

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Western Jurisdiction Takes Steps Toward Redefining Boundaries

In a first step toward an anticipated reduction in the number of bishops, the Committee on Conferences of the Western Jurisdiction has released its proposal on boundary changes of annual conferences in the Jurisdiction. Although the report will not receive final action until the 2012 Jurisdictional Conference meets, the committee released the proposal now to provide an extended time for comment, questions and feedback. During this time, key groups in the Jurisdiction can plan for changes that will occur in annual conferences and Episcopal areas following the 2012 conference.

The plan released this week does not make major changes in the boundaries of most conferences in the Jurisdiction. The major recommendation is the uniting of the existing Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain Conferences into a new conference composed of their existing areas. This merger is intended to broaden the resource base for support of mission and ministry, enhance communication, and build connectionalism. The committee is tentatively recommending the new conference be called the Mid-Continent Conference.

In addition, the Committee is proposing that the four counties in Southwest Utah be transferred for missional reasons to the Desert Southwest Conference.

In a move away from the geographic definition of boundary, the committee included in their report a "Vision of Permeable Boundaries." The report states that, "...the Church's mission and ministry is not well-served by hard and fast boundaries..." and proposes that "Our boundaries need to be open and permeable, providing opportunities for connection and cooperating rather than serving as barriers that keep us separated."

Committee co-chair Rev. Frank Wulf shared that, "The suggestions for moving forward into the future may be the most important part of our proposal... We are unanimous in our recommendation to the Jurisdiction that it move forward aggressively in finding ways to make our boundaries truly permeable."

In a structure unique to the Western Jurisdiction, the Committee on Conferences has the responsibility for dealing with matters of boundaries and names of the annual conferences. They report to the Jurisdictional Conference. The Committee incorporates lay and clergy voices from all annual conferences in its deliberations.

With the release of this report, other groups and individuals in the Western Jurisdiction will be able to review the boundary changes and the vision of the permeable boundaries concept as they do preparatory work for the 2012 conference. Actions of the 2008 General Conference will reduce the number of Western Jurisdiction Bishops from six to

five. The College of Bishops for the Western Jurisdiction has the responsibility of determining how the annual conferences will be assigned to Episcopal areas, and the Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy will recommend the assignment of Bishops to the Jurisdictional Conference.

Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata, President of the College of Bishops, expressed his, “deep appreciation to the Conference Committee for the extraordinary and prayerful attention they have given to their task.”

The full Proposal of the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Conferences can be viewed at www.wjcumc.org.

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