



Conference Forum—March 2021



Wespath

BENEFITS | INVESTMENTS

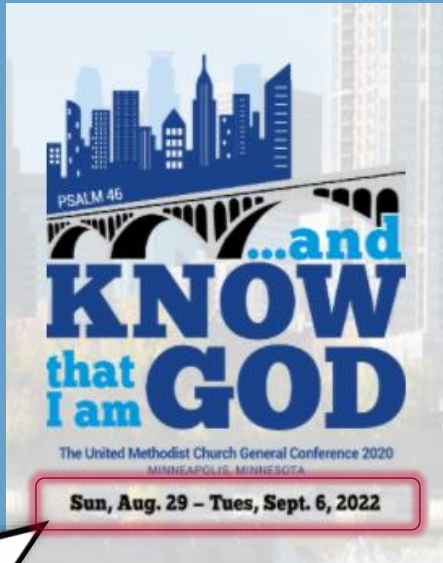
General Conference Delay; Contingency Planning

General Conference 2020 ... 2021 ... 2022

- Commission on General Conference Decision:
 - Delays General Conference to **August 29 – September 6, 2022**
 - Minneapolis
 - One day shorter than already shorter 2021 dates



Reasoning Behind Further Delay



Pandemic challenges still made rescheduled General Conference **questionable as planned**

- Vaccine rollout slower than expected
 - Especially in developing world
- U.S. visa application issues and \$\$ bond requirements likely to hinder travel to U.S. (especially from Africa, Philippines)
 - **44%** of delegates from central conferences
 - **Africa: 278; Philippines: 52; Europe/Eurasia: 40**
- **Virtual alternative ruled out—equity obstacles**
 - **Internet access:** Disparate reliability across global Church
 - **16 time zones:** Geographically dispersed
 - **Multiple languages**

Special Session 2021

- Bishops call a **Special Session of General Conference**
 - **May 8, 2021**
 - Virtual (videoconference) meeting
 - Purpose: **Suspend GC rules to allow paper balloting**—12 “essential petitions”
 - Requires **quorum**
 - Requires **2/3 vote to suspend the rules**
 - Adjourn after tally of **paper ballots**—**July 13, 2021**



So, In Summary....



Andy Bryan

@randrew



I am a part of a denomination that needs to set a meeting to suspend our rules so that we can create new rules to dictate what we are supposed to do when we cannot meet to create rules.

[#UMCGC](#) [#UMC](#) [#GC2020](#)

12:41 PM · 25 Feb 21 · [Twitter Web App](#)

35 Retweets **23** Quote Tweets **288** Likes

12 “Essential” Petitions

1 Petition

Conforms *Discipline* ¶354 to
Judicial Council Decision 1383

3 Petitions

Accommodate **bishops’
retirements**

4 Petitions

**Certain annual conference
elections** (secretary, treasurer,
Board of Ordained Ministry,
Committee on Episcopacy)

2 Petitions

Allow General Conference and
central conferences to **meet
online in pandemic, war, other
circumstances**

2 Petitions

Ratify GCFA’s decision to
**keep the General Church budget
at 2017-2020 level**

No Pension/Benefits Matters

- Wespath's 26 petitions delayed to 2022
 - Wespath's board, CPP* changes, RPGA* closing, substantial *Discipline* clean-up, Wespath name, etc.
- Petition to close CRSP* delayed
 - At least \$200 million in additional long-term liabilities
- Petition to establish *Compass* delayed
 - Implementation **2024** at earliest
 - Cost savings deferred

* Plans

CPP: Comprehensive Protection Plan

RPGA: Retirement Plan for General Agencies

CRSP: Clergy Retirement Security Program



Other High Profile GC Proposals Omitted

Protocol for Reconciliation and
Grace Through Separation

Christmas Covenant

General Church budget
reductions

Elections (Judicial Council,
general agencies, etc.)

Revised Social Principles

Human sexuality inclusiveness
changes

Others ...



Efforts Afoot

- Some may make **requests of Council of Bishops**
- Some may move to **suspend the rules to consider other matters** during Special Session
 - **Requires 2/3 vote** to consider business beyond the “call”
- Some may **submit petitions** (and force Committee on Reference consideration—*a la* St. Louis 2019)



Unintended Consequences of Delay

- Local church disaffiliations/reaffiliations




Others?



- No path for annual conference change of affiliation
- Ongoing uncertainty and financial challenges across Connection...

Unlikely Pension/Benefits Proposals...



NO
Wespath
proposals
considered
in 2021

Resulting Pressures:

- Disaffiliations/separations may not wait ...
“unplanned **disruption**”
 - Pension withdrawal payments
 - DCBC¹ pension conversions
- Historically low annuitization rates for MPP²
- VTP³ expired
- Approximately \$200 million in new additional DB⁴ liabilities for UMC each year of delay
- Wespath Board directors’ service further extended

1. Departing Clergy Benefit Conversion
3. Voluntary Transition Program

2. Ministerial Pension Plan
4. Defined benefit

Disaffiliation Contingencies ...

- **Disruption in absence of Protocol**
 - *Discipline* ¶2553 **Disaffiliation** pathway
 - Clergy termination under ¶360 → pension conversion to UMPIP
 - Other avenues...
 - ¶2549 **Closure** of Local Church
 - ¶2548 **Deeding** UMC Local Church to Federated Church or **Other Evangelical Denomination**
 - ¶1504.23 Pension Withdrawal Payment applies under ¶2548 and ¶2549
... but with more flexibility than ¶2553 (i.e., timing of payment)



Disaffiliation Contingencies ...

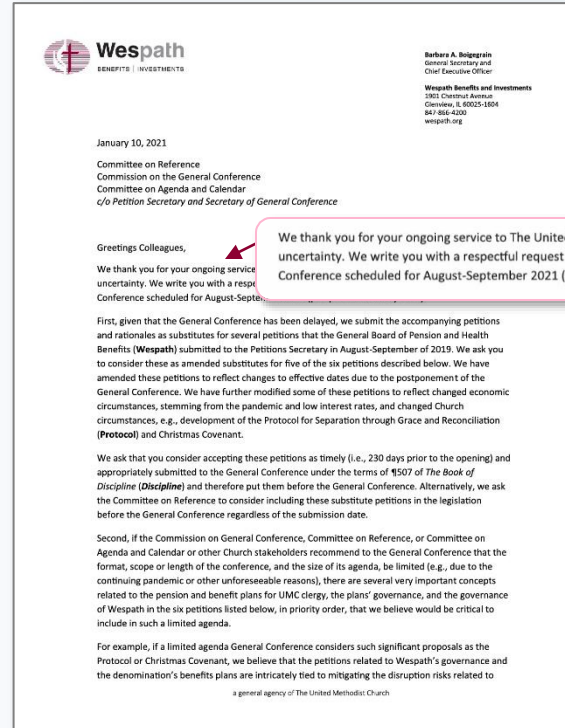
- **Ideas for dialogue**
 - Could disaffiliation pension liability payments be structured as installments or escrowed until Protocol (or similar) is approved?
 - Are there creative ways to allow local churches to become “federated churches” shared by Global Methodist Church/ Liberation Methodist Connexion congregations?
 - Could UMC clergy be appointed as extension ministry under, e.g., ¶344.1.c, while waiting to transfer after Protocol?
 - Preventing conversion of pension benefits and allowing ongoing participation



Wespath's Planning for GC 2020 / '21 / '22

Request to GC Commission (January)

- **Substitute Petitions:**
 1. CRSP closing amendment; 2. *Compass*;
 3. *Compass* shared governance; 4. CPP amendments;
 5. Retirement Plan for General Agencies (RPGA)
- Substitute petitions would:
 - Accelerate alternative MPP distribution option
 - Reflect U.S. regionalization in *Compass* shared governance
 - Transition rules for CPP for clergy moving to a New Methodist Denomination
 - Adjust timelines/effective date due to GC postponement
- ***Wespath will continue to examine and refine proposals to reflect the changing circumstances ...***



Alaska Omnibus Proposal

Combines:



Christmas Covenant

- *Disciplinary* non-constitutional provisions (some U.S. regional governance)



Protocol

- For Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation
- As drafted by Mediation team

Includes **2 Wespeth proposals**...

- Board governance petition (20214-FA)
- Modified *Compass* shared plan governance petition (20222-FA)

In addition, Omnibus would:

- Rename central conferences as **regional conferences**
- Permit disaffiliated local churches to re-join a different UMC annual conference— not geographically connected



Questions...





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