

Other Major Proposals from the General Agencies and Commissions

In addition to the previous articles addressing critical legislation and discussion coming before General Conference 2004, *Circuit Rider* invited the General Agencies and Commissions of the Church to identify up to five important proposals they will bring before General Conference.

General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA)

Quadrennial Budget: A recommended quadrennial budget of \$585,668,000 for 2005-2008, reflecting a 7.3% increase over the 2001-2004 amount for the seven general apportioned funds of the denomination.

Number of Bishops: Proposed revisions in ¶405 of *The Book of Discipline* which, if adopted by General Conference, would reduce the number of bishops eligible for election in each of the five jurisdictions and fix the number of bishops in the central conferences.

Episcopal Residence: A proposed revision in ¶635 which would provide a \$10,000 grant to an episcopal area to assist in the cost of maintaining the episcopal residence, with the balance of the necessary costs the responsibility of the annual conference(s) of the episcopal area. (See Reports: Episcopal Fund)

To Learn More

All legislation from GCFA is posted at www.gcfa.org.
The direct link is www.gcfa.org/GCFARports2004.html.

General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)

Military Service: Revision of the Social Principles section on military service to read, "We also acknowledge that many Christians believe that when peaceful alternatives have failed, the force of arms may regretfully be preferable to unchecked aggression, tyranny and genocide."

Death Penalty: Addition of a new section in Social Principles on the death penalty to clarify and emphasize our denomination's historic opposition.

Human Sexuality: Revise clause in section 161G on Human Sexuality to read "Although faithful Christians disagree on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all."

Terrorism: New resolution on terrorism that condemns all acts of terrorism with no exception for the target or the source and supports cooperative international efforts to prevent financing for and movement of terrorist organizations.

Bioethics: New resolution on the ethics of embryonic stem cell research deriving from the work of the Genetic Science Task Force, which states, in part, "we should not create embryos with the intention of destroying them, as in the creation of embryos for research purposes."



To Learn More

All legislation from GBCS is posted at www.umc-gbcs.org

We have all of our resolutions and suggested social principles changes on our website at http://www.umc-gbcs.org/about/general_conf.php

General Board of Discipleship (GBOD)

Division on Ministries with Young People: The Shared Mission Focus on Young People developed a comprehensive, coordinated approach for youth and young-adult ministries in The United Methodist Church and recommends the creation of the Division on Ministries with Young People within the General Board of Discipleship to empower young people as world-changing disciples of Jesus Christ, to nurture faith development, and to equip young leaders.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.idreamachurch.org

Holy Communion Study: Through a mandate from the 2000 General Conference, GBOD collaborated with GBHEM, GCCUIC, and the Council of Bishops to develop a church-wide study of the theology and practice of Holy Communion called "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion."

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gbod.org (Under "quick-links" select Holy Communion Study)

Services for the Ordering of Ministry: GBOD consulted with GBHEM and the Council of Bishops to provide liturgical texts for the ordination and the commissioning of those in the probationary relationship and proposes the adoption of Services for the Ordering of Ministry in The United Methodist Church as the official texts to be used by the bishops and annual conferences during the 2005 – 2008 quadrennium.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gbod.org

Science and Theology: The work of a task force mandated by the 2000 General Conference resulted in a resolution to develop a theological statement for The United Methodist Church concerning the relationship of science and theology, to create resources for youth and adults, and to develop plans for a variety of forums to improve the dialogue between the disciplines of science and Christian faith.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gbod.org/scienceandtheology

Hispanic/Latino Ministries: With the growth of the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States, the GBOD proposes a resolution that every annual conference in the United States develops a strategic, comprehensive plan for Hispanic/Latino ministries by December 31, 2006.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gbod.org

General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM)

Rural Ministries: Approval of the action phase of the National Comprehensive Plan for Town and Country Ministries; eight years in the making, it affirms the rural church and projects strategies for strengthening town and country congregations, which have one-third of the United Methodist membership in the USA.

Ethnic Ministry Plans: Continuation of the several national ministry plans that are effectively reaching and engaging the growing ethnic populations in the United States; these include Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American communities.

Lay Mission Service: Establishment of a new mission service category, that of lay missionary (or “diakon”), comparable for laymen to the historic Office of Deaconess.

Africa Reconstruction and Development: Adoption of a resolution aimed at greater global United Methodist involvement in addressing the economic, political, education, and health challenges in Africa.

Restorative Justice Ministries: Expansion to all church levels of an emphasis on justice ministries that promote penitence, fairness, and reconciliation in criminal justice systems.

To Learn More

For more information call or write Deborah Bass (212 870-3608, dbass@gbgm-umc.org) or Michael Rivas (212 870-3609, mrivas@gbgm-umc.org), or consult the agency’s website at www.gbgm-umc.org.

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

Global Education Fund: A new worldwide program proposal aimed at leadership development of clergy and laity for the church and the broader society. The Global Education Fund will assist United Methodist and Methodist educational institutions around the world with a particular emphasis on those in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe in improving, strengthening, and advancing their quality and viability through technical assistance with well-qualified educators and with moderate funding. (email iamscu@gbhem.org or phone 615-340-77402.)

Ministerial Education Fund: The MEF is integral to the recruitment and preparation of future leaders of our church. The MEF supports the 13 United Methodist schools of theology and provides scholarships and other clergy education needs in the annual conferences. (email dom@gbhem.org or phone 615-340-7389.)

Black College Fund: The United Methodist Church has a long history of providing educational opportunities to the underprivileged and disenfranchised. The BCF helps our 11 historically

black colleges and universities fulfill their promise of reaching out and providing an education to all who desire it. (email bcfumc@gbhem.org or phone 615-340-7378.)

Africa University: Africa University’s mission is to prepare a new generation of African leaders educated on their own continent and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed to build nations that are economically—as well as politically—-independent and self-sustaining. (email audevoffice@gbhem.org or phone 615-340-7438.)

University Senate: Academic freedom, freedom of inquiry, liberal arts education, faith development—these values are close to the heart of every United Methodist. Through the University Senate, the church ensures that these core values are upheld with professional and theological integrity. (email iamscu@gbhem.org or phone 615-340-7740.)

To Learn More

For more information about General Conference 2004 legislation and about the funds and programs related to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, go to the www.gbhem.org home page and click on the General Conference 2004 logo. Follow the links under “Resources.” For information about the apportioned funds, go to www.umcsgiving.org.

General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH)

Designate the site of the founding of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society in Boston, MA, as a Heritage Landmark of The United Methodist Church (Para. 1712.2). This society was the first woman’s missionary society on the Methodist side of our denominational family and a forerunner of United Methodist Women.

Print the annual District Superintendents’ Report to the Annual Conference, if there is such a report, in the Annual Conference journal (Para. 606.3m). This is an extremely important report for tracing the history of an Annual Conference for any given year.

Require that there be a Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History (Para. 530.1). This completes the connectional structure for Archives and History and makes official what the five Jurisdictions have already authorized.

Require Jurisdictional and Annual Conference secretaries to deposit two paper copies of their respective conference journals with the General Commission on Archives and History and other appropriate depositories (Para. 1711.3i). The printing of paper copies of such journals, rather than electronic copies, better insures the long-term preservation of such important historical documents.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gcah.org or email cyrigoyen@gcah.org

General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIC)

Acts of Repentance Worship Service of appreciation for African-Americans who remained in the denomination during the segregation era, conducted by GCCUIC and Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

Building New Bridges in Hope: This General Conference reso-

lution on Christian-Jewish relationships is proposed for re-adoption without change.

Our Muslim Neighbors: This is a proposed revision and updating of this important interfaith statement of our church.

Certificate of Annual Conference Membership: In cooperation with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the General Board of Discipleship and the Council of Bishops, the GCCUIC recommends the creation of a certificate of annual conference membership as one result of discussions held at the Joint Consultation on Ministry held in 2002.

New line item in Interdenominational Cooperation Fund for inter-religious relations. The creation of a new line item within the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund will strengthen our denominational participation in interfaith dialogues, the development of resources, and related initiatives.

To Learn More

All proposed legislation is available at www.gccuic-umc.org or email cchapman@gccuic-umc.org

General Commission on United Methodist Communications (UMCOM)

Igniting Ministry Media Campaign: United Methodist Communications is requesting \$33.5 million to continue and expand the mission of the Igniting Ministry media campaign for 2005-2008 which includes 18 weeks of additional advertising throughout the year and grants for new congregations to have a public presence in their community.

Igniting Ministry Media Campaign: Youth Expression. United Methodist Communications is requesting \$5.4 million to fund a coordinated effort of resource development, local advertising materials and grants for congregations that will extend the denomination's ministry to greater numbers of youth.

Central Conferences Communications Initiative: United Methodist Communications is requesting \$2.3 million to underwrite the cost of developing or continuing communications partnerships between United Methodists in Africa, Europe, Asia and the United States.

Annual Conference Director of Communications: United Methodist Communications is recommending that each annual conference or Episcopal Area have a director of communications to oversee the communications ministries within an annual conference and that the person sit on the extended cabinet or equivalent body.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.umcom.org or email ncoleman@umcom.org

General Commission on Religion and Race (G CORR)

Economic Justice: The Imperative of the Church: The Minority Group Self Determination Fund. This resolution requests increasing the MGSDF fund to 8 million for the quadrennium

Racial Profiling: This resolution calls the church to be more proactive in the elimination of racial profiling by law enforcement.

In Defense of the Refugees and Immigrants Seeking Economic, Spiritual and Emotional Wholeness and Freedom: This resolution calls local churches to find ways to assist, welcome and enable the

refugees, immigrants and undocumented persons in their midst.

Respecting the Native American Legacy and Tradition: This resolution requests General Conference to call upon all church units not to hold meetings in cities which sponsor sport teams using Native American symbols, mascots, and names.

Multi-cultural and ethnic specific ministries: two sides of the Inclusive Church: This resolution gives direction to the church as it continues developing and strengthening ethnic specific and multi-cultural ministries.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.umc.org/gcrr or email ypupo-ortiz@gcorr.org

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW)

Inclusiveness: An important petition brought jointly with The General Board of Church and Society to update the Constitutional paragraph on Inclusiveness of the Church (paragraph 4) by adding "gender, disability and mental condition."

Sexual Ethics in Ministry: Updates to three Resolutions on Sexual Ethics in Ministry to increase their usefulness a local church study document: eradication of sexual harassment and sexism; and sexual misconduct in ministerial relationships.

Women and Ministry: Two new Resolutions on two contemporary issues related to women and ministry: the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women; and, caring for clergy spouses and families.

Chargeable Offenses: An update and reorganization to reflect our current understanding of chargeable offenses (paragraph 2702.1 (h) - (k), by expanding (k) to read, "harassment, including but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment."

Biblical Language: An amendment to the Resolution "Biblical Language" (Resolution #321) that adds several examples of inclusive images from the Bible, and re-emphasizes the encouragement to use inclusive images for God.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gcsrw.org or email gcsrw@gcfa.org

General Commission on United Methodist Men (UMM)

Study of Men in the UMC: Establish a committee to conduct a denominational study to determine why so many men are missing from the United Methodist Church and what can be done about it.

Men's Ministry Certification: A process to establish a communication link between GCUMM, local churches (particularly those with no chartered UMM unit) and Central Conference churches to enable GCUMM greater opportunities to: resource, support and provide information about men's ministry to the local church.

Men's Ministry Sunday (with no special offering): annual observance on which GCUMM would provide resources to help local churches celebrate and highlight the various ministry and mission resources and opportunities for men in the local church.

To Learn More

For more information, see www.gcummm.org or email kkena@gcummm.org