

Connectional Table Recommendations for The United Methodist Church

Connectional Table members voted to file a petition asking delegates of the 2012 General Conference to restructure the governing boards of general agencies to form a more cohesive, efficient and flexible organization.

The legislation is based on one of the Call to Action recommendations, which proposes instituting one agency called the Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry that is accountable to one board comprised of 15 directors, replacing most of the agency boards that are supported through general church funds. The Center will organize its work into proposed "Offices" rather than separate agencies with separate boards of directors. The legislation also proposes to create a 45-member General Council for Strategy and Oversight that will work with General Conference and the Council of Bishops to set long-term strategies for the denomination and provide oversight for the new board of directors.

"This legislation provides a means for dialogue about much-needed change in our governance structures of the general church. We offer this to the church in anticipation of spirited and engaged holy conferencing at General Conference," says Bishop John Hopkins, chair of the Connectional Table. "We also realize that this is just one aspect of a much larger vision toward fostering and sustaining vital congregations across the UMC."

During its July 27-28, 2011 meeting in Nashville, Tenn. members of the Connectional Table voted to support and affirm recommendations made by the Call to Action - Interim Operations Team that seek to put in place the first steps toward a 10-year plan to foster and sustain more vital congregations across the UMC. The recommendations are:

1. **General Agency Realignment** – The CT recommends a realignment of most general agency functions with an emphasis on unifying key competencies. The CT proposes that nine of the agencies be consolidated as the Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry governed by a Board of Directors comprised of 15 people and elected by a General Council for Strategy and Oversight. The General Council for Strategy and Oversight shall be composed of 45 people who represent the diversity and inclusiveness of the UMC. The Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry will be led by an Executive General Secretary elected by the Board of Directors.
2. **Guaranteed Appointment of Clergy** – The CT recommends that the General Conference make necessary changes in policy and practice to allow for a just, reasonable, and compassionate process that provides for the transition of low performing clergy from the itinerancy. The Ministry Study Commission will be bringing legislation to this effect, which the Connectional Table affirmed.
3. **Redirect Use of Apportionments** - The CT recommendation that the General Conference authorize the Board of Directors of the United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry to determine during the 2013-2016 quadrennium the most effective ways to fulfill the mission of the UMC including programs and spending at all levels of the church. The Board shall evaluate spending across the seven general church funds to assess work in order to identify significant opportunities for improved effectiveness and for achieving efficiencies and economies. Following this assessment and evaluation, the Board of Directors shall recommend for joint approval by the General Council for Strategy and Oversight and the Council of Bishops a plan for reallocation of funding goals for each of the seven general church funds and for

redirecting spending plans for a sum up to \$60 million in the 2013- 2016 quadrennium for purposes related to the overall work of the UMC and the adaptive challenge. The first \$5 million shall be allocated to young people's lay leadership development, administered through the Division on Ministry with Young People or its successor body. The second \$5 million shall be allocated to Central Conference theological education, administered through the GBHEM Global Theological Education Fund or its successor body.

4. **United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH) and the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits (GBOPHB)** – The CT recommends the formation of a special study task group with expertise specifically related to the publishing and/or pension investment and health care industries be appointed jointly by the Board of Directors and the Council of Bishops. Their assignment is to review the organizational structures and business models with the Boards of UMPH and GBOPHB to determine the optimal structures that will allow each to best serve the church and their respective missions while remaining viable and self-funding.
5. **Denomination-Wide Financial Analysis** – The CT recommends that a General Conference-designated task force focus on total spending across the whole of the United Methodist Church to examine and compare annual conference fundraising and spending; analyze expenses at all levels of the church; look for best practices and cost-saving measures; and give high visibility to best practices for the benefit of others.

In addition to the five recommendations, the Connectional Table affirmed the CTA – IOT's proposals for change in the following four areas:

1. **Performance of Clergy**
 - Adopt updated performance qualities and vital indicators for clergy.
 - Bishops lead in requiring that assessments are used consistently in every annual conference on an annual basis.
 - Focus training and continuing education efforts to enhance performance of new and experienced clergy in relevant competencies based on assessments.
 - Appointments should be made based on proven performance and potential for achieving the desired outcome.
2. **Performance of Bishops**
 - Adopt performance qualities and vital indicators for bishops.
 - Jurisdictional Committees on Episcopacy and Area Committees on Episcopacy lead in implementing annual assessments with results sent to COB.
3. **Support Establishment of Bishop without Residential Assignment**
 - Permit a bishop without a residential assignment to work on the adaptive challenge in the UMC.
 - Continue to work with the COB to shape the role of the bishop without residential assignment.
 - This bishop will chair the new General Council for Strategy and Oversight and serve as an ex-officio member without vote on the Board of Directors.
4. **Role of Seminaries**

- COB and appropriate offices shall work with seminary leadership to identify curriculum that will best train future clergy to grow vital congregations.
- COB and appropriate general church offices shall oversee the development of the curricula requirements for the seminaries, clarify expectations, measure performance, and tie funding to the outcomes.

A Brief History of the Call to Action

In the fall of 2009 the Call to Action (CTA) Steering Team was commissioned by the Council of Bishops with support from the Connectional Table to conduct an assessment of the practices and processes of The United Methodist Church. The charge was to find ways to become more effective at fulfilling the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and to be vital in ministries addressing the Four Areas of Focus.

The worldwide economic crisis that unfolded at the end of the last decade was a spark igniting the review. Additionally, the Church in the United States has experienced a four-decade decline in membership; an aging and predominantly Anglo constituency; declines in worship attendance, professions of faith and baptisms; and difficulty in attracting younger generations. Other trends, including declines in clergy health and job satisfaction, were additional indicators that change is needed. The study found that the church is confronting a “creeping crisis of relevancy that accompanies the acute crisis of an underperforming economic model.”

After extensive research (available online at www.umc.org/CalltoAction), the CTA Team made key recommendations to focus the Church’s leadership for the next ten years centered on what the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table agree is the Adaptive Challenge for The United Methodist Church. That challenge is **to redirect the flow of attention, energy, and resources to an intense concentration on fostering and sustaining an increase in the number of vital congregations effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

The Call to Action - Interim Operations Team

An 8-member Interim Operations Team, accountable to the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table, was assembled to evaluate the Church’s systems and structures for deep change. The team brings skills in change management, proven ability to develop accountability processes and experience in mission alignment and large culture shifts.

The next steps for some of these recommendations will be legislative proposals for delegates of the 2012 General Conference to consider.

Visit the Call to Action website for the latest information at <http://umccalltoaction.org>.