a general agency of The United Methodist Church
About Wespath

Wespath is one of the 13 general agencies that serve The United Methodist Church (UMC). Wespath is the benefits administrator for the Church. In the U.S., Wespath administers retirement, health, disability and death benefits for clergy, lay employees and their families.

In Africa, the Philippines and Eurasia, Wespath partners with 69 conferences to administer pension payments through the Central Conference Pensions program. More than 3,200 retired clergy and surviving spouses receive payments through the Central Conference Pensions program.

Wespath does not receive any general church funds.

About Our Name

In July 2016, we changed our operating name from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to Wespath. Our name reflects our heritage as an agency of the Church:

- **Wes** honors John Wesley, our Wesleyan heritage, and John Wesley’s commitment to social justice.
- **Path** refers to our goal of providing participants and institutional clients with a path to follow in achieving retirement, well-being and investment objectives.

Wespath Governance

**PETITION 20213 – FA**

*Discipline Section IX (¶1501–1509)—GBPHB-Wespath Name*

**What it is:** Formally changes the agency’s name to Wespath throughout *The Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions*; replaces “General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.”

**Why it is recommended:** Since 2016, Church stakeholders have used the Wespath name.

Wespath’s Legislation Is Future-Focused

General Conference 2020 (GC 2020) petitions supported by Wespath anticipate a future United Methodist Church that is affected by changing demographics, financial constraints and potential UMC restructure.

Many of Wespath’s petitions apply to annual conferences and clergy in the United States—and will have no effect on clergy or local churches outside the U.S. This is because most of Wespath’s work focuses on benefit plans for U.S. clergy (as directed by *The Book of Discipline*) and for lay employees in the U.S.

**Wespath’s priorities are:**

- Caring for those who serve—now and in the future;
- Assuring long-term sustainability of benefits for those who serve;
- Serving the UMC and any new expressions of Methodism that may emerge;
- Helping United Methodist-related institutional clients meet their investment and mission objectives, while honoring the values of the UMC; and
- Sustainable investing that considers environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors and Church values.

Changing UMC Demographics

UMC membership in the United States is declining, while membership is growing outside the U.S. The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) estimates that—during 2020—total Church membership in the Central Conferences will become more than total Church membership in the U.S. jurisdictions.

Source: UM News, Nov. 25, 2019
Legislation from Wespath

Many of Wespath’s petitions apply only to clergy, local churches, annual conferences or benefit plans in the United States.

**Benefit Plan Changes**

**Petition 20220 – FA**

Retirement Plan for U.S. Clergy ("Compass" Plan)—¶1504.1

Compass is a proposed retirement plan for clergy in the U.S. It would not change pension benefits provided in Africa, the Philippines or Europe.

**What it is:** A new retirement plan for U.S. clergy.

**Why it is recommended:**
- Sustainable over the long-term, so future generations of clergy will have retirement benefits
- Adequate income for clergy
- Affordable for conferences
- Flexible and portable
- Does not change pension benefits for clergy in Central Conferences

*Compass is designed to meet the changing needs of the Church.*

**Other Benefit Plan Changes**

**Petition 20227 – FA**

¶1504.1 Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP)—Current Retirement Plan

**What it is:** Provides transition from CRSP to new Compass plan for U.S. clergy.

**Petition 20222 – FA**

¶1504.1—Mandatory Plans and New Clergy Defined Contribution Retirement Plan

**What it is:** Allows Wespath to make small changes to U.S. clergy plans between General Conferences. Updates U.S. pension plan name to Compass.

**Petition 20228 – FA**

¶1504.1—Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) Amendments

**What it is:** Simplifies death benefits. Extends timeline for U.S. clergy to exit the ministry.
LEGISLATION FROM WESPATH

**Wespath Governance**

**Petition 20214 – FA**

\[\text{¶1502 Membership (Wespath Board of Directors)}\]

**What it is:** Reduces size of Wespath’s board of directors.

**Why it is recommended:**
- **Cost-savings**—less travel costs for meetings
- **Efficiency**—easier decision-making
- **Consistent with other UMC general agencies**—GC 2012 and GC 2016 approved smaller boards for 9 agencies
- **Diverse viewpoints**—keeps Central Conferences representation on board

**Wespath Services**

**Petition 20224 – FA**

\[\text{¶1504.20—Central Conference Pensions (CCP)}\]

**What it is:** More accurate description of Wespath’s role and expectations related to the CCP program in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

**Why it is recommended:**
- Clarification and updates
  - Describes Wespath’s collaboration with other UMC general agencies for the CCP program
  - Modernizes description of CCP program
  - Clarifies Wespath’s role with individual Central Conferences. (Wespath consults with Central Conferences and assists with local administration of pensions)

**Petitions 20221 – FA and 20223 – FA**

\[\text{¶1504.2—Wespath Voluntary Plans (U.S. Benefit Plans)}\]

\[\text{¶1504.16—Institutional Investors (Global)}\]

**What petitions are:** Clarify the definition of “affiliation with The United Methodist Church.”

**Why they are recommended:** Assures that any new expression of Methodism can use Wespath services.
Legislation from Wespath

Other *Discipline* Updates

**PETITIONS 20221 – FA, 20225 – FA, 20229 – FA, 20648 – FA AND 20230 – FA**

*What petitions are:* Minor clarifications to the *Discipline*.

Contingencies for Potential UMC Restructure

**PETITION 20701 – FA**

*New ¶2555—Pension Matters for Disaffiliating Church Units*

*What it is:* New *Discipline* paragraph.

*Why it is recommended:*

**Flexibility and continuity**

• Provides a way for Wespath to handle pensions and benefits if U.S. annual conferences or groups of local churches separate from the UMC
• Protects U.S. clergy pensions
• Would apply with all major General Conference proposals to restructure the UMC

Church Investment Ethics

**PETITION 20266 – GA**

*¶717—Sustainable and Socially Responsible Investments*

*What it is:* Encourages UMC investors to engage government leaders and policymakers to support sustainable and socially responsible investment practices.

*Why it is recommended:*

• **Aligns** investment practices with UMC Social Principles, balanced with fiduciary duties.
• **Enables a “voice at the table”**—Church-related investors (including Wespath) can engage corporations and governments to create positive change related to human rights issues, climate-risk and other issues.

Our approach of *Invest—Engage—Avoid* guides Wespath’s investment activities. Read more at wespath.org/si.
**Petition 20725 – CO**

**U.S. Regional Conference**

Wespath strongly supports the Connectional Table’s proposal for a U.S. Regional Conference. We played a key role in developing this legislation—in collaboration with the Connectional Table and other denominational partners.

**What it is:** Establishes new U.S. Regional Conference for governance of U.S.-only matters, including benefit plans for U.S. clergy, U.S. tax-related matters and U.S. holiday observances, among other U.S.-only matters.

**Why it is recommended:**
- **Consistent with Central Conferences governance**—would allow autonomy for U.S.-specific matters, similar to autonomy that the Church outside the U.S. has.
- **Global focus**—allows for more time at General Conference to focus on *connectional* matters that impact our global Church.
- **Shifting global demographics**—General Conference delegates are increasingly from conferences outside the U.S., yet use a disproportionate amount of General Conference time on petitions that have no impact outside the U.S.

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**Petition 20652 – FA**

¶615, 622, 639, 818—Proportional Payment

**What it is:** Removes out-of-date language about clergy salaries.