marriage and restricting religious liberty in preserving our views in favor of traditional marriage. Petition 60309 is to be preferred.

**ALCOHOLISM**

Pet 60464      Page 338      Alcohol and Other Drugs      Support

This petition strengthens an important resolution on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug addiction.

**BIOETHICS**

Pet 60225      Page 318      Bioethics      Support

This petition adds a new section on bioethics, emphasizing that we cannot treat any human life at any stage as a mere commodity. It supports embryo adoption programs that make available for adoption frozen embryos not needed for research. In this newly expanding field, it is important to formulate solid moral principles to provide guidance.

Pet 60401      Page 350      Human Cloning      Support

This petition amends Resolution 3182 and strengthens our call for a ban on the use of cloning for making embryos for research experiments or stem cells. In this time of advancing biological technology, it is important to maintain moral boundaries on that technology. Human life is not to be used as a commodity.

**BULLYING**

Pet 60199	Page 299	Bullying	Support
Pet 60682	Page 300	Bullying	Oppose

These two petitions are alternative ways of adding a new section to the Social Principles on bullying. Petition 60199 is clear and concise, with concrete recommendations. It gives a brief theological foundation and enumerates the behavior that is considered bullying. Petition 60682 lacks any theological foundation and lacks a definition of bullying. Some of the recommendations from 60682 could be incorporated into 60199.

**FAMILY**

Pet 60854	Page 300	Mothers and Fathers	Support
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Sociological research has demonstrated the unique contributions to family life of mothers and fathers. While not limiting either mothers or fathers to a certain rigid role, each makes a vital contribution to raising healthy children. This contribution should be recognized.

Pet 60661	Page 300	Family	Oppose
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This petition's amendments to the Social Principles have the effect of minimizing the importance of parents and family for all children. We ought to be strengthening and encouraging parents and families, not minimizing their contribution toward the raising of children. No matter what adults are charged with raising a child, they are serving as that child's parents. That relationship is unique and worthy of mention.

**HOMELESSNESS**

Pet 60688	Page 319	Homelessness	AMEND and Support
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This petition adds a new section to the Social Principles on homelessness. As a global statement, we recommend deleting the sentence giving statistics for LGBTQ homelessness in the U.S. It is the only statistic in the paragraph and therefore out of place. The causes of homelessness are listed, and the church's ministry to the homeless is lifted up as being important.

**PORNOGRAPHY**

Pet 60164	Page 299	Pornography	Support
Pet 60706	Page 302	Internet Pornography	Support

These two petitions add a new section to the Social Principles on pornography. Petition 60164 is a comprehensive, balanced examination of the issue, including a clear definition of pornography. Petition 60706 notes the pervasiveness of Internet pornography, making it available to millions of people in a much more easily accessed format. We suggest adding 60706 into 60164 for a more complete statement. In this time when up to 40 percent of people regularly access pornography, it is essential for the church to speak out more forcefully on this topic.

Pet 60167	Page 334	Readopt Resolution	Support
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This petition urges the readoption of Resolution 2082, Prevention of the Use of Pornography in the Church.



# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 3

### CONFERENCES

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

#### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of annual conference includes retired clergy with voice and vote. We have reached the point when there are more retired clergy in most U.S. annual conferences than active clergy. Many of the retired clergy do not participate in annual conference, but they must be matched by an equalizing lay member of conference. This artificially inflates the number of people serving as members of annual conference, leading to extra expense for the meeting and an overrepresentation of laity. This also creates inequity with many of the central conferences, which have far fewer retired clergy, which then reduces their representation at General Conference.

***Pet 60603***      ***Page 418***      ***AC Membership of Retired Clergy***      ***Support***  
This petition creates more equity in balancing lay and clergy annual conference membership, as well as addressing the issue of General Conference representation.

Pet 60015      Page 417      Equalization of Annual Conference Membership      Oppose  
While this petition addresses the lay/clergy imbalance of annual conference members, it does not address the issue of General Conference representation. If this approach is chosen, that element from Petition 60603 should be added here.

#### **DELEGATE NUMBER**

The Commission made the decision to reduce the number of delegates from nearly 1,000 to 850 for the 2016 General Conference and wants to further reduce the number of delegates for 2020. Such reductions heighten the inequity of representation between annual conferences and deprive annual conferences of the opportunity to create more diversity within their delegations. We believe the original intent of the *Discipline* was to allow the Commission to adapt the formula to bring the number of delegates just within the upper or lower limits set by the Constitution, not to allow the Commission to set an arbitrary number of delegates within the limits. If a lower number is to be chosen, then the General Conference should set that number, not the Commission. This petition writes that interpretation into the *Discipline*.

***Pet 60067***      ***Page 454***      ***Formula Adjustment***      ***Support***

#### **DELEGATE REQUIREMENTS**

***Pet 60602***      ***Page 435***      ***Eliminate Conflict of Interest***      ***Support***  
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 removing the prohibition on serving as a jurisdictional delegate.

Pet 60601      Page 403      Requirement for election      Support  
 This petition requires those standing for election as General Conference delegates to have read the entire Bible in order to be eligible for election. Since Scripture is our primary guide for faith and life, it is appropriate to require that those making decisions on behalf of the whole denomination should have read it.

Pet 60522      Page 436      Lay Delegate Residency      Oppose  
 This petition requires that all lay persons elected as delegates to General Conference must reside within the geographical boundaries of their annual conference. This proposal would unfairly exclude from serving lay persons who have legitimate reasons for living outside the conference. If someone has enough connection with the annual conference to be elected as a delegate, they have enough connection with the conference to represent it well, no matter where they live. This decision should be left up to the voters.

### **EPISCOPAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

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 petition is part of a comprehensive set of petitions. It envisions using the Interjurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy as the body to handle complaints against bishops, after expanding the IJCE to include members from the central conferences. It may be better to refer this petition to Committee 10, Judicial Administration, which is handling the bulk of these petitions, so that they can be acted on together.

***Pet 61028      Page 454      Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process      Support***

### **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.

***Pet 60215      Page 400      Global Church Structure – Connectional Conferences      Oppose***  
***Pet 60216      Page 402      Global Church Structure – Boundaries      Oppose***  
***Pet 60983      Page 402      Global Connectional Conference – Connectional Conferences      Oppose***  
***Pet 60214      Page 405      Global Church Structure – Global Connectional Conference      Oppose***  
***Pet 60219      Page 407      Global Church Structure – Name Changes      Oppose***  
***Pet 60982      Page 407      Global Connectional Conference – Name and Composition      Oppose***  
***Pet 60218      Page 409      Global Church Structure – Regional Conferences      Oppose***  
***Pet 60984      Page 410      Global Connectional Conference – Regional Conferences      Oppose***  
***Pet 60211      Page 433      Global Church Structure      Oppose***

<b>Pet 60985</b>	<b>Page 434</b>	<b>Global Connectional Conference – Annual Conferences</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 60986</b>	<b>Page 438</b>	<b>Global Connectional Conference – Boundaries</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 60220</b>	<b>Page 442</b>	<b>Global Church Structure – Legislative Committee on U.S.</b>	<b>Oppose</b>

While not establishing a U.S. central conference, Petition 60220 would have all U.S. delegates come one week before General Conference to act on U.S. matters as a recommendation to the General Conference. This would dramatically increase the cost and length of General Conference, without any appreciable gain in effectiveness. It would still exclude non-U.S. voices from these early deliberations.

<b>Pet 60981</b>	<b>Page 467</b>	<b>Global Connectional Conference – Concept Proposal</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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<b>Pet 60935</b>	<b>Page 412</b>	<b>US UMC as Central Conference</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition is not part of the above proposals, but would still create a U.S. Central Conference that would have the same power to adapt the *Book of Discipline* that other central conferences currently have. This proposal would still have the effect of removing non-U.S. voices from our deliberations, and it would ultimately be aimed at providing a way to permit same-sex weddings and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals in the U.S. Before taking any step such as this, the underlying theological conflict needs to be resolved first.

<b>Pet 60816</b>	<b>Page 466</b>	<b>Jurisdictional Process</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition would provide for a study process by a committee to examine how the U.S. delegates can deliberate on matters that pertain only to U.S. churches. While not opposed to the study *per se*, we believe that the underlying theological conflict needs to be resolved before any steps can be taken in this regard. Furthermore, the study committee does not fairly represent the U.S. jurisdictions. More importantly, this issue is one of the least pressing issues facing a church that is experiencing dramatic membership loss in the U.S. Other priorities should be the subject of our attention.

### **MINIMUM REPRESENTATION**

These petitions aim to correct the current imbalance between church membership and representation at General Conference. Under current rules, every annual conference, no matter how small, receives a minimum of two delegates at General Conference. This means that annual conferences of 500 members all the way up to 60,000 members receive the same representation. (Conferences over 60,000 add additional delegates according to the formula.) The present system encourages the proliferation of annual conferences in order to increase representation. Either of these two petitions might encourage consolidation of small conferences for better resourcing of ministry.

<b>Pet 60196</b>	<b>Page 413</b>	<b>Representation to General Conference by Episcopal Area</b>	<b>Consider</b>
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This petition would set the minimum at two delegates per episcopal area, rather than two per annual conference.

<b>Pet 60605</b>	<b>Page 414</b>	<b>GC Membership</b>	<b>Consider</b>
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This petition sets a minimum for an annual conference to be represented at General Conference at 5,000 members. This number ensures a more viable annual conference. Smaller conferences might be made districts in a larger annual conference. However, this proposal might present problems for annual conferences established by language, in that it would require the larger annual conference to accommodate several different languages.

**NUMBER OF BISHOPS**

**Pet 60932**      **Page 467**      **Defer Reduction in US Episcopal Areas**      **Oppose**

This petition would delay any change in the number of bishops in the U.S. It conflicts with a number of proposals being dealt with in Committee 12, Ministry and Higher Ed/Superintendency. It might be best if this petition were referred there, so that all proposals about the number of bishops could be handled by one committee. We believe that some changes to the formula for the number of bishops are needed to bring greater balance in terms of the number of members under the care of each bishop. Wide differences between small and large episcopal areas do not serve us well.

**ORGANIC JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION**

These petitions are part of 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.

**Pet 61003**      **Page 416**      **Powers of Jurisdictional Conferences**      **Oppose**  
**Pet 61011**      **Page 456**      **New Duties of Jurisdictions**      **Oppose**

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.

Pet 61001	Page 411	Basis for Jurisdictions	Support
Pet 61002	Page 415	General Conference Powers	Support
Pet 61004	Page 439	Flexible Boundaries	Support
Pet 61005	Page 440	Minimum Jurisdictional Membership	Support
Pet 61006	Page 441	Annual Conference Boundaries	Support
Pet 61007	Page 441	Transfer of Local Churches	Support
Pet 61013	Page 443	Conferences Transferring Jurisdictions	Support

**PROGRESSIVE JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION**

These petitions are part of a comprehensive plan to create an additional Progressive Jurisdiction within The United Methodist Church that could allow same-sex weddings and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. The current five jurisdictions would continue to operate under the current requirements of the *Discipline*. Many progressives oppose this plan because they do not want to be segregated within the larger denomination. Many evangelicals oppose this plan because it would still allow part of the church to engage in practices that the Bible prohibits—this time with the church's blessing. In addition, progressives would continue to carry their fight to change the church's position to General Conference every quadrennium. Thus, we do not believe it would resolve the conflict over our church's stance on sexuality and marriage.

**Pet 61021**      **Page 412**      **Basis for Jurisdictions**      **Oppose**

<b>Pet 61022</b>	<b>Page 416</b>	<b>Equal Representation</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61023</b>	<b>Page 440</b>	<b>Creating a Sixth Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61025</b>	<b>Page 445</b>	<b>Customized Participation</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61026</b>	<b>Page 447</b>	<b>Forming the New Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61024</b>	<b>Page 455</b>	<b>Jurisdictions and Race</b>	<b>Oppose</b>

## **TWO JURISDICTION SOLUTION**

These petitions are part of a comprehensive plan to dissolve the current five jurisdictions and put in their place two jurisdictions, a progressive jurisdiction and a traditionalist jurisdiction (or perhaps three jurisdictions, including a moderate jurisdiction). Each could modify the *Discipline* on the issues of same-sex marriage and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals, with one jurisdiction permitting it and the other strengthening prohibitions against it. Annual Conferences, local churches, and clergy would be free to choose which jurisdiction to belong to. Some evangelicals have been open to this idea as a possible compromise that would keep us together, while other evangelicals have found it unacceptable because it would still allow part of the church to engage in practices that the Bible prohibits—this time with the church’s blessing. Most progressives have not been supportive of this proposal because they desire to change the whole church, not just have part of the church to themselves. So the struggle would continue every four years at General Conference—this would not resolve the church’s conflict.

<b>Pet 61015</b>	<b>Page 412</b>	<b>Basis for Jurisdictions</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61016</b>	<b>Page 417</b>	<b>Constitutional Powers of Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61017</b>	<b>Page 439</b>	<b>Jurisdictional Boundaries</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61020</b>	<b>Page 444</b>	<b>Forming New Jurisdictions</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 61019</b>	<b>Page 456</b>	<b>Powers and Duties of Jurisdictions</b>	<b>Oppose</b>

## **PETITIONS**

<b>Pet 60035</b>	<b>Page 449</b>	<b>Petition Submission</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition would restrict clergy and lay members from submitting petitions to General Conference. It is undemocratic to limit access to General Conference by individuals. This proposal also puts a premium on the institution of the church because all the entities allowed to petition General Conference are institutions of the church. It leaves out the voice of the grassroots.

<b>Pet 60226</b>	<b>Page 449</b>	<b>Mandatory Vote</b>	<b>Support</b>
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This petition requires that every petition receiving an affirmative vote by a legislative committee must receive a vote by the plenary session of General Conference. It is unfair to have legislative committees do all their work and then not have it acted upon by the plenary body. In 2012, at least one legislative committee did not get to present any of its petitions to the plenary (other than those on the consent agenda). This requirement would act to deter those who seek to prevent action through delaying tactics and would require better time management of our plenary sessions.

## **ABORTION**

Abortion is a controversial subject within both our church and society. As Christians, we should lean toward protecting and preserving life whenever possible. Scripture lifts up the personhood of the unborn (e.g., Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44). The early church consistently spoke against abortion and infanticide, which was a common practice among the Romans. While acknowledging that there are

difficult and exceptional cases to consider, we believe United Methodism does best when it advocates on behalf of the lives of unborn children and supports the lives of women in crisis pregnancies. It should not be controversial to compile lists of resources that can help women facing unplanned pregnancies find feasible alternatives to abortion, which is what this petition recommends.

Pet 60583      Page 463      Mother-Child Resource List      Support

### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE STRUCTURE**

Pet 60513      Page 434      Annual Conference Structure      Support

Pet 60959      Page 464      Permissiveness in AC Structure – Connectional AC Parallels      Support

These petitions aim to give greater flexibility to annual conferences in how they structure themselves to accomplish the mission of the church in linkage with the general church. This kind of flexibility is helpful in adapting to unique circumstances in individual annual conferences, as well as adapting to changing circumstances over time without needing to change the *Discipline* to do it.

### **COMMISSION ON THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

Pet 60528      Page 452      Discontinue Commission on General Conference      Oppose

This petition aims to dismantle the Commission on the General Conference and turn its tasks over to the Connectional Table. However, running the General Conference is not in line with the CT's mission. It is also an overwhelming task in and of itself. Adding it to what the CT already does would be totally unworkable. The coordinating mission of the church would not be attended to, and the running of General Conference would not be done with excellence.

### **CONFERRING**

Pet 61044      Page 404      Christian Conferencing      Oppose

This petition adds to the Constitution the mandate that General Conference is to be for the purpose of worship, prayer, and fellowship done in a spirit of Christian conferencing. As classically understood, Christian conferencing is the sharing of one's own faith understandings and experiences with a small group of fellow disciples for the purpose of helping all grow in grace and holiness. This is not the purpose of General Conference. Trying to make General Conference a venue for Christian conferencing distorts the meaning of such conferencing and would lay upon General Conference an unrealistic duty that distracts from GC's true purpose.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Pet 60516      Page 455      Conflict of Interest on Committee on Episcopacy      Support

This petition aims to eliminate potential conflicts of interest by disqualifying persons in a direct reporting relationship to an active bishop from serving on the jurisdictional committee on episcopacy. This common-sense provision will enhance trust and foster healthier functioning of the committee.

### **DELEGATE ELECTION**

Pet 60568      Page 435      Elections      Support

This proposed amendment enshrines one of the principles of election in our Constitution. It protects the right to nominate potential delegates from the floor of annual conference, opening up the process. This provision ensures consistency across the church in how our annual conferences elect delegates to General Conference. It is meant to correct processes followed in some annual conferences that manipulate the process toward hand-picked delegates.

**EPISCOPAL OVERSIGHT**

Pet 60512      Page 414      Authority of General Conference      Support

This petition changes the Constitution to overturn the Judicial Council decision that ruled Plan UMC unconstitutional at the 2012 General Conference. The petition clarifies that General Conference has the authority to delegate specified and limited authority for oversight without it being a limitation of the general oversight by the bishops.

**EPISCOPAL SUPPORT**

Pet 60068      Page 417      Episcopal Support      Support

This petition requires that each jurisdiction bear all the financial costs of the bishops serving in that jurisdiction. Financial support for bishops should be a foundational financial obligation. If a jurisdiction cannot support its own bishops, it has too many bishops or needs to develop greater financial capacity. Otherwise, it sets up a situation of long-term financial dependency upon the general church. We would ultimately like to see the central conferences moving in this same direction, as they build their financial capacity, as well. But this petition deals only with the jurisdictions in the U.S. and does not affect the central conferences.

**GLOBAL BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

***Pet 60277      Page 466      General Book of Discipline – Draft      No Position***

This petition authorizes a churchwide feedback process to help shape a proposed *General Book of Discipline* that would apply equally to all annual conferences and not be subject to adaptation by the central conferences. The new draft would have to take into account all the changes in the *Discipline* made at the 2016 General Conference. The final draft of the *General Discipline* would then be proposed and voted on (with whatever amendments) at the 2020 General Conference. This petition does not commit the General Conference to a final version of the Global Book.

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL**

Pet 60514      Page 415      General Conference Override Judicial Council Declaration      Oppose

Since the Judicial Council is the primary interpreter of church law, the integrity of the judicial process must be protected. This petition provides that the General Conference could override a Judicial Council decision by a supermajority vote. As frustrating to the body as Judicial Council decisions sometimes are, this move would violate the principle of separation of powers. A better way to overturn unpopular judicial decisions is with legislative action to change the Constitution, which could end up yielding greater clarity in the long run than a simple override.

**JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES**

Pet 60058      Page 436      Flexibility in Number of Jurisdictions      Support

This petition allows General Conference to change jurisdictional number and boundaries without the need for a constitutional amendment. This provision would give greater flexibility in structuring the church for effective ministry. It would not burden thousands of annual conference members who would have to vote on a boundary change that did not affect them.

Pet 60202      Page 437      Jurisdictional Realignment and Name Change      No Position

This petition would eliminate the Western Jurisdiction and redistribute its annual conferences among the North Central and South Central Jurisdictions, moving a few other annual conferences to create greater balance. The impetus behind this move, to create more balanced jurisdictions based on membership, is a good one. We have not taken a position on whether this is the best solution.

- Pet 60549      Page 437      Change Jurisdictional Boundaries      Oppose  
 This petition would shift four annual conferences into the Western Jurisdiction. Again, the impetus to create more balanced jurisdictions is a good one. However, it would seem that this proposal would create greater imbalance. While helping the Western Jurisdiction, it would decrease the North Central and South Central and create a greater imbalance between those two and the two eastern jurisdictions.
- Pet 60941      Page 438      British Columbia in Western Jurisdiction      No Position  
 This petition expands the Western Jurisdiction to include British Columbia in order to incorporate a few congregations located there. We have not taken a position on the wisdom of this proposal, but think it bears watching.
- Pet 60059      Page 465      Jurisdictional Study Committee      Support  
 This petition would create a study committee to examine the jurisdictional boundaries and bring a report to the 2020 General Conference. This proposal makes sense as a way to gather more information and allow annual conferences to have input into any recommended change of jurisdictional boundaries.

#### **LOCAL PASTOR ELIGIBILITY**

- Pet 60538      Page 435      Local Pastor – Voting Rights and Election to Delegation      Support  
 This petition would allow local pastors who have completed educational requirements, provisional, associate, and affiliate clergy members to vote on constitutional amendments and the election of clergy delegates to General Conference, as well as serve as clergy delegates. As local pastors become a larger share of clergy in our denomination, it makes sense that they should serve as delegates, bringing their unique voice and perspective to the General Conference deliberations.

#### **PLAN OF SEPARATION**

In the highly polarized climate of current United Methodism, many believe it is difficult to see how we can continue to live together in one body. Many progressives see the “full inclusion” of GLBTQ persons in the life of the church, including same-sex marriage and ordination, as the civil rights issue of our time. They will not rest until same-sex marriage and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not only allowed but encouraged in the entire church (particularly in the U.S.). At the same time, many traditionalists see this question as a test of biblical authority, which is clearly stated in our doctrinal standards. They would not be able to continue in a denomination that allows or even mandates the performing of same-sex marriage and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals because they see it as contrary to Scripture. Congregations have been leaving the denomination at an increased pace over the last several years. In light of potentially heightened disobedience or if the position of the church changed, that exodus could grow. Rather than see congregations depart piecemeal, leading to a splintering of the denomination, these petitions provide an organized way of allowing congregations and pastors who could no longer live together to separate with grace and respect. While not universally supported by either progressives or traditionalists, we believe that if separation is to occur, it is better to try to construct new viable denominations out of the separating parties and avoid potential litigation costing millions of dollars. As the Renewal and Reform Coalition, we do not have consensus on these petitions and so are not endorsing them, but simply urging careful, honest consideration of all relevant challenges. We understand that these petitions represent very deep concerns of faithful, valued fellow



United Methodists, and would be more faithful than petitions to authorize same-sex weddings in our church.

Pet 60993      Page 471      Plan of Separation      Consider

This petition lays out a comprehensive process for fairly providing for a separation of the denomination into two or more new entities. By making the annual conference the primary locus of decision-making, it would seek to minimize the impact on local churches that are in agreement with their annual conference position. It would allow an orderly process that would culminate in the organizing of new entities in May 2020, with the appropriate division of assets thereafter. It envisions the entire process being completed by 2022. This petition requires a constitutional amendment, which creates a high bar to passage.

Pet 60994      Page 474      Commission on Separation      Consider

This petition would set up a commission to develop a plan of separation that would be presented to a special called session of the General Conference in 2018. It takes the same approach as Petition 60993, but leaves the details to be worked out by the commission, rather than incorporating them into this petition. It would allow greater input from all sectors of the church to consider issues that would need to be resolved in order for the separation to go forward. It has the same goals as Petition 60993: to end the conflict in a fair way without litigation, allowing the church in its new entities to focus on the primary mission of discipleship. This petition requires only a majority vote, which is much easier to obtain than a constitutional amendment.

#### **TRANSLATION**

Pet 60723      Page 453      Translation of DCA      Support

This petition would mandate translation of the daily DCA during General Conference into the official languages of the conference. Without such translation, central conference delegates not fluent in English are at a disadvantage, often not even knowing what is being voted upon or discussed. This is an issue of fairness as we live into the reality of being a global church. Because the document can be distributed electronically, it becomes more possible for timely translation to take place.

*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)*

# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 4

### DISCIPLESHIP

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

#### **FAIR REPRESENTATION**

As the membership makeup of the denomination changes, it is important that different regions are fairly represented on general agencies as well as other denominational gatherings. Representation of the U.S. jurisdictions and central conferences is not always reflective of the proportional membership of each region. These imbalances unfairly privilege certain regions of the church while diminishing the voice of others.

<b><i>Pet 60100</i></b>	<b><i>Page 566</i></b>	<b><i>Jurisdictional Young People's Ministries</i></b>	<b><i>AMEND</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60579</i></b>	<b><i>Page 572</i></b>	<b><i>Global Young People's Convocation</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

These petitions address young people's ministries and convocations. Petition 60579 gives specific provisions to ensure fair representation of the various parts of the global church. Petition 60100 needs to be amended to be consistent with those same fair representation provisions.

#### **HOMOSEXUALITY**

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 60894</i></b>	<b><i>Page 585</i></b>	<b><i>Teen Sexual Identity and Suicide Risk</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60896</i></b>	<b><i>Page 586</i></b>	<b><i>Teen Sexual Identity and Suicide Risk</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

These two petitions aim to revise Resolution 2121 on Teen Suicide related to teen sexual identity. Aside from disliking the term "sexual identity" (our identity is in Christ, not in our sexuality), there is much to like about Petition 60896. It broadens the scope of the resolution to address global needs and issues. Its recommendations are congruent with the current stance of the UM Church on homosexuality. On the other hand, Petition 60894 is narrowly U.S.-centric. It incorporates the term "gender identity," which implies that a person's gender is based on one's own feelings, rather than biological reality, and that gender can be changed (which we disagree with). We much prefer 60896.

<b><i>Pet 60797</i></b>	<b><i>Page 582</i></b>	<b><i>Resources</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
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This petition instructs the Board of Discipleship "to develop and share on its website a list of books and other recommended resources that clearly affirm our Church's moral standards for

sexual behavior.” These resources are needed by clergy and laity in local churches to effectively guide young people in understanding their developing sexuality, as well as to inform adults’ moral decisions regarding sexuality. The resources are designed to promote compassionate ministry with same-sex-attracted-persons, teens at risk for suicide and others. This is one of the primary roles of the Board of Discipleship—identifying resources that can help the people in local churches engage in more effective ministry. We would encourage that these resources include some available in other languages, especially the official languages of the UM Church.

### **MARRIAGE**

Marriage is the main building block of a healthy family, which then builds a healthy society. It is imperative that the church work to strengthen marriages according to God’s design. Christian marriage takes on the added significance of showcasing the image of God through complementary genders (Genesis 2) and symbolizing the union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5).

#### ***Pet 60800      Page 569      BOD Responsibilities      Support***

This petition requires the Board of Discipleship to prioritize resources that strengthen marriage and families in line with United Methodist teaching about marriage. This needed emphasis will be of great practical help to local churches in their efforts to support and strengthen marriages and families in their congregations and communities.

#### ***Pet 60782      Page 581      Global Study of Marriage      No Position***

This petition would form a task force to study marriage. We favor the idea of developing a comprehensive theology of marriage, along with practical recommendations to strengthen the ministry of the church with regard to marriages. However, we would not want to see this study group used to promote a revision in United Methodist teaching on marriage that would advocate same-sex marriage or other forms of marriage contrary to biblical teaching. Therefore, we have not taken a position on this petition. Perhaps it could be amended to mandate that the study would make its recommendations in line with UM teaching and doctrine on marriage.

### **CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT**

#### ***Pet 60092      Page 594      Readopt Resolution      Support***

This petition readopts Resolution 8015, Guidelines: The United Methodist Church and the Charismatic Movement. This resource helps charismatics and non-charismatics understand each other and work together better in the church. This is a very helpful document.

### **CHRYSALIS**

#### ***Pet 60080      Page 585      Readopt Resolution      Support***

This petition readopts Resolution 2101, Support Chrysalis at All Levels of the Church. Chrysalis is a spiritual growth and enrichment program similar to Walk to Emmaus for young people. It has been very effective.

### **MORMONISM**

#### ***Pet 60087      Page 592      Readopt Resolution      Support***

This petition readopts Resolution 3147, Guidelines for Ministering to Mormons Who Seek to Become United Methodists. The resolution contains a robust theology of baptism and effectively illustrates the differences between Mormonism and Christianity. This is a very helpful resource.

**WALK TO EMMAUS**

Pet 60081      Page 585      Readopt Resolution      Support  
 This petition readopts Resolution 2102, Support the Walk to Emmaus at All Levels of the Church. The Emmaus Walk is an effective program of spiritual renewal for adults that has helped revitalize many congregations. We should encourage its use.

**BLACK CHURCH**

Pet 60109      Page 576      Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century      Support  
 This petition revises and adopts the plan for strengthening the black church.

Pet 60310      Page 588      Resourcing Black Churches in Urban Communities      Support  
 This petition revises and adopts Resolution 3063, encouraging resourcing and training for black church leaders.

**NATIVE AMERICAN PLAN**

Pet 60107      Page 575      Native American Comprehensive Plan      Support  
 This petition revises and adopts the plan for Native American ministry within the UM Church.

Pet 60849      Page 594      Native People and the UMC      Support  
 This petition consolidates 17 existing resolutions about Native People into one resolution. It gives an historical and theological overview of ministry with Native Americans. This is a very helpful resource for the church.

**NEW HYMNAL**

Pet 60106      Page 573      Hymnal Committees      No Position  
 This petition establishes two committees: one to prepare and present to the 2020 General Conference a new hymnal and a second committee to be a standing committee to continually revise and upgrade the resources available. The hymnal is envisioned to contain a core of materials that all churches would use, supplemented by a large reservoir of additional resources that congregations could purchase and tailor to their situation. The hymnal would be available in various print formats, as well as online versions. Once the hymnal was "published," it would be continually revised and updated with new resources, keeping it more in tune with changing needs of the church. The biggest question is who will be on the committees and what criteria will they use to approve the resources made available through this project. We hope that the committees will be sensitive to the needs, desires, and tastes of the broad grassroots of the church. (A recent test of this process was not encouraging, as over half of the top 100 contemporary worship songs was not approved for use by United Methodists.)

**SERVICES OF ORDINATION**

Pet 60108      Page 576      Services for the Ordering of Ministry      No Position  
 This petition adopts the revised services for the ordination and consecration of clergy and bishops. We believe the services are in line with United Methodist doctrine and worship. We will rely on the expertise of committee members to verify the fidelity of the services.

*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)*

# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 5

### FAITH AND ORDER

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*

*Priority petitions in bold italics*

#### **HOMOSEXUALITY**

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. It is important to maintain clear lines of accountability to what our church has taught for 44 years and continues to require today. We oppose any efforts to remove or weaken our church's standards. Instead, we support efforts to strengthen accountability to our church's standards.

***Pet 61039***      ***Page 768***      ***Amend Footnote***      ***Support***

This petition is necessary because of confusion over what constitutes a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." The General Conference is the only body that can define the term. Currently, persons who are living openly in partnerships or marriages with same-sex spouses are being ordained and appointed as clergy in the UM Church, despite what our *Discipline* says. This is because they refuse to "self-avow" by acknowledging that they are in a sexual relationship with a same-gender partner (the current definition). Broadening the definition to include those who are married to a person of the same sex or gender, as well as those who communicate in a public setting that they are a practicing homosexual, removes ambiguity. It preserves the "public" nature of self-avowal by stipulating that being married or in a domestic partnership (a public act) or making a public statement constitutes "self-avowal." It also would eliminate the need to probe into intimate details of a couple's relationship.

***Pet 60779***      ***Page 769***      ***Deletion***      ***Oppose***

***Pet 60780***      ***Page 769***      ***Qualifications for Ordination***      ***Oppose***

***Pet 60781***      ***Page 769***      ***A Third Way – Qualifications for Ordination***      ***Oppose***

***Pet 60907***      ***Page 770***      ***Qualifications for Ordination***      ***Oppose***

These petitions all remove the qualification that self-avowed practicing homosexuals shall not be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve. Petition 60781 allows annual conferences to decide to ordain and appoint practicing homosexuals, while Petition 60907 gives that power to jurisdictions or central conferences. All four would allow practicing homosexuals to serve as ordained clergy in at least some parts of The United Methodist Church.

***Pet 60799***      ***Page 769***      ***Qualifications for Ordination***      ***Support***

This petition would make clear the current understanding that those engaging in any kind of sexual relationship outside of heterosexual marriage are disqualified from serving as clergy in

the UM Church. It puts other forms of sexual immorality on an equal basis with homosexual behavior.

Pet 61036	Page 770	Qualifications for Ordination	Oppose
While well-intended, this petition is confusing in the language of the footnote, and the definitions given include extraneous material and also do not include non-marital sexual relationships (fornication).			
Pet 61042	Page 770	Qualifications for Ordination	Support
This petition specifically names the practice of homosexuality as a sin.			

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

<b><i>Pet 60544</i></b>	<b><i>Page 762</i></b>	<b><i>Mission Statement</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
This petition adds to our mission statement the words “for the eternal salvation of persons.” It would help us remember the spiritual dimension of discipleship and the necessity for evangelism. It is needed to balance the emphasis on world transformation, which too often becomes the goal, rather than the result, of disciple-making, glossing over the need to “offer them Christ” (Wesley’s primary instruction to early American Methodists).			

### **TWO JURISDICTIONS**

This petition is part of a comprehensive plan to dissolve the current five jurisdictions and create two (or three) new jurisdictions covering the entire U.S.—a “progressive” jurisdiction, a “traditionalist” jurisdiction, and possibly a “moderate” jurisdiction. The plan would 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 require annual conferences and local churches to choose which jurisdiction to affiliate with, based on their agreement with that jurisdiction’s stance on same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexuals. Some traditionalists could accept this solution as a compromise, while others could not, but so far there has been no support from the progressive leadership for this approach. This petition must be acted upon along with the rest of the plan. To enact this petition alone would give every jurisdiction the power to adapt the *Discipline* similar to the central conferences and would be a recipe for chaos. At least one, and perhaps three, of the current jurisdictions would allow same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexuals. It would be well to refer this petition to Committee 3, Conferences, which is dealing with the bulk of the petitions related to this plan.

<b><i>Pet 61018</i></b>	<b><i>Page 759</i></b>	<b><i>Two-Jurisdiction Solution – Power to Adapt the Discipline</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
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### **ARTICLE XXIII**

Pet 60864	Page 759	Deletion	Oppose
This petition deletes Article XXIII from our <i>Articles of Religion</i> . While on its face this article is irrelevant for the global United Methodist Church, the interpretive paragraph on page 70 of the <i>Discipline</i> applies the principles of Article XXIII for countries other than the U.S. It would be better to have replaced Article XXIII with a suitably globally framed paragraph, rather than pursue the blunt instrument of deleting it. There are also questions of procedure, since the <i>Articles of Religion</i> are protected by the first restrictive rule (§ 17).			

**BIBLICAL AUTHORITY**

Pet 60676      Page 760      Revision of Our Theological Task      Support

This petition brings much-needed revision to our theological statement, emphasizing the primary authority of Scripture and clarifying how that works out in our theological method. In a time when experience is becoming more important to some in doing theology, it is essential to reinforce the primary authority of Scripture for our life and faith (see *Articles of Religion*, Article V, and *Confession of Faith*, Article IV).

**BIBLICAL LANGUAGE**

Pet 60260      Page 778      Readopt Resolution      Oppose

This resolution discourages the use of masculine terms for God. While acknowledging that the Bible uses a variety of metaphors and descriptions for God, nowhere does the Bible use feminine or neuter terms in addressing God. This resolution goes too far when it discourages the use of biblical language in addressing or describing God.

**GLOBAL DISCIPLINE**

Pet 60276      Page 758      General Book of Discipline      No Position

This petition accompanies Petition 60277 in Committee 3, Conferences, which authorizes a churchwide feedback process to help shape a proposed *General Book of Discipline* that would apply equally to all annual conferences and not be subject to adaptation by the central conferences. The final draft of the *General Discipline* would then be proposed and voted on (with whatever amendments) at the 2020 General Conference. This petition codifies that process in ¶ 101 of the *Discipline*. We suggest that Part V Social Principles Preface and Preamble be restored (not deleted) as part of the *Discipline* that is not adaptable. These sections contain important theological foundation of the Social Principles. It might be helpful for Petition 60277 to be brought to this committee, so that all petitions on the Global Discipline could be acted on together.

Pet 60352      Page 758      General Book of Discipline Process      Oppose

This petition attempts to modify the feedback process being used to shape the Global Discipline, per Petition 60277 in Committee 3, Conferences. Such modifications of the process need to be incorporated into 60277 so that there are not contradictory provisions. The process should not be included in the *Discipline* itself (as this Petition 60352 does), but made part of the non-Disciplinary action of the General Conference, in line with 60277. We further oppose weighting the process unfairly with institutional bodies that would tend to have more influence than the voice of the grassroots of the church. These bodies can certainly be included in the feedback process by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, but should not have official standing, as this petition suggests. Deletion of the first sentence of ¶ 101 loses the description of our Wesleyan way of serving Christ “through doctrine and disciplined Christian life.”

**NICENE CREED**

Pet 60980      Page 759      Add Nicene Creed to Doctrinal Standards      Support

This petition implements the Constitutional amendments in Petitions 60978 and 60979, which are currently assigned to Committee 7, General Administration. 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 would be helpful if all three petitions could be acted upon by this legislative committee, as requested by the submitters.

*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)*



# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 6

### FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*

*Priority petitions in bold italics*

#### **ABORTION**

Abortion is a controversial subject within both our church and society. As Christians, we should lean toward protecting and preserving life whenever possible. Scripture lifts up the personhood of the unborn (e.g., Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44). The early church consistently spoke against abortion and infanticide, which was a common practice among the Romans. While acknowledging that there are difficult and exceptional cases to consider, we believe United Methodism does best when it advocates on behalf of the lives of unborn children and supports the lives of women in crisis pregnancies.

***Pet 60760      Page 736      Investment Ethics      Support***

In a time when we are updating our investment criteria, concerned that our church does not profit from economic activities that are not in keeping with Christian principles, we should not profit from 40-50 million abortions worldwide per year, 1.2 million of which occur in the U.S. One example of such investments is the production of abortifacient drugs such as Mifepristone.

#### **APPORTIONMENTS**

***Pet 60030      Page 692      Conference Apportionment Formula      Support***

Apportionments are a foundational factor in connecting United Methodist churches in ministry. This petition seeks to limit a local church' apportionment to ten percent of a local church's program expenditures. Some churches experience 15-20 percent of their budget going to apportionments, which severely impacts the local church's ability to do ministry. The biblical tithe is a good minimum standard, with encouragement to give voluntarily more than that amount from money raised for that purpose.

***Pet 60724      Page 692      Limiting Apportionments      Consider***

This petition also limits local church apportionments to ten percent, but includes all missions in the base amount off of which the apportionment limit is calculated. The more missions are included in the base, the less incentive for local churches to engage in supporting missions, since every dollar will be "penalized" in an apportionment. We prefer Petition 60030.

***Pet 60031      Page 697      Conference Apportionment Formula      Support***

This petition sets a limit on how much of the annual conference apportionment income should go to the general church. Some annual conferences experience as much as 30 percent of their budget going to general apportionments. Setting the maximum at 10 percent enables the annual conference to engage in vital ministry locally and protect local churches from financial hardship, while encouraging local church participation and support for projects over and above apportionments.

***Pet 60691      Page 729      Eliminate Percentage Adjustment      Oppose***

The elimination of the percentage adjustment would cause hardship for churches living in poorer parts of the U.S. The percentage adjustment is also the bedrock for making central

conference apportionments fairly reflect the economic strength of each nation. The adjustment is an essential aspect of fairness.

### **CENTRAL CONFERENCE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

The most urgent need in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Philippines is for highly trained pastoral leaders who can support the church's ministry and growth. As a denomination, we should structure support for theological education into our regular apportionments, rather than rely upon a once-every-four-years decision about how much we can spare in the budget for this purpose. Having a regular apportionment would ensure a steady funding source upon which theological schools could rely. Petition 60927 establishes central conference theological education as a separate apportioned fund, rather than taking the money from general agencies in the World Service Fund. Petition 60928 establishes how the fund would be administered and sets the amount at \$10 million for the quadrennium. This is a tiny percentage of the \$130 million currently being spent on U.S. theological education.

<b><i>Pet 60927</i></b>	<b><i>Page 702</i></b>	<b><i>Central Conference Theological Education Fund</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60928</i></b>	<b><i>Page 703</i></b>	<b><i>Funding for the Central Conference Theological Ed Fund</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

### **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. It is important to maintain clear lines of accountability to what our church has taught for 44 years and continues to require today. We oppose any efforts to remove or weaken our church's standards.

<b><i>Pet 60773</i></b>	<b><i>Page 691</i></b>	<b><i>Clarify AC Funding Restrictions</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60768</i></b>	<b><i>Page 697</i></b>	<b><i>Clarify GCFA Funding Restrictions</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

These petitions restrict church funds from being given "to any local church that identifies or labels itself as an unofficial body or movement." This restriction is in line with Judicial Council Decision 871, which prohibits such labeling or identification. Unfortunately, some groups are ignoring this decision without consequence. Tithes and offerings of our members ought not go to churches that are not conforming to our church requirements.

<b><i>Pet 60774</i></b>	<b><i>Page 691</i></b>	<b><i>Use of Church Funds</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60776</i></b>	<b><i>Page 691</i></b>	<b><i>Deletion</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60770</i></b>	<b><i>Page 697</i></b>	<b><i>Continue Funding the Church's Response to the HIV</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60771</i></b>	<b><i>Page 698</i></b>	<b><i>Remove Language</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60772</i></b>	<b><i>Page 698</i></b>	<b><i>Foster Holy Conferencing in UM Organizations</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60775</i></b>	<b><i>Page 698</i></b>	<b><i>Use of Church Funds</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

These petitions all remove the restrictions on church funds going to "any gay caucus or group" or otherwise "promote the acceptance of homosexuality." This restriction ensures that church funds will not be used in ways that violate the consciences of donors. Removing the restriction would potentially precipitate a drop in giving or a re-designation of giving to local use only. Removal would thus hurt the worldwide mission and functioning of the general church and annual conference.

Pet 60769      Page 697      Scope of Authority      Support

This petition clarifies that the responsibility of GCFA extends only to monitoring general church expenditures. It is the responsibility of the annual conference to monitor annual conference expenditures. We believe the last sentence addition should be deleted. While we do not advocate disobeying secular law, neither should we be unconditionally bound by it.

**Pet 60995      Page 701      Definition of Spousal Benefits      Support**

This petition seeks to reverse a decision to grant “spousal” benefits to both same-sex and opposite sex partners of general church employees living in a marriage or other union. The current policy contradicts the fact that our church does not recognize same-sex marriages or unions and advocates celibacy in singleness for heterosexual persons. Our church policies should embody our church teachings and values. We ought not to offer “spousal benefits” to persons who are not spouses in the eyes of church teaching.

#### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM STAFF**

**Pet 60581      Page 690      Standards for Program Staff      Support**

This petition establishes minimum standards for annual conference program staff. They are the same standards required of general church program staff. Since staff are working on behalf of the church, they should model the church’s values, lifestyle, and teachings. Credibility is undercut when staff hold beliefs at odds with UM doctrinal or ethical standards, or when their actions are not in accord with those standards.

#### **TRANSLATION**

As a worldwide church, it is essential that all operate out of the same “playbook.” This means that the *Book of Discipline* needs to be translated into all the official languages of the church. Not having an official translation of the church’s “bylaws” makes 40 percent of the church feel disregarded. We cannot expect our central conference brothers and sisters to operate effectively without a *Discipline* that they can understand. Such translation would get us all on the same page—literally!

**Pet 60591      Page 725      Translate the BOD into Official Languages of GC      Support**

**Pet 60938      Page 731      Swahili Translation      Support**

#### **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 60580      Page 705      Consistency and Transparency in Investment Ethics      Support

This petition requires that the board be consistent in its social advocacy with companies, treating similar entities alike. It further mandates the solicitation of comments from diverse perspectives in the church before implementing any action. This proposal would enhance trust in the board’s handling of these matters by making it transparent and consistent.

Pet 60759	Page 729	Petroleum and Natural Gas Investment Policy	Oppose
Pet 60175	Page 735	Investment Ethics	Oppose
Pet 60201	Page 736	Investment Ethics	Oppose
Pet 60316	Page 736	Investment Ethics	Oppose

These petitions 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 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 60038	Page 732	Investment Ethics	AMEND and Support
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This revision of our ethical investment guidelines is well balanced, thoughtful, and practical. It upholds scriptural values in balancing the various advantages and disadvantages posed by investment decisions. They are good guidelines for our decision-makers to follow. We recommend keeping the list of specific items under point 1 on page 734, since they give more definitive and clear guidance.

Pet 60855	Page 730	Establish a Screen to Remove and Avoid Investments in Illegal	Oppose
Pet 60858	Page 730	Divestment	Oppose

These petitions would require divestment from companies with involvement in illegal settlements in Palestinian territory. These resolutions are vague in defining what constitutes an illegal settlement (which is at present a political determination) and thus nearly impossible to implement objectively. Such divestment would more likely hurt Palestinian workers who are hired by these companies. (When Soda Stream was forced out of the West Bank by a boycott, 600 Palestinian workers lost their jobs.) Boycotts and divestment may tend only to drive Israel more deeply into isolation and an unwillingness to compromise for the sake of peace. Israel will not surrender its only remaining bargaining chip without security guarantees that the Palestinians are unwilling to give. Thus, divestment will ultimately be counterproductive to advancing peace.

Pet 60857	Page 730	Divest from Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett	Oppose
Pet 60859	Page 730	Aligning Investments with Social Principles	Oppose
Pet 60856	Page 739	Divest from Caterpillar	Oppose
Pet 60867	Page 741	Educational Campaign about Hewlett Packard	Oppose

These petitions all advocate or move toward divestment from particular companies that do business with Israel in some way connected with Israeli activities in the West Bank. Some of the activities in which the companies are involved include protecting Israeli citizens (both Jews and Arabs) from suicide bomb attacks by radical Palestinians. Since the security fence was built in Israel, bomb attacks have shrunk to almost zero, saving hundreds of lives each year. For example, Motorola is being boycotted because Israeli soldiers use Motorola cell phones on duty. That is comparable to calling for a boycott of Ford because bank robbers overwhelmingly use Ford trucks in their criminal activity (hypothetical example). Divestment would send a message that our church does not approve of nations acting to defend themselves. While Israel's actions

are not above reproach, there needs to be a balanced call for Palestinians to acknowledge Israel's right to exist within secure borders and to renounce violence that often targets innocent civilians, as well.

Pet 60761      Page 736      Investment Ethics      Support  
 This petition encourages positive investment in companies that have a good record in peacemaking and cooperation. This positive alternative to divestment helps move the church in a constructive direction to foster and reward corporate behavior that is in line with our values.

Pet 60852      Page 739      Diplomacy and Investments in Palestine      Oppose  
 This petition is well-intended but naïve in thinking that the U.S. or other governments can impose a peace settlement upon Israel and the Palestinians who have been unable to agree on a peace deal for over 20 years. Peace needs not just the influence of outsiders, but the will of the heart to live in peace. Until conditions exist that make peace possible on the ground, any political settlement will not be effective.

### **THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

Pet 60667      Page 703      Supporting UM Candidates for Ministry      Support  
 This petition would shift more resources directly to students entering ordained ministry, rather than supporting the operating budgets of the schools. The seminaries would receive more funds through the students, rather than through direct payments of the MEF funds.

Pet 60558      Page 703      Prohibit Non-Christian Training      Support  
 This petition would ensure that UM theological schools would concentrate on using their resources for training Christian leaders, rather than diluting their mission by training non-Christian leaders. Non-Christians would be welcome to attend classes, but there should be no programs designed to train non-Christian religious leaders at a United Methodist school.

### **PUBLISHING HOUSE**

Pet 60048      Page 723      UMPH Authorization      AMEND  
 This petition deletes some historical material that is no longer needed. However, in doing so, it endangers the Publishing House's relationship with the denomination as being subject to the *Discipline* and the Restrictive Rules. The petition should be amended to retain this language: "in accordance with the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* and the Restrictive Rules (§ 22, section III, article IV, of the Constitution)." We want to ensure that the Publishing House remains governed by the *Discipline*.

*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)*

# 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.

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

## **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.

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

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.

<b>Pet 60163</b>	<b>Page 785</b>	<b>Inclusiveness of Gender and Age</b>	<b>No Position</b>
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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.

<b>Pet 60606</b>	<b>Page 785</b>	<b>Inclusiveness of Sex and Gender</b>	<b>Support</b>
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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
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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
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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](http://www.methodistcrossroads.org)*

# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 8

### GLOBAL MINISTRIES

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

#### **MISSIONARY STANDARDS**

***Pet 60032***      ***Page 851***      ***Missionary Standards***      ***Support***

This petition sets essentially the same standards for all future GBGM missionaries that are currently in place for clergy. Many missionaries are clergy and already bound by these standards. Lay missionaries ought to embody the same high standards of conduct. It is important that our missionaries be a living example of Christian conduct, embodying the message they proclaim.

#### **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS**

***Pet 60222***      ***Page 891***      ***Aid to the Persecuted Christian Church Worldwide***      ***Support***

This new resolution would provide practical ways for the worldwide church to address the persecution of our brothers and sisters in Africa and the Middle East. It is important that we stand in solidarity with persecuted Christians, since we have a special relationship with them through the Body of Christ. This resolution provides ways for us to learn about their plight, as well as concrete ways for us to help.

Pet 60313      Page 863      The Church's Response to Ethnic and Religious Conflict      No Position

This petition revises and readopts Resolution 3124, which encourages peace-making in the midst of religious conflict and persecution. We are also concerned that some of the organizations that the GBGM is asked to partner with are on-sided anti-Israel organizations. We leave this petition up to the discretion of the committee.

#### **AFRICA DEVELOPMENT**

These three petitions all propose greater emphasis on providing development assistance to the continent of Africa. As the continent most in need of development and with perhaps the greatest potential, it is appropriate to focus attention on Africa's development. The petitions revise, update, and readopt three current resolutions.

Pet 60319	Page 879	Africa Growth and Development	Support
Pet 60476	Page 881	Democratic Republic of the Congo: Hope for a Radiant Future	Support
Pet 60414	Page 882	Liberia	Support

#### **HIV/AIDS**

***Pet 60931***      ***Page 866***      ***United Methodist Global AIDS Fund***      ***Support***

In response to the progress that has been made in treating and preventing HIV/AIDS, this petition revises and renews the resolution supporting continued involvement in this battle. It is important for the church to stand with those who are fighting this disease and provide encouragement and support to victims and health care workers alike.

**ISIS**

Pet 60910      Page 893      Condemnation of Terrorist Acts of ISIS      Support  
 This petition condemns the terrorist actions of ISIS and encourages the church to engage in Spirit-led ministry to areas that are being freed from ISIS control.

**ISRAEL**

Pet 60198      Page 856      End Coalition Support      Support  
 Pet 60599      Page 857      Withdraw UMC from Coalition      Support

These two petitions seek to end United Methodist participation in the coalition "U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation." This coalition takes a one-sided approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, favoring the divestment from and isolation of Israel, without expressing any concern for anti-Israeli violence and terrorism. Blaming or seeking to punish only one side will not advance the cause of peace. A more balanced approach is needed. We encourage delegates to visit this group's own website - [www.endtheoccupation.org/](http://www.endtheoccupation.org/) - and see for themselves how this group advocates an agenda of singling out the world's lone Jewish state for sweeping Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Even some very liberal American political leaders have strongly opposed the BDS movement.

Pet 60205      Page 890      A Pathway for Peace in Palestine and Israel      Support  
 This is an excellent resolution that portrays a much more balanced and nuanced approach to building the conditions for peace in the Middle East. It applies the principles of restorative justice and positive peace-making to this intractable conflict.

Pet 60868      Page 892      Task Force on Israel/Palestine      No Position  
 This petition calls upon the Board of Church and Society and Board of Global Ministries to create a task force to study the situation in Israel and Palestine, recommending actions that can be taken to respond to requests for aid from Palestinian Christians. We are concerned that the resolution does not mention the need to also respond to requests for aid from our Jewish friends and Christians in Israel. We hope that the task force would take a balanced approach in understanding the dynamics involved in the conflict, tailoring their recommendations accordingly.

**ASIAN-AMERICAN PLAN**

Pet 60330      Page 856      Asian American Language Ministry Plan      Support  
 This petition asks for approval and adoption of the Asian American Language Ministry Plan. This is an important outreach to a fast-growing segment of the population of the U.S.

**HISPANIC PLAN**

Pet 60332      Page 856      National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry      Support  
 This petition asks for approval and adoption of the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. This plan is currently being carried out in at least 49 annual conferences in the U.S. Hispanics are the largest non-European ethnic group in the U.S.

**KOREAN PLAN**

Pet 60331      Page 856      Korean Ministry Plan      Support  
 This petition asks for approval and adoption of the Korean Ministry Plan. This plan has been an integral part of the revitalization efforts of the U.S. part of United Methodism. It upholds a

disproportionately active segment of the church's membership with unique needs in reaching out to immigrant and subsequent generations.

### **PACIFIC ISLANDER PLAN**

Pet 60333	Page 857	Pacific Islander Ministry Plan	Support
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This petition asks for approval and adoption of the Pacific Islander Ministry Plan, aiming to resource, strengthen, and advocate for the growth and development of Pacific Island churches and ministries within the U.S.

### **IMMIGRATION**

Pet 60317	Page 869	Global Migration and the Quest for Justice	No Position
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This petition revises and readopts Resolution 6028 on global migration. It lays out the circumstances surrounding this crucial problem in today's world, along with the principles for providing ministry and advocacy around this vulnerable population. There may be some points of disagreement with the principles enunciated by this resolution, but it also names many of the issues that need to be confronted in learning to deal with the migration crisis besetting parts of the globe.

*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)*

## LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 9 INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONS

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*

*Priority petitions in bold italics*

### **UNITED METHODIST MEN**

Pet 60267      Page 1003      Add Class Meetings      Support

This petition encourages the addition of class meetings to men’s ministry. The goal of these class meetings is to discuss transformational questions as to where the men have intersected with Christ. This ought to be a major focus of our discipleship.

Pet 60954      Page 993      Plan UMC Revised – UM Men      Support

This petition equalizes the structure of United Methodist Men with that of United Methodist Women.

### **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN**

Pet 60729      Page 977      Responsibilities of UMW      Support

This petition encourages the incorporation of evangelism in the program efforts of United Methodist Women. Since evangelism is central to the mission of the church, it should be incorporated into all the ministries of the church.

### **ANNUAL CONFERENCE STRUCTURE**

These petitions all propose changing “shall” to “may” to allow annual conferences to structure their ministry in the way that is most effective for them. We like the idea of more flexible structure, as long as the responsibilities inherent in the current structures are cared for by some part of the annual conference.

Pet 60958	Page 975	Permissiveness in AC Structure – Director of Communications	Support
Pet 60963	Page 975	Permissiveness in AC Structure - CCELCC	Support
Pet 60966	Page 975	Permissiveness in AC Structure - CCAH	Support
Pet 60968	Page 976	Permissiveness in AC Structure – CCORR	Support
Pet 60969	Page 976	Permissiveness in AC Structure – CCOSROW	Support
Pet 60970	Page 976	Permissiveness in AC Structure – CCSMC	Support

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# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 10

### JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

*Renewal and Reform Coalition (RRC)*

*Priority petitions in bold italics*

#### **CHARGEABLE OFFENSES**

These petitions deal with various chargeable offenses that are proposed to be added.

<b><i>Pet 60070</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1017</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offense</i></b>	<b><i>Amend and Support</i></b>
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Those who disagree with our church's standards and teaching regarding sexuality and marriage have taken to "ecclesiastical disobedience," including disrupting meetings and imposing their agenda on bodies of the church. Such behavior is not in keeping with Christian conferencing and indeed is a form of bullying. As such, it should not be allowed in the church. Church bodies should not be held hostage by a vocal minority of demonstrators, nor should the body's ability to do what the church tasks it to do be prevented (often at great expense of the time wasted). The proposed petition needs to be amended to add the phrase "by conduct that violates that body's rules." The full chargeable offense would then read, "interfering with the General Conference or another United Methodist body or agency's ability to conduct business by conduct that violates that body's rules."

<b>Pet 60890</b>	<b>Page 1021</b>	<b>Chargeable Offenses</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition proposes adding as a chargeable offense "waging war." While most Christians would agree that war is heinous and not in keeping with God's ultimate will, most Christians would also agree that in a fallen world, war is a necessary evil of last resort in order to protect innocent people from the aggression of others. Romans 13:1-5 states that God gives the one in authority the right to "bear the sword" as "God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." John the Baptist did not command soldiers to abandon their occupation (Luke 3:14), and the first Gentile convert was a commanding officer in the Roman army (Acts 10).

<b>Pet 60593</b>	<b>Page 1021</b>	<b>Chargeable Offense</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
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This petition would add "believer's baptism" as a chargeable offense. The phrase is vague and undefined. While our doctrinal standards encourage infant baptism, they do not deny baptism to youth or adults who come to Christ later in life and have not been baptized. Such baptism could be a chargeable offense under this petition. Furthermore, our doctrinal standards do not forbid infant dedication, should the parents so desire.

<b>Pet 60160</b>	<b>Page 1018</b>	<b>Fiscal Malfeasance</b>	<b>Oppose</b>
<b>Pet 60933</b>	<b>Page 1018</b>	<b>Fiscal malfeasance</b>	<b>Support</b>

These petitions add a new chargeable offense, fiscal malfeasance. Financial misconduct is not necessarily covered under the chargeable offense "crime," since some instances of misconduct are not prosecuted in the secular legal system or the person is not convicted. Petition 60160 is insufficient because it does not define the offense. Petition 60933 gives a good definition that

makes clear what is meant by the offense. Accountability for financial stewardship and integrity are essential for any non-profit organization, including especially the Christian Church.

### **COUNSEL FOR THE CHURCH**

The process of church discipline and accountability are essential for a functioning denomination. To maintain the integrity of the process, the counsel for the church must agree with the provision of the *Discipline* he/she is asked to uphold through the accountability process. Having a church counsel who publicly has opposed the disciplinary provision they are tasked to uphold erodes trust and creates the appearance of impropriety. Petition 60595 seems the best way to accomplish this, although other options could be considered. Some of the language from 60594 could be incorporated in 60595.

<b><i>Pet 60595</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1023</i></b>	<b><i>Commitment of Counsel for the Church</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
Pet 60559	Page 1025	Selecting Counsel	Not recommended
Pet 60594	Page 1026	Selecting Counsel	Consider

### **EPISCOPAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

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.

<b><i>Pet 60029</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1011</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61029</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1022</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61030</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1024</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61031</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1027</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 61032</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1031</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60923</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1017</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60920</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1022</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60921</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1024</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60922</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1026</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60924</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1031</i></b>	<b><i>Revision of the Episcopal Complaint Process</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

The three sets of petitions above represent two different proposals to revise the complaint process for bishops. Petition 60029 comes from the Kentucky Conference, the second group is similar, submitted from Reynoldsburg, OH. The third group of petitions is a slightly different approach submitted by the Western Pennsylvania Conference. 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.

## **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 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.

<b><i>Pet 60212</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1005</i></b>	<b><i>Global Church Structure - Judiciary</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60988</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1006</i></b>	<b><i>Global Connectional Conference – Judiciary</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

## **HOMOSEXUALITY**

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. It is important to maintain clear lines of accountability to what our church has taught for 44 years and continues to require today. We oppose any efforts to remove or weaken the chargeable offenses.

<b><i>Pet 60766</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1018</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60762</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1019</i></b>	<b><i>Removing Practice of Homosexuality from List</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60763</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1019</i></b>	<b><i>A Third Way – Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60764</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1019</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60765</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1020</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60904</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1020</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60767</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1020</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60888</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1021</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60905</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1021</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60889</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1021</i></b>	<b><i>Chargeable Offenses</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>

<b><i>Pet 60796</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1034</i></b>	<b><i>Support of LGBT Persons</i></b>	<b><i>Oppose</i></b>
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This resolution would ask United Methodists to ignore the standards we have set as a church for how we expect our clergy to behave. Such an approach undermines the connection that binds us together, makes our General Conference decisions meaningless, and creates a precedent for ignoring other parts of the *Discipline* with which individuals disagree.

## **JUST RESOLUTION**

Just resolution is an honorable attempt to resolve possible violations of the *Discipline* in a more amicable way that avoids the need for a trial. Recently, however, the just resolution process has been used to circumvent the requirements of the *Discipline* and in effect condone violations of its requirements. These petitions aim to restore integrity to the just resolution process.



**Pet 60027      Page 1010      Complainant as Party to Just Resolution      Support**

This petition requires that the complainant have a say in whether the complaint is considered “resolved” through a just resolution. Reconciliation (the aim of a just resolution) cannot take place without the participation and agreement of the complainant. It is important to note that the complainant’s refusal to accept a just resolution does not automatically lead the complaint to trial. It would still have to pass the committee on investigation before a trial could be held, and that body could dismiss the complaint without trial.

**Pet 60028      Page 1011      Definition of Just Resolution      Support**

This petition defines a just resolution as one where the respondent apologizes for acknowledged violations of the *Discipline* and commits not to repeat the offense. Without these elements, a just resolution is not “just,” nor does it truly resolve the complaint. It *de facto* condones the violation. Without these elements, there is no expression of repentance, so there can be no effective restoration of the respondent to the church body.

**Pet 60391      Page 1015      Just Resolution Before and After Referral to Counsel      No Position**

This petition distinguishes between a resolution obtained before referral to a counsel for the church and after such referral, requiring the complainant’s agreement in the former case, but not the latter. While an improvement on the current situation, it would not prevent the abuse of the resolution process to circumvent the requirements of the *Discipline*, once a complaint was referred to counsel for the church.

**Pet 60806      Page 1016      Just Resolution      Support**  
**Pet 60807      Page 1029      Just Resolution      Support**

These petitions would require any just resolution involving the acknowledged offense of performing a same-sex wedding to include an unpaid suspension of one year for the clergy person involved. This provision would again prevent the abuse of the just resolution process to avoid significant consequences for violations of the *Discipline*.

## **PENALTIES**

The issue of penalties in trials needs clarification from several aspects. In addition, recent and growing instances of disobedience to the church’s prohibition on performing same-sex weddings threaten to make this prohibition meaningless. In very few cases has a meaningful consequence been levied against a person found to have committed the offense. Consequences have ranged from a 24-hour suspension to writing a paper to no consequences at all. A specific penalty is needed regarding this offense because it is the only offense for which a nationally orchestrated campaign of disobedience is being pursued. Since this is a global requirement, there should be a consistent understanding of the penalty, which removes ambiguity and prevents the tacit condoning of violations of the *Discipline* by levying no meaningful consequence. The first petition represents the best alternative of a clear and consistent penalty for this offense.

**Pet 60810      Page 1030      Mandatory Penalty      Support**

**Pet 60808      Page 1027      Consequences      Not Recommended**  
**Pet 60809      Page 1030      Consequences      Not Recommended**

While the intent of these identical petitions is laudable in imposing set penalties, they are unclear in their details and ramifications. A simpler and more straightforward approach seems preferable.

Pet 60596      Page 1029      Penalties      Support  
 This petition would allow penalties that include restitution and/or the renewal of membership or ordination vows. A recent Judicial Council decision has disallowed anything other than a punitive penalty, which would preclude any more restorative approach that a trial court might wish to take.

Pet 60673      Page 1028      Management of Judicial Just Resolution Agreements      Support  
 This petition would task the committee on investigation with the supervision of any just resolution or trial court penalty. This would ensure that a judicial body maintains jurisdiction, rather than the current practice of turning that responsibility over to a bishop or cabinet or board of ordained ministry.

Pet 60597      Page 1032      Clarify Appeals Committee Powers      Support  
 This petition clarifies that an appeals committee cannot undo the penalty imposed by a trial court unless there are egregious errors of church law. It also provides that the appeals committee cannot invent a new penalty, but must impose a penalty within the range of options considered by the trial court. This restrains the appeals committee from undoing the hard work of the trial court without sufficient cause.

### **APPEALS**

The ability to appeal is guaranteed in the church constitution. Appeals are an essential part of the judicial process in order to ensure a level playing field and prevent errors of church law or process from denying a just result of a trial or proceeding.

Pet 60069      Page 1032      Church Right to Appeal      Support  
 This petition provides the same right of appeal to the church as exists for the respondent. In a system where pastors serve as lawyers and bishops as judges, errors in church law are to be expected. There needs to be a fair system to address such errors in order to ensure a just outcome. It is unfair to grant the right of appeal to the respondent, but not to the church.

Pet 60592      Page 1009      Availability of Records in Appeal      Support  
 This petition ensures that all relevant materials from previous trials are available to both sides when there is an appeal of a current case. That legal history is essential for maintaining continuity and the value of precedent in deciding questions of church law. Such materials were denied to a counsel for the church during a recent appeal.

Pet 60911      Page 1032      Administrative Review Process      Support  
 This petition provides needed clarity regarding the appeals process in administrative matters. It is prompted by Judicial Council Decision 1276, which noted the lack of clarity and asked General Conference to address it.

### **JUDICIAL COUNCIL**

Since the Judicial Council is the primary interpreter of church law, it is essential that the church be able to operate under an authoritative interpretation. These two petitions allow greater access to bring questions of church law interpretation and implementation to the Judicial Council. Petition 60527 allows the annual conference, the basic unit of the church, to request such interpretations. Petition 60521 allows the annual conference lay leaders, as the primary representative body of laity, to request such interpretations.

Pet 60527	Page 1009	Annual Conference Declaratory Decision Requests	Support
Pet 60521	Page 1009	AACLL Authority to Request Decisions	Support

### **ORGANIC JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION**

This petition is part of 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. Petition 61014 sets up jurisdictional courts tasked with interpreting that jurisdiction's unique standards and adaptations of the *Discipline*.

Pet 61014	Page 1008	Jurisdictional Judicial Courts	Oppose
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*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)*

# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 11

### LOCAL CHURCH

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

#### **CHURCH PROPERTY**

In the current climate of polarization within The United Methodist Church, questions have been raised about the possibility of separation. Local churches on both sides of the question of homosexuality and marriage have voted to leave the denomination. This has been handled by each annual conference on a case by case basis, leading to inconsistency in how these situations are treated. These two petitions propose ways of standardizing the handling of churches desiring to leave the denomination. We believe that covenant cannot be coerced, and that churches that are unwilling to live within the boundaries of our covenant ought to have the freedom to leave the denomination with their property without undue penalty. Many laypersons believe it is unfair that the denomination should be able to keep the church's property in that case, since it is the local members who built it and provide the upkeep. Allowing frustrated churches who are unwilling to continue supporting our denominational covenant to exit may relieve the pressure of conflict and allow the denomination to refocus its energy on its mission.

***Pet 60811***      ***Page 1043***      ***Disaffiliation***      ***Support***

This petition provides a process of exit for congregations who are "in irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience with the provisions of *The Book of Discipline* ... on the practice of homosexuality and the blessing of homosexual unions." It is thus limited only to churches who cannot accept United Methodist teaching and requirements around these issues. Such congregations are now increasingly engaged in disobedience to the *Discipline* because of their conscientious position. Exit would require a period of study and discernment, a two-thirds vote of the church conference, and the local church assuming all debts. The local church could then keep its property. We would be open to adding to this petition the additional requirements that Petition 60812 would impose on departing congregations.

***Pet 60812***      ***Page 1044***      ***Disaffiliation***      ***Consider***

This petition is similar to the first, except that the reason for leaving is a bit broader. In light of the "deep conflict over the church's position on the practice of homosexuality and the blessing of homosexual unions," a church could leave if "for reasons of conscience, witness, or mission it can better serve Christ and his kingdom by not being affiliated with The United Methodist Church." This petition would allow churches who feel strongly on either side of the question to depart, if they felt they could not longer conscientiously serve within United Methodism. In addition to the requirements imposed by the first petition, this petition also requires the local church to repay to the annual conference money invested by the conference in the local church during the previous five years and to pay one additional year's apportionment in full.

#### **HOMOSEXUALITY**

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.

**Pet 60839      Page 1041      Responsibilities of S/PPRC      Oppose**

This petition mandates a non-discrimination policy for lay staff based on "age, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status." Such broad language could mandate that churches hire practicing homosexuals, transgender persons, and unmarried cohabiting heterosexual persons as lay staff. It would open the local church to increased legal liability to being sued over employment decisions. Congregations could be forced to hire and promote people who do not ascribe to the congregation's values. Including "gender identity" as a category is an implicit affirmation that a person's gender is based on one's own feelings, rather than biological reality, and that gender can be changed. Our statement on inclusiveness is already found in ¶ 4 of the constitution and in ¶ 140, so there is no need to reiterate it here in a way that opens up legal liability for the congregation.

**WOMEN'S MINISTRY**

The importance of various forms of women's ministry in the local church is unquestioned. Unfortunately, the *Discipline's* support for United Methodist Women as the primary ministry for women has led pastors, superintendents, and bishops in some areas to oppose or even prohibit any other form of women's ministry. These two petitions emphasize the importance of women's ministry and open the door to a variety of formats in addition to UMW being able to function well in the local church.

**Pet 60614      Page 1038      Supplemental Ministries      Support**

This petition encourages supplemental ministry programs for women and men in addition to United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men.

**Pet 60844      Page 1050      Women's Ministry      Support**

This resolution lifts up the importance of women's ministry in the local church and encourages local churches to provide supplemental women's ministry programs that fit the unique needs of women in each church.

**LEADERSHIP STANDARDS**

It is important that local church leaders affirm the teachings of our denomination, so that the ministry and mission of the local church can be unified around a common foundation of essential matters. Since we require local church leaders to be "loyal to the ethical standards ... in the Social Principles," we should also require leaders to affirm our doctrinal teachings, as well.

Pet 60713      Page 1037      Church Council      Support

Pet 60714      Page 1037      Powers and Duties of the Charge Conference      Support

This petition would require the church leadership to "promote awareness of and concurrence with the Doctrinal Standards and General Rules." This will improve the theological literacy in our congregations.

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Pet 60607      Page 1035      Membership      Support

This petition makes explicit in the *Discipline* what has been affirmed by the Judicial Council, that pastors can exercise discernment about a person's readiness to assume the vows of membership. It is important to provide an avenue of appeal in order to protect against the abuse or capricious use of pastoral authority. The right of appeal is enshrined in ¶ 20 of our Constitution. The P/SPRC is the body best equipped to handle these appeals, since they are used to dealing with confidential personal information, and the committee is intended to be representative of the congregation's breadth and diversity.

Pet 60071      Page 1036      Accountability      Support

This petition enhances the fact that members are accountable for the vows they take at baptism and profession of faith. It creates the foundation for a higher expectation of membership.

Pet 60021      Page 1036      Accurate Membership Statistics      Consider

Pet 60022      Page 1036      Accurate Membership Statistics      Support

Pet 60023      Page 1036      Accurate Membership Statistics      Support

These petitions aim to make the church membership statistics more accurate by mandating that persons who are no longer active (without reason) in the local church be removed from membership. Membership statistics in many congregations do not reflect the actual people who are active and supportive in the life of the church. Pastors in some regions have been openly encouraged to dishonestly "pad" their membership numbers in order to help their area take more denominational leadership slots which are assigned proportionally to membership. On the other hand, there are times when pastoral discretion is needed to keep a person on the roll of members. Petition 60021 mandates the inactive member's removal, while petitions 60022 and 60023 only mandate that the member be recommended for removal. Such recommendation is still subject to the approval of the charge conference.

**ORGANIC JURISDICTIONAL SOLUTION**

This petition is part of a set of petitions being handled by Committee 3, Conferences, and we recommend that it 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. 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.

Pet 61009      Page 1042      Organic Jurisdictional Solution – Transfer Procedures for Churches  
Support

This petition would allow a congregation to transfer to another annual conference in which it may not be geographically located.

*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)*

# 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.

<b><i>Pet 60066</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1082</i></b>	<b><i>Tenure of Bishops</i></b>	<b><i>Consider</i></b>
<b><i>Pet 60510</i></b>	<b><i>Page 1082</i></b>	<b><i>Tenure of Bishops</i></b>	<b><i>Support</i></b>

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
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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
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This petition encourages support for Africa University.

### **ANTI-SEMITISM**

Pet 60926	Page 1183	Confronting Twenty-First-Century Anti-Semitism	Support
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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
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**BLACK COLLEGE FUND**

Pet 60344	Page 1176	The Black College Fund	Support
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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
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**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 Christian 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)*

## 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.

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