

GC Special Sitting Update 2-19-25

Thank you for your prayerful preparation for our upcoming special sitting of the General Conference on March 3, 2025. We want to clarify a few key points to ensure you have the necessary information as you consider the resolution before you.

1) The Board of Bishops

We have received several questions about the Board of Bishops' role in this proposal, and we want to provide clarity:

- The Board of Bishops did not initiate the proposal to move General Conference (GC) by two years. This recommendation originated from other members of the Unleashing Missional Momentum (UMM) group, after assessing the best path for a healthy change-management process. The primary reason for the proposal is to allow more time for research, regional discussions, implementation, and prayerful discernment.
- The Board of Bishops fully supports affirming the resolution. Since this extension would lengthen their terms, the bishops were initially hesitant, as none had committed to serving beyond 2027. After prayerful discernment the bishops came to support this action as good for the church and endorsed the proposal to the BOA and the General Conference. They are for it and submitted to the will of the church expressed in the vote.
- After deciding it would be good for the organization, they needed to process the decision on a personal level. They each spent time consulting with their spouses, and in prayer they engaged in personal discernment regarding their ability to commit to the extended term.
- **Bishops Kaye Kolde and Keith Cowart** have agreed to serve through 2029 if the resolution is approved.
- **Bishop Kenny Martin** has discerned that he cannot commit beyond 2027. He feels called to focus on building bridges across denominations and engaging in local missional work, which he believes is best pursued outside the bishopric.

2) Special Bishop Election

If the resolution is adopted and Bishop Kenny Martin steps down in 2027, a special bishop election will be conducted in accordance with our polity. The BOA will oversee a search

process, receiving nominations from annual conferences. Candidates will be processed and a slate submitted per the Book of Discipline for GC delegate consideration. A digital election will then take place in a series of ballots until a new bishop has been elected by the GC. This follows our polity and the historic precedent set in 2005 when Bishop David Kendall was elected after Bishop Les Krober's mid-term retirement.

3) Nature of the Decision

This proposal is to move GC from 2027 to 2029 as a one-time act. While changing the interval between GC may be something the GC will consider in the future, it is not being considered in this resolution or vote. This is a one-time action.

4) Organizational Momentum

Some have asked if we would lose organizational momentum by not gathering again until 2029. This proposal is specifically to move GC from 2027 to 2029 to make room to gather regionally for prayer, processing, and implementation of potential change. Our bishops have a made plan for regional gatherings focused on worship and prayer later this year (August 7-8, 21-22, 28-29) and another round of regional gatherings in 2027 for prayer and processing should the resolution pass.

5) Anticipated Changes and the Purpose of the Extension

This proposal to move GC from 2027 to 2029 is intended to provide space for deeper discussion and discernment regarding anticipated structural and organizational changes.

- Some operational changes that do not require BOA or GC action are being implemented now. Some changes like the creation of a new network of annual conferences designed for mission are underway with proposed changes to annual conference boundaries being fully processed and acted upon by those AC's affected by the changes and the Board of Administration.
- Processing space will be needed for other potential changes that are being researched by several different groups looking at key areas, including the pension, resource allocation across the denomination, and Book of Discipline revisions. Formal proposals requiring BOA or GC action will be made when the work is completed. All recommendations will undergo due diligence, discerning prayer, and robust deliberation before being presented.

- One significant expected proposal will come from the Book of Discipline revision committee, formed by the 2023 GC. This committee was tasked with:
 - reducing the size of the Book of Discipline,
 - updating its structure and language in response to a legal review,
 - identifying sections that could be moved to an operational manual.

Given our legal review thus far, we anticipate these changes will be substantial and will require thorough regional discussions.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to this process and trust in God's leading. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to michael.forney@fmcusa.org. Thank you for your continued prayerful consideration as we approach our gathering.