

**PROPOSAL FROM THE WESTERN JURISDICTION**  
**COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES**

October 2, 2009

***Values:***

In its process, the Committee on Conferences attempted to address the following values:

- The value of being connected.
- The value of diversity.
- The value of tradition.
- The value of starting new communities of faith as a priority.
- The value of stability.
- The value of (seeing all locations as vital opportunities for ministry) minimizing the “exile factor.”
- The value of a missional focus – at the Jurisdictional Level.
- The value of coherence, geographical proximity.
- The value of flexibility, ability to respond to changing populations.
- The value of viability.
- The value of using and building technology, especially communication.
- The value of making disciples for Jesus Christ in order to transform the world.
- The value of using our resources wisely, avoiding redundancy.
- The value of taking risks.
- The value of language and cultural competency.
- The value of maximizing our contribution/influence to the General Church.
- The value of permeable boundaries.
- The value of empowering ministry across the Jurisdiction.
- The value of clergy memberships, relationships and covenants. (This can be both a value and a limiting factor.)

***Synopsis of Proposed Changes***

The Western Jurisdiction Committee on Conferences is proposing that three changes be made to the Conference boundaries within the Jurisdiction:

- I. Merge the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Conferences and rename the new Conference as The Mid-Continent Conference;
- II. Redraw the boundary of the Desert Southwest Conference to include the 50 square miles in the northeast corner of Arizona that are currently excluded by the Jurisdictional Conference rules;
- III. Transfer the counties of Iron, Washington, Garfield and Kane in Southwest Utah to the Desert Southwest Conference.

These changes will become effective at the first meeting of the affected Conferences or 31 July 2013, whichever come first.

### ***Actual Proposal to the Western Jurisdiction Conference***

The Committee on Conferences moves that the 2012 Western Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church amend *The Annual Conference Boundaries of the Western Jurisdiction* as follows. These changes will become effective at the first meeting of the affected Conferences or 31 July 2013, whichever comes first.

**ALASKA MISSIONARY CONFERENCE:** The entire state of Alaska.

**CALIFORNIA-NEVADA ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** Northern California counties of Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Kern (except for that portion extending from the easterly side of the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and that portion extending from the southerly base of the Tehachapi Mountains described as Antelope Valley), Kings, Lake, Lassen, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yolo and Yuba, and the town of New Cuyama in Santa Barbara County. Nevada counties of Carson, Churchill, Douglas, Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lyon, Mineral, Pershing, Storey, Washoe and White Pine. (WJCJ - 1972 pg 43. 1992 pg 28-29)

**CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** Counties of Imperial, Inyo, in Kern only that portion described as the Antelope Valley to the base of the Tehachapi Mountains and that portion extending easterly from the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara (excluding the town of New Cuyama), Ventura, and excluding the cities bordering the Colorado River, namely, Blythe, Needles, and Fort Yuma. The entire State of Hawaii, the Territory of Guam and other territories of the United States in the Pacific region. (WJCJ-1980 pg 28, 52. 1984 - pg 32, 83, 1992 pg 29)

**DESERT SOUTHWEST ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** The entire State of Arizona ~~with the exception of fifty square miles in the northeast corner bounded by New Mexico, Utah and the Navajo Nation.~~ That portion of California bordering the Colorado River, namely the cities of Blythe, Needles and Fort Yuma. The counties of Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln and Nye in the state of Nevada. **The counties of Iron, Washington, Garfield, and Kane in the state of Utah.** (1968 Gen. Conf. Jour. pg 1330, WJCJ - 1984 pg 32)

**OREGON-IDAHO ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** The entire state of Oregon. The Idaho counties of Ada, Adams, Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Blaine, Boise, Bonneville, Butte, Camas, Canyon, Caribou, Cassia, Clark, Custer, Elmore, Franklin, Fremont, Gem, Gooding, Jefferson, Jerome, Lincoln, Madison, Minidoka, Oneida, Owyhee, Payette, Power, Teton, Twin Falls, Valley and Washington ~~except Lemhi County (Salmon).~~ (WJCJ - 1960 pg 52-53, 59, 65. 1968 pg 47, 77)

**PACIFIC NORTHWEST ANNUAL CONFERENCE:** The entire State of Washington. The Idaho counties of Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Clearwater, Idaho, Kootenai, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce and Shoshone. (WJCJ - 1960 pg 52-53, 59, 64-65)

~~ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANNUAL CONFERENCE: The entire states of Colorado, and Utah. The Wyoming counties of Albany, Campbell, Carbon, Converse, Crook, Goshen, Laramie, Lincoln, Natrona, Niobrara, Platte, Sublette, Sweetwater, Uinta and Weston. (WJCJ 1972 pg 43, 1976 pg 35/36)~~

~~YELLOWSTONE ANNUAL CONFERENCE: The entire state of Montana, Lemhi County, Idaho, and the Wyoming counties of Big Horn, Fremont, Hot Springs, Johnson, Park, Sheridan, Teton, Fremont, and Washakie. (WJCJ 1960 pg 59,65, 1976 pg 35,36)~~

**MID-CONTINENT ANNUAL CONFERENCE: The entire states of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The entire state of Utah, except the counties of Iron, Washington, Garfield and Kane. The Idaho county of Lemhi.**

***Rationale for Proposed Changes:***

*For the Rocky Mountain-Yellowstone merge:*

This merge will make greater resources available to both conferences, while maintaining clergy memberships and relationships. Greater resources, not-just-financial resources, will aid mission and ministry. A shared conference structure will enhance communication and build connectionalism. There is already an affinity between the two conferences. Relationships have already been developed.

*Northeast Arizona:*

The Constitution states that the Western Jurisdiction includes the entire state of Arizona (Section 7, Paragraph 37, Article 1—p33).

*Southwest Utah Counties:*

These four counties, which have a total of four United Methodist Churches, have an affinity and geographic proximity with Las Vegas. The four existing churches are already connected and cooperating with the Desert Southwest Annual Conference. This would just formalize an already existent connection, which would further the vision, mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church in Southwest Utah and the Desert Southwest Annual Conference.

**A VISION OF PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES**

As the Committee on Conferences has done its work over the last two quadrennia, it has become increasingly clear to us that the Church's mission and ministry is not well-served by hard and fast boundaries that keep conferences isolated from each other. We believe that the work of Jesus Christ in the Western Jurisdiction calls us to a new self-understanding. Rather than viewing the Jurisdiction as an accidental collection of Conferences, we need to begin to think and act as a Jurisdiction that is bound together by a common vision and mission. Our boundaries need to be open and permeable, providing opportunities for connection and cooperation rather than serving as barriers that keep us separated. We need to develop a degree of trust that will facilitate the sharing of all kinds of resources across our boundaries and enable us to work

together on common goals and purposes. It is crucial for us to focus on what moves mission and ministry ahead in the Western Jurisdiction rather than merely seeking to protect the status quo.

Recognizing that work of developing trust and facilitating cooperation is beyond the scope of the mandate that the Committee on Conferences has been given, we nevertheless offer the following suggestions to the Jurisdiction for focused conversation and action as we move into the future toward which the Spirit of God is leading us.

### I. Communicating and Connecting:

- A. Carry through with the decision of the 2008 Jurisdictional Conference to develop a Jurisdictional communications plan and hire a Jurisdictional communications director.
- B. Given the geographical challenges we face in the Western United States and the Pacific, explore alternative ways of being together that employ up-to-date communications technologies, including but not limited to computer and video conferencing, forms of distance learning, etc.
- C. Carry through with plans to develop a Western Jurisdictional Retreat Center that serves as the locus for the Western Jurisdictional identity and provides opportunities for prayer and worship, community development, leadership training, planning, etc.
- D. Establish a central jurisdictional office for shared administrative functions. (The specific functions to be centralized in a jurisdictional office would need to be identified.)
- E. Develop regularized and effective ways for sharing invitations across Conference boundaries for training events, lay speaking schools, etc.

### II. Developing Principled Christian Leaders for the Church and the World:

- A. Facilitate open itineration of ordained and commissioned clergy around the Jurisdiction:
  - 1. Work with Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to explore ways of creating uniformity in the candidacy and ordination process (including the development of clear recruitment guidelines for use by Local Churches and District Committees on Ordained Ministry);
  - 2. Initiate honest and focused conversation among and between the leaders of the various Conferences about the development of a uniform minimum salary structure for appointed clergy that will facilitate cross-conference appointments;
  - 3. Initiate honest and focused conversation among and between the leaders of the various Conferences about the development of a uniform health care plan (including common understandings about the health care benefits to be provided to retired clergy);
  - 4. Develop a task force to address disparities among the Conferences in pre-'82 pension funding and the impact of those disparities on cross-conference appointments.
- B. Promote ways of sharing Episcopal Leadership across Conference boundaries, especially in areas where the bishops demonstrate particular expertise. These areas of expertise include, but are not limited to: urban ministries, rural ministries, leadership development, children, youth and young adult ministries, ethnic ministries, etc.

- C. Develop centers for excellence that draw on the strengths of the various Conferences and provide opportunities for particular Conferences to share their strengths jurisdictionally to train, inspire and mobilize lay and clergy leadership.
- D. Utilize the United Methodist related seminaries and institutions of higher learning in the Western Jurisdiction to provide high-quality opportunities for leadership training and skills development for lay and clergy. Explore effective forms of distance learning.
- E. Continue the work of the Jurisdictional Task Force on Theological Education.

### III. Creating New Places for New People and Revitalizing Existing Congregations:

- A. Work jurisdictionally to identify opportunities for planting/developing new faith communities, to train persons as “church planters,” and to provide appropriate resources for them to succeed. This would include leveraging Path One lay missionary training.
- B. Continue the work of the Western Jurisdiction Korean Mission (Would it be possible to identify, resource and deploy coordinators for other ministries in a manner similar to what is being done by the Western Jurisdiction Korean Mission?);
- B. Pursue the mandate for radical hospitality that emerged from the 2008 Jurisdictional Conference and develop practical tools for use in the Conferences, Districts and Local Churches of the Jurisdiction
- C. Develop a Latino/Hispanic Ministry focus for the Jurisdiction.
- D. Explore possibilities for establishing other ways of developing common ministry focuses in areas such as:
  - 1. Ministry with Youth and Young Adults;
  - 2. Immigration;
  - 3. Music ministry;
  - 4. Ministry in ethnic minority communities,
  - 5. Lay speaking ministries;
  - 6. Etc.
- E. Engage Conference Boards of Higher Education and Campus Ministry in cross-conference cooperation to provide quality ministry in institutions of higher education.
- F. Aggressively apply Path One training across the Jurisdiction

### IV. Engaging in Ministry with the Poor and Combating the Diseases of Poverty by Improving Health Globally:

- A. Reestablish and support a Western Jurisdictional coordinator for United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) and promote opportunities for cross-conference cooperation on Mission projects.
- B. Develop ways of making effective responses to disasters (e.g. UMCOR West)
- C. Explore and develop ways of addressing issues of poverty and disease in the Western Jurisdiction (e.g., through Bishops’ Initiative on Children and Poverty, Open Table program in Phoenix, etc.)

This proposal is from the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Conferences. The Committee includes a lay and clergy member from each Conference, and representatives from the Western

Jurisdiction Leadership Team, the Committee on Episcopacy, the College of Bishops, and the Directors of Connectional Ministry. The Committee consulted with the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

This proposal will be submitted for final consideration and determination at the 2012 session of the Western Jurisdiction Conference.