GCFA Update on UMC Finances - African Conferences: Questions

**Questions for Episcopal Fund:**

1. Please elaborate what you mean by moving expenses?

**Response:** When a bishop is newly elected, newly assigned, or retiring, the Episcopal Fund will cover the expenses to move the bishop’s and family’s belongings to the new home.

1. Is there an annual balance sheet obligation for insurance?

**Response:** No, medical insurance is optional, the bishop would elect this on an annual basis. A balance sheet from the conference is not required.

1. Are we obligated to submit an annual assessment for the insurance?

**Response:** No, there is not a requirement for an annual assessment for medical insurance, however, an annual wellness exam is highly encouraged and is covered at 100% by the insurance plan.

1. Is there any medical insurance for the retired bishops?

**Response:** At the time of retirement,Retired bishops have the option to participate in the medical, dental, and vision plans that are offered. This is an elective and not required.

1. Is the episcopal fund equally distributed across annual conferences? If not, how is it done?

**Response:** Office allowance can vary by Episcopal Area in the Central Conferences due to different economic situations. Annual increases, if any, are the same across the denomination.

1. How much is a Bishop’s salary in Africa?

**Response:** The range in the Central Conferences would be $61,334-$136,721 for salary and $10,000-$28,220 for housing.

1. Why do you only pay Bishops and not DS's?

**Response:** The Episcopal Fund is for the support of bishops only.

1. How many bishops are going in retirement in 2024 in Congo central conference?

**Response:** 2 bishops in the Congo Area are mandatory retirement in 2024.

**Questions for Legal:**

1. Are there mandatory delegates comprising of annual conferences' total delegates to the General Conference? If yes, can you name those mandatory delegates?

**Response:** [Here](https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-how-are-general-conference-delegates-chosen#:~:text=Each%20annual%20conference%20in%20Africa,Church%20has%20a%20concordat%20relationship.) is an article that may help answer some of your questions about delegates: [How are General Conference delegates chosen? (umc.org)](https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-how-are-general-conference-delegates-chosen#:~:text=Each%20annual%20conference%20in%20Africa,Church%20has%20a%20concordat%20relationship.)

We are not aware of any provision in the Discipline that requires a specific position/individual within the annual conference to be elected as a delegate. The Discipline requires an equal number of lay and clergy delegates. We believe that is the only requirement for electing delegates.

1. What will be the net effect of delegates at the GC 2020 in the wake of this disaffiliation? Will it in any way impact the 2020 General Conference?

**Response:** There is no impact on delegates to GC2020. Those delegate counts were based on the membership numbers available when delegates were elected prior to 2020.

1. Can the Annual Conference replace General Conference Delegates that are not in good Standing with their Annual Conferences?

**Response:** The Judicial Council has addressed whether replacements delegates can be elected:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/judicial-council/judicial-council-decision-home/judicial-decisions/judicial-council-decision-1472>

From the Decision: “If a delegate’s status as clergy or lay has changed since the election, the person is disqualified from serving as delegate and must be declared ineligible, and the vacancy in the General Conference delegation may be filled by electing a new delegate if the vacancy cannot be filled with reserve delegates.”

1. Is there a possibility that the “Africa Plan” approved in 2016 GC is put on hold?

**Response:** The General Conference would have to decide to delay it or modify it in some way.

1. Is there a chance that the 5 vacant positions of the bishops in Africa will not be filled come 2024 because of the declining support being rendered on the 20 already existing bishops?

**Response:** The General Conference would have to decide to delay or modify the addition of bishops in some way.

1. If specific country laws domesticate the UMC book of Discipline and therefore the country laws and the book of Discipline are ready together. To what basis does 2553 not be applicable in annual conferences? Quite not clear and confusing.

**Response:** The 2019 General Conference special session adopted legislation that delayed the start of 2553 in the central conferences. It would only go into effect 12 months after the 2020 General Conference. With the delay in holding that General Conference, it has also delayed the start of 2553 in the central conferences.

The language was added to 543.17. It applies to all legislation passed at GC2019, not just 2553.

The current language of the paragraph is available at this link: <https://www.umofficialresources.com/updates>

1. **Information item:** For those who may not have it, the changes made to the Discipline by the 2019 special session of General Conference are available here, including the language added to 543.17 that delays implementation of the changes in the central conferences: <https://www.umofficialresources.com/updates>
2. What criteria does General Conference use on dividing geographical location of having Residential bishop in any conference which is under Episcopal area to have its own Episcopal area?

**Response:** Paragraph 404.1 outlines the criteria the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters is to consider in making recommendations to the General Conference about the number of episcopal areas in the central conferences. It says:

“The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters shall:

a) consider these criteria in the following order of priority:

(1) the number of charge conferences and the number of active clergy in episcopal areas;

(2) the geographic size of episcopal areas, measured by the square miles/square km, and the numbers of time zones and nations;

(3) the structure of episcopal areas, measured by the number of annual conferences, and the overall church membership in all annual, provisional annual, missionary conferences, and missions in episcopal areas.

b) conduct a further analysis of the context and missional potential of changes in episcopal areas.”

**Questions for Data Services:**

1. What is BAC?

**Response:** BAC: Business of the Annual Conference. The order of items discussed during the annual conference.

1. Where can the guidelines for memoirs be found?

**Response:** <http://gcah.org/resources/manual-for-annual-conference-commission-on-archives-history> **&** <http://gcah.org/resources/working-with-memoirs>

1. Should the journal include reports of the AC committees?

**Response:** Yes, the Journal can include reports of the Annual Conference Committees.

1. Can GCFA make available other statistical data collection tools such as software to collect data quarterly?

**Response:** This GCFA project is scheduled sometime after General Conference.

1. I suggest that there be training for conference statisticians to correct mistakes made in this area.

**Response:** Training is important and GCFA will create training for central conferences.

1. Can the outline shared of AC journal be unique or it must depend on the Annual Conference business.

**Response:** The outline provided is from the Book of Discipline. Each conference can add additional information as needed in the Miscellaneous section.

1. Is there a way to organize physical training for statisticians on data collection?

**Response:**  Training is important and GCFA will create training for central conferences.

1. What is the significance of the annual statistics of annual conferences, annually to the GCFA office. Any benefit to annual conference in terms of representation to General Conference?

**Response:**  GCFA provides information to The Commission on General Conference and uses the statistical reports in the Annual Conference Journals to determine the number of delegates for General Conference. This is outlined in the Book of Discipline ¶511.5.

**Questions for Finance:**

1. What is the plan to recover 23% decline from the apportionment? What strategy can we do to raise the bar of episcopal finances which are in decline?

**Response:** Here are some ways we can recover from our decline:

* 1. Increase in giving.
  2. GC delegates review the election of the number of Bishops, including the five additional Bishops in Africa. A decline can be reduced by not electing the maximum allowed number of Bishops (however, it must be noted that GCFA has no authority in recommending a reduction in the number of Bishops).
  3. GCFA, in collaboration, with UMCOM is going to conduct effective stewardship programs throughout the Central Conferences, including Africa.
  4. Bishop Palmer and Bishop Bickerton are going to meet with the Africa College of Bishops to strategize about the coming Quadrennium, including the number of Bishops and stewardship initiatives.

1. What was the root cause of churches disaffiliating from United Methodist Church in USA and what will be the solution to stop those disaffiliations?

**Response:** The stated rationale of the legislation that became ¶ 2553 claimed it would be a “consistent process for local churches who desire to disaffiliate . . . over disagreements related to human sexuality.” Disaffiliations pursuant to ¶ 2553 will not be possible after December 31, 2023. We do not know whether the General Conference will adopt a similar provision at some point in the future.

1. Can you kindly emphasize the reason GCFA board reduced the base percentage to 23%?

**Response:** As explained in slides 95-99, the capacity of the local churches in the U.S. has declined due to the impacts of COVID-19 and disaffiliation.

1. What strategy has been put in place to improve apportionments from Africa from 17% to a better percentage?

**Response:** This meeting and communication is part of that process. It is giving you, the leaders of the Africa UMC, the information to share with your local churches & members.

1. The conferences are in dilemma regarding the situations of 2024 where some do not yet know where they will be affiliated. What advice can you give to encourage conferences to increase contributions?

**Response:** The UMC is a connectional church and is a Wesleyan principal. Giving to the General Church apportionments will make the whole connection stronger.

1. Do you anticipate any disaffiliation/withdrawals of churches/annual conferences in Africa?

**Response:** cannot be predicted. Should the General Conference decide to establish another disaffiliation-style process that would be applicable in Africa, decisions on whether to disaffiliate would be in the hands of those who the General Conference gives such authority to.

1. The formula has linked the giving to the GDP which is based on the majority rural which is low. How would this be a solution to the huge expenditure from Africa?

**Response:** Currently the collection rate of Apportionments in Africa is only 17%. So, apportioning at a higher rate is unlikely to increase payments.

1. Do we have detailed information about the Central Conference assessments? If yes, those failing to increase the share, are they aware or have they been given notifications to improve to achieve this goal. If yes, through what means/email or otherwise.

**Response:** We communicate regularly with the Episcopal leadership regarding (quarterly) the status of the contributions from their Episcopal Area. We also publish the data on the GCFA website: <https://www.gcfa.org/_files/ugd/5524b1_43fe2855eeed46a7af107e203e21de2c.pdf>

1. What are the procedures to follow when conferences want to use unused fund or balances of account projects that are inactive as of now for other purposes?

**Response:** If the funds were given by the donor for a specific purpose they can only be used for that purpose without approval by the donor. If the source of the funds was not restricted by the donor, the governing board can redesignate the funds.

**General Questions:**

1. Who can participants contact for questions in the future?

**Response:** Ndzulo Tueche is our Connectional Relations Manager for the Central Conferences. He may be reached at ntueche@gcfa.org, by What’s App at +1.615.400.1051 or by his local Cote d’Ivoire number at +225 070 724 5180.