



March 16, 2020

The Connectional Table (CT) has received many questions about the relationship between the CT's U.S. Regional Conference legislation and the recently released legislation referred to as the Christmas Covenant: <http://www.tinyurl.com/Christmascovenantfinal>.

After a close examination of this legislation, we affirm that the Christmas Covenant accurately reflects the CT legislation which proposes creating a U.S. Regional Conference. It also makes the regional conference structure consistent worldwide.

The Christmas Covenant was named as such in recognition of the historic Christmas Conference of 1784. It was written by a coalition of central conference members from the Philippines, Africa and Europe. The legislation has been endorsed and sent to General Conference by the Philippines Annual Conference-- Cavite.

We celebrate that the Christmas Covenant was created by members of our central conferences and seeks to bring structural equity and regional self-determination to the whole church. It has always been the vision and work of the Connectional Table to raise awareness and appreciation of our worldwide connection by listening to voices from all parts of our connection, especially our central conference brothers and sisters.

Like the CT USRC legislation, the Christmas Covenant legislation creates a two-stage process in relation to the U.S. It starts with an interim U.S. Regional Committee that does not require constitutional changes. It then creates a U.S. Regional Conference, which requires amendments to the Constitution. In addition, it includes the CT's non-disciplinary petition creating an Interim Committee on Organization for the U.S.

Much of the Christmas Covenant legislation related to central conferences simply effects a name change. The legislation changes the terminology in the Book of Discipline related to the central conferences, replacing "central" with "regional" and "church outside the U.S." with the more globally equitable language, "church around the globe." These changes are consistent with the intent of the CT legislation to move away from the painful racist history of the Central Jurisdiction by using "regional" instead of "central" for the whole church.

Moreover, the Christmas Covenant puts into place structural changes related to equity. For instance, to create consistency in structure across the globe, it gives the regional conferences outside the U.S. the ability to create jurisdictions. In addition, it gives all regional conferences, including the U.S. Regional Conference, the option of abolishing jurisdictions or not using them at all. However, like the CT legislation, it keeps in place the current structure, powers and duties of jurisdictions in the United States.

Regional governance legislation, like the CT USRC legislation or the Christmas Covenant, can provide the regional adaptation authority necessary for self-determination in our worldwide church. Such legislation can provide a way for our church to remain a “big tent” church worldwide as we each shape ministry for our different contexts. Providing the space for us to stay connected in ministry but more regional in governance is a way we can seek to continue to be the Body of Christ together.

The Christmas Covenant gives the CT and the successor body of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters a role in perfecting this structure to insure equity. This collaborative group would bring a report to the 2024 General Conference. If this legislation passes, the Connectional Table would welcome such work on behalf of our worldwide connection.



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