

# METHODIST LAITY REFORM MOVEMENT

Iowa United Methodists Working for Christian Faithfulness  
and Reform Within The United Methodist Church

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## Care for Our Constitution

**To: Our Members and Iowa Annual Conference Members**

**From: METHODIST LAITY REFORM MOVEMENT** 5-09

The most important votes in our 2009 Iowa Annual Conference (June 4-7) will probably be on the **32 proposed Amendments to the Constitution of The United Methodist Church**. We are sharing with you our concerns and recommendations.

**If you are an Annual Conference Member (lay or clergy)**, we invite you to review this report and bring it with you.

You are invited to **visit our MLRM information table in Hilton Coliseum** and attend our **brief information meetings on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights**, immediately when the IAC adjourns, in the **Scheman Building, Room 179**.

To **all others** receiving this report: We invite you to review it and **express your own opinions** to your Annual Conference Members (Lay and Clergy) from your Local Church, before they go to Ames for the IAC session that begins Thursday, June 4.

The Iowa Annual Conference will **vote separately on each of the 32 proposed Constitutional Amendments, beginning at 1:30 PM, Friday, June 5**.

The **Guide on page 6 (back page)** lists all 32 Amendments. The text of each Amendment is in the Pre-Conference Manual.

The UMC **Constitution trumps** everything else in our UMC *Book of Discipline*. If any *Discipline* provision is important to you, be careful **not** to overrule it by Constitutional Amendment.

The General Conference proposes Amendments to our UMC Constitution, but the **Annual Conferences decide**. We vote YES or NO on each Amendment; they cannot be amended.

To ratify any UMC Constitutional Amendment, it must receive **two-thirds** of the **combined total** votes in all UMC Annual Conferences worldwide. **Each individual's vote counts!**

We offer this report in the hope that it will be helpful to you and will aid thoughtful, prayerful decision-making. We respect everyone's right to make his or her own decisions. THANK YOU for your consideration of our concerns and recommendations.

**Please register now for our Annual Renewal Dinner, Thursday, June 4.** See the **enclosed invitation**.

## Amendment 1: the TROJAN HORSE

Iowa Annual Conference will vote on this Amendment at 1:30 PM, Friday, June 5

**Methodist Laity Reform Movement recommends: Vote NO**

**BEWARE!** This proposed Amendment 1 to the Constitution of The United Methodist Church (UMC) would **remove all standards or expectations for membership** in the UMC. **All** persons willing to speak the membership vows would have the **absolute right to become members and to participate in every part of the Church!** **No exceptions, no safeguards.**

This Amendment 1 would **overrule our UMC Book of Discipline and its sexual morality standards, divide our Church,** and cause a **disastrous split.** Don't let our United Methodist Church repeat the huge mistake that is now destroying the Episcopal Church.

If this proposed Amendment is ratified (by two-thirds of the total combined votes in all Annual Conferences worldwide), our current good UMC Constitutional inclusiveness requirement will be changed to read (bold language would be added; crossed-out language would be deleted):

**¶ 4. Article IV.** Inclusiveness of the Church — The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth **and that we are in ministry to all.** All persons ~~without regard to race, color, national origin, status or economic condition~~ shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, **and** upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, ~~and~~. **All persons,** upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith **and relationship in Jesus Christ, shall be eligible to** become professing members in any local church in the connection. In the United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body. ~~of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.~~

This looks benign at first glance. It seems simpler to delete the categories that must not limit our inclusiveness — “race, color, national origin, status or economic condition” — and instead say “all persons shall be eligible” for membership. Many supporters sincerely believe this would merely affirm and increase our inclusiveness. But beware of unintended consequences!

**Amendment 1 is a Trojan horse. If you think we are alarmists, carefully re-read the last two sentences of the Amendment. Consider what this Amendment would actually do:**

1. This Amendment would impose this **absolute requirement: All** persons who are willing to speak (truthfully or dishonestly) the membership vows **must** be admitted as members in any United Methodist local church. It would **remove all standards or expectations for church membership** other than the desire to join. It does not provide any exception or safeguard.
2. Amendment 1 would give **each** of these persons the **absolute right to become a member** of the UMC:
  - A Ku Klux Klan leader who refuses to repent of his racism.
  - A man who repeatedly abuses his wife and insists he has the right to do so.
  - A person committing adultery, incest, or homosexual behavior, who refuses to stop.
  - A person who creates and sells pornography, and insists this is a legitimate business.
  - A convicted pedophile who asserts that what he or she did is “good for children.”

## Amendment 1: the TROJAN HORSE, continued

- A cult leader who wants to join for the purpose of influencing our youth.
- An engaged couple who want to join a local church so they can pay a lower wedding fee.

3. Amendment 1 **prohibits any exclusion of any member from any “organizational unit of the Church.”** For example, a member who is a cult promoter, Ku Klux Klan leader, or convicted pedophile would have the **absolute right** to participate in the local church’s Christian Education department or youth program. This would conflict with the UMC’s efforts to protect children.

4. The **UMC Constitution trumps** everything else in the *Book of Discipline*. If Amendment 1 is ratified, the Judicial Council (United Methodist Supreme Court) would almost certainly rule that it **overrules and cancels the UMC’s position on human sexuality in our Book of Discipline**. For example, the absolute requirement that **no** “organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member” conflicts with Paragraph 304.3 of the *Book of Discipline*, which states: “The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.” It also conflicts with Paragraphs 304.2 and 2702.1 of the *Book of Discipline*, which require “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” for ordained clergy.

5. This Amendment is **intended to overturn the UMC’s Christian standards on sexual morality in our Book of Discipline**. It was proposed by pro-homosexuality advocacy groups. For 36 years they have failed to persuade the UMC General Conference to approve homosexual behavior. Now they seek to **compel this approval through a back-door Constitutional Amendment**.

6. Amendment 1 would cause a big increase in **church litigation and expenses**.

7. The Amendment would **prohibit any** local church requirement for **membership preparation**, because it says the only requirement for membership is taking the membership vows.

8. The Amendment would **cancel and prohibit the Pastor’s authority and responsibility** to help persons discern when they are ready for church membership. The Pastor is now a shepherd, but would become a mere recording clerk under this Amendment.

9. Amendment 1 was **hastily approved** near the end of the 2008 General Conference, with only **4 minutes of debate**, and **over 150 delegates absent**. **Our Annual Conference should give this Amendment the careful examination it did not receive at General Conference**.

10. Of course the Church must welcome sinners and accept sinners as members. We all are sinners who need God’s grace and Christ’s sacrificial love. But our Church correctly asks us to repent of our sin and accept Christ’s transformation. This Amendment would compel the Church to admit as members, and to include in all church structures, persons who insist that their sin is not a sin and who demand that the Church approve their behavior. The Church is not obliged to approve sinful behavior because some Church members engage in it — whether it is greed, pride, racism, stealing, adultery, homosexual behavior, child abuse, or other sin. The Church must graciously **call sinners (all of us) to repentance rather than affirm sinful behavior**.

**Please vote NO on Amendment 1. Let’s not divide and weaken our Church!**

## Segregation Amendments (World Church Structure)

**Iowa Annual Conference will vote on each of these 23 Amendments, beginning at [1:30 PM, Friday, June 5](#)**

***Methodist Laity Reform Movement* recommends: **Vote NO****

These 23 separate Amendments to the Constitution of The United Methodist Church (UMC) are a combined package. They would **allow big changes and expensive enlargement** of the worldwide UMC structure.

*Methodist Laity Reform Movement*, together with many African United Methodists (see statements below), regards these as **Segregation Amendments**. They were proposed by honorable UMC officials who sincerely believe these Amendments will open the door for desirable changes – but the **unintended consequences would divide and weaken our global Church**.

These 23 Amendments would allow division of our global UMC into separate Regional Conferences for the USA and for other parts of the world. The existing Central Conferences outside the USA would be renamed as Regional Conferences, but these Amendments do much more than renaming.

Here are **9 good reasons to vote NO on all 23 Amendments**:

1. These Amendments would **add one more layer of structure and bureaucracy**. We already have Districts, Annual Conferences, Jurisdictional Conferences (in the USA), and the General Conference. These are not merely meetings; they are permanent church government organizations with staff and costs at each level. The new USA Regional Conference would be a **new 5<sup>th</sup> level of structure – more meetings, more staff, more costs, higher apportionments**. The Amendments would also allow one more layer for the UMC in other countries: Jurisdictional Conferences within their Regional Conferences. This is the wrong direction for a Church that is **already too top-heavy and bureaucratic**.
2. These 23 Amendments are **premature**. The official study committee has not yet presented any specific plan for the new worldwide structure. It **does not make sense to amend our Church Constitution in 23 places before we have seen a definite restructuring plan**. The costs are unknown. Ratifying these Amendments would be like starting a building with no cost estimate. The cart is in front of the horse.
3. These Amendments are a **top-down** proposal by high-level Church officials, with very little input from United Methodists around the world.
4. There would be at least partial **separation** of the USA UMC from United Methodists in other countries. Some decisions now made by the worldwide General Conference would instead be made by the separate Regional Conferences. While the restructuring plan is yet unknown, it is probable that each Regional Conference would make its own decisions and go its own way on social principles, sexual morality, and ordination standards – **dividing and weakening** our global Church.
5. The **separation between United Methodists in the USA and in Africa would be especially harmful**. The UMC is growing rapidly in Africa. We have much to learn

## Segregation Amendments (World Church Structure), continued

from our African brothers and sisters; we need a closer relationship with them. African delegates to the General Conference have consistently upheld traditional Biblical and United Methodist beliefs – one big reason why their churches are growing.

6. **Decisions on important principles**, such as Christian doctrine, ordination standards, and sexual morality, should be made by the **General Conference** with its proportional representation of our global Church – not by a new USA Regional Conference with no participation by delegates from Africa or the rest of the world.

7. **Many African United Methodists regard these Amendments as segregation** and an attempt to **impose a new church structure upon them without their participation**. We should listen to them. For example:

- **Rev. Jerry P. Kulah**, District Superintendent in the **Liberia** Annual Conference: “The African Central Conferences are not the ones putting forth this proposal. ... Certainly, this proposal, as it stands, has the propensity to create division and segregation within the global community of believers called the United Methodists.. ... If this Regional Conference idea is pursued and sustained, we are most likely to have a fractured Church. In addition, we might not have a common *Discipline* and a unified way of doing the business of the United Methodist Church. Regional Conferences doing their own things could keep going their separate ways until new denominations eventually evolve. ... As long as an issue is ecclesial, biblical, and theological, it must concern the General Church. And we must jointly address it.”
- **Rev. J. Kabamba Kiboko**, the first clergywoman ordained in the **Southern Congo** Annual Conference: “This new organization fundamentally continues a structure of “othering” the global areas outside of the United States. From a postcolonial perspective, this maintains the “us versus them” mentality and an aura of segregation. ... It continues a “paternalistic past” into the present in what should be the church of Christ. We postcolonial subjects demand the right to speak ourselves with our “own” accents. What I say is that we ought to be asking: What is the Holy Spirit saying to the global church? What would God have us do? Only then, should we act.”
- **Okoko Luhata**, General Conference delegate from **East Congo**: “I think that we should have dealt with these Amendments at the Annual Conferences ... we haven’t dealt with (these) matters at Annual Conferences or at Central Conferences. That is why, Bishop, we should have asked the grassroots. We should have been consulted on this.”

8. All 23 Amendments were **hastily approved** near the end of the 2008 General Conference, with very little debate. **Our Annual Conference should give these Amendments the careful examination they did not receive at General Conference.**

9. This proposed new structure **conflicts with John Wesley’s worldwide vision** – “The world is my parish.” We need a stronger, closer global Church – not segregation of United Methodists into separate regions.

**Please vote NO on all 23 Segregation Amendments.**

# GUIDE to the PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

**On Friday, June 5 the Iowa Annual Conference will vote on these 32 Amendments to the UMC Constitution. Methodist Laity Reform Movement** (Iowa United Methodists working for Christian faithfulness within the Church we love) **offers these suggestions** for your prayerful consideration. The UMC **Constitution trumps** everything else in the *Book of Discipline*; **great care and caution** are needed when voting on Constitutional Amendments.

Please vote on **each** of the 32 Amendments. The text of each Amendment is in the Pre-Conference Manual. To ratify any UMC Constitutional Amendment, it must receive **two-thirds** of the **total combined** votes in all UMC Annual Conferences worldwide. **Your vote counts!**

**1 (I) NO.** This Amendment is a **Trojan horse**. It would remove all standards for Church membership, overrule our *Book of Discipline* and our UMC stand on sexual morality, divide our Church, and endanger children and youth. **See pages 2 & 3.**

**2 (II) YES.** Requires ethics and conflict of interest policies throughout the UMC.

**3 (III) NO.** This is the **first of 23 Amendments** that together would partially segregate our global UMC, separating USA and African United Methodists. **See pages 4 & 5.** In this Guide we identify all 23 as Segregation Amendments.

**4 (IV) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**5 (V) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**6 (VI) NO.** Would allow an 8-years delay for a newly created Annual Conference to have proportional representation in the UMC General Conference. Proportional representation is necessary for fairness and should not be delayed.

**7 (VII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**8 (VIII) YES.** Requires that General Conference decisions on membership in the Church and in Church agencies and programs shall be "without reference to gender."

**9 (IX) YES.** Requires that each Jurisdictional Conference (they elect Bishops) include at least 100 delegates.

**10 (X) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**11 (XI) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**12 (XII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**13 (XIII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**14 (XIV) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**15 (XV) YES.** Allows General Conference to define lay and clergy membership of Annual

Conference without having to amend the Constitution. Reduces from 2 years to 1 year the minimum time a lay person must have been a UMC member before being elected to Annual Conference.

**16 (XVI) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**17 (XVII) YES.** Allows lay members of the Annual Conference Committee on Investigation to vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

**18 (XVIII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**19 (XIX) YES. Allows Local Pastors and provisional clergy members** who have completed educational requirements (and 2 years appointed service for Local Pastors), plus **associate clergy members**, to **vote** in Annual Conference **elections of clergy delegates** to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Now they cannot vote for either clergy or lay delegates. Giving them the right to vote is simple justice.

**20 (XX) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**21 (XXI) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**22 (XXII) YES.** Adds United Methodist churches in Bermuda to the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC.

**23 (XXIII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**24 (XXIV) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**25 (XXV) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**26 (XXVI) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**27 (XXVII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**28 (XXVIII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**29 (XXIX) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**30 (XXX) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**31 (XXXI) NO.** Segregation Amendment.

**32 (XXXII) NO.** Segregation Amendment.