

Bringing Missional Adaptation and Focus to a New Quadrennium

2020 Spending Plan
Narrative Report



Connectional Table
The United Methodist Church

Purpose

The Connectional Table (CT) serves a distinct role within the church: as a body of laity and clergy from across our worldwide connection whose purpose, "... is for the discernment and articulation of the vision for the church and the stewardship of the mission, ministries, and resources of The United Methodist Church as determined by the actions of General Conference and in consultation with the Council of Bishops." (United Methodist Book of Discipline, ¶906)

Bringing Missional Adaptation and Focus

As The United Methodist Church anticipates great and unprecedented change, the CT is preparing for the new things God is doing. It may be that unity and mission within our connection will be expressed in different ways in the future, and we realize that such

The Essential Functions of the Connectional Table

- To provide a forum for understanding and implementing the vision, mission and ministries of the global church.
 - To enable the flow of information and communication among annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, general agencies and the Council of Bishops.
 - To coordinate the program life of the church with the mandates of the gospel, the mission of the church, and the needs of the global community.
 - To review and evaluate the missional effectiveness of the general program-related agencies and connectional structures of the church as they collectively seek to aid annual conferences and local churches.
 - To recommend to the General Conference such changes and implementing legislation as may be appropriate to ensure effectiveness of the general agencies.
 - To provide leadership in planning and research, assisting all levels of the church to evaluate needs and plan strategies to carry out the mission of the church.
 - To be accountable with GCFA for the General Church Budget.
- 2016 Book of Discipline ¶ 905, paraphrased

changes will take time. The 2021-2024 quadrennium will provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation and discovery, and the CT will continue its vital work in fostering new, deep conversations between people and groups from around our global connection as we work together to discern what is emerging in the life of our church. During this time, the CT will emphasize key themes—**Vital, Worldwide and Contextual, Affirming and Inclusive, Effective, and Connectional**—and organize our work in specific ways.

The Connectional Table will continue to collaborate with and support the Council of Bishops (COB) and the agencies in bringing vitality and purpose to the connection by strengthening ministries in the Four Areas of Focus.

The **Vital Congregations Through the Four Areas of Focus (VC4AF)** working group is composed of two advisory groups: *Agency Evaluation* and *Connectional Assessment*. This group is leading efforts to increase effectiveness and accountability throughout our connection. Toward this end, the CT will continue working with the agencies even as it engages conversations about how “agency” might take new forms.

The CT will also continue to facilitate the work of discerning mission and vision in order to foster collaborative strategic planning and resourcing of the agencies in line with missional priorities into the next quadrennium and beyond. The VC4AF group works in collaboration with the COB through the Strategic Team, which includes the four lead program board executives and four bishops who chair COB leadership teams related to the Four Areas of Focus. The purpose of this group is to develop strategy, advance, engage, inspire, align and equip the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table around the work of the four areas of focus with the purpose of increasing the number of vibrant congregations. This quadrennium, Strategic Team worked closely with United Methodist Communications (UMCOM) to develop a new messaging strategy to lead us into the new quadrennium. The tag-lines—**Making New Disciples in New Places, Leading Where God Calls, Overcoming Poverty Together, Seeking Health and Wholeness**

for **All**—stay true to the legacy of the Four Areas of Focus while introducing language that is more accessible to people in the pews and the world.

The **Worldwide Nature** working group comprises three advisory groups: *Chapter 5*, *General Church Council*, and *U.S. Contextual Ministries*. These groups will continue to deepen the conversation about a vision for a worldwide connection and consider the needs for adaptive structures and systems in light of our shifting church membership.

The *Chapter 5* group worked with the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters and the Committee on Faith and Order throughout the quadrennium to evaluate our administrative order as a church. These groups mutually decided to continue this work into the upcoming quadrennium as they discern together how agency might be expressed in our worldwide connection.

Finally, the *U.S. Contextual Ministries* advisory group has written legislation to create a U.S. Regional Conference at General Conference 2020. Creating a U.S. Regional Conference provides an organizational structure for the U.S. to have parity with existing central conferences for doing work on the adaptable portions of The Book of Discipline. Equally important, a regional conference will offer the U.S. the opportunity to develop missional strategies for the church in the U.S. context.



2020 Spending Plan

Despite a nearly 19.5 percent reduction in income in 2019, the 2020 spending plan reflects no reduction in dividends, interest, benefit trust income and World Service payout income. Due to decreased revenue and increased responsibilities associated with General Conference 2020, the quadrennial budget and the implications of the Special Session, the CT anticipates controlled spending down of its reserves.

Aware of the need to maintain adequate reserves in order to sustain our work in future quadrennia, the CT engaged in prudent spending and programming decisions, resulting in actual spending amounting to \$124,000 less than what was budgeted for the year in 2019. At present our 2020 budget is \$40,000 less than 2019's budgeted amount. It is important to note that the final year of a quadrennium is typically our highest spending year due to our responsibilities at General Conference.

Several priorities for 2020 have emerged as the CT continues its adaptive work into the future, particularly in this time in the life of our denomination. Below are highlights of these priorities and their corresponding financial implications for the 2020 spending plan.

The 2020 General Conference

The CT traditionally has responsibilities for General Conference, including helping to plan for and participate in pre-General Conference briefings. For General Conference 2020, the CT will be involved in supporting the legislative work of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, GCFA (the quadrennial budget), as well as its own legislative proposal to create a U.S. Regional Conference.

In addition, the CT anticipates working closely with the Commission on the General Conference and the Council of Bishops to ensure a General Conference that emphasizes the value of our connectionalism, even in times of change, and moves our church forward. We have included \$55,000 in the meeting expenses line item that would go toward expenses relating to General Conference 2020. This number is typical of General Conference spending for the CT. Included in the \$55,000 is the travel, hotel and meal expenses for members of the CT staff, CT executive committee, CT members who will serve as legislative observers, and CT Budget Advisory Team members. The aforementioned groups will meet in Minneapolis during General Conference to discuss implications and next steps related to the CT's mandates and the budget for the denomination.

Another \$12,000 is allocated to achieve our bi-focused communications goals at the General Conference: raising awareness of the Connectional Table, and advocating for our legislation. These expenditures will include: a table in the exhibit hall with an interactive display; various printed materials to influence delegates to vote for the U.S. Regional Conference legislation and raise awareness of the CT (these materials will incur high translation costs); and "swag" materials, such as pens and globe stress balls with the regional conference logo.

CT Office Space: Stewardship, Collaboration and Community-Building

Our 2019 spending plan included the hope of moving our office from its current location the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) building to the office building portion of the First UMC Chicago Temple building in downtown Chicago. Unfortunately, the CT

was unable to find a sublease for our space and was unable to make a move at this time. The result is a slight cost saving in 2019 and 2020 as the rent at the ELCA is less, and there was no need to move.

Additionally, we have been good stewards of our resources by cutting our landline phone service and switching to a digital phone option that saves us almost \$2,500. Staff members will be able to be reached through our main phone line even when they working off site for events or conferences. We have also discontinued our subscription for OnBoard, a board of director file sharing software, which will result in \$2,000 savings annually.

CT Communications Plan

The CT has recently devoted a full-time staff position to communications and developed a strategic communications plan. While we anticipate continuing to work in collaboration with UMCOM, the CT has determined a need to have more in-house capability for its own communication efforts. These efforts have included increased social media usage (reach and engagement have increased by 200 percent each), continuous website updates, in-house press relations management, on-demand presentation production, occasional photography and videography and more. The communications staffer frequently cross-collaborates with the agencies. For example, the State of the Church report is a collaborative project between the CT, the COB, UMCOM and GCFA, and we are hoping this year to include GBGM, GCORR and Discipleship Ministries. The CT and UMCOM split the cost of this report, with UMCOM handling production and digital publication costs and the CT handling printing and translation costs.

This year, the CT launched Emerging, an exciting communications compiling a digital anthology on the exciting new things God is doing in this moment in the life of the church. The website is run on communications staff time and volunteer effort and managed

digitally through the content management system Squarespace, which incurs an annual cost of \$20 to own the domain name emergingmethodism.com.

We are suggesting a conservative \$3,000 budget to cover the cost of software, occasional printing costs and other miscellaneous needs as our communications staffer helps us begin to better engage these efforts on behalf of the CT and its work for our worldwide church.

Staff Development and Retention

In a moment of transition for the denomination and the Connectional Table, we value working hard to retain our staff. One element of this is through offering opportunities for staff development and continuing education. We are recommending a modest increase to the continuing education line item, an increase of \$1,000, so that all staff members will have the resources to attend a conference or other continuing education event in 2020. We hope that will build our team and be a small perk that helps with staff retention.

Additional Anticipated Meetings

The meeting expenses for 2019 are slightly higher than previous years to account for the expense of General Conference and one meeting of the 2020-2024 board of the CT. It is essential that the organizational and orientation meeting of the full board be in-person as we acclimate and welcome our new board to the work of the CT and to each other. There are also the additional advisory group and denominational meetings related to general

conference. We have attempted to budget and plan for these advisory meeting to happen in combinations with other trips as much as possible to save travel costs and time.

Consultative Work

The CT spending plan includes \$8,000 in the Consulting line item for the hire of continued consulting support related to CT work, including support for CT's work on the quadrennial budget and presence at General Conference.