Higher Ed and Superintendency

1. The United Methodist Church is a worldwide connectional church. Why and in which ways is this relevant in your context?

Input and Perspectives:

- The cross-cultural nature of global United Methodist Church helps promote understanding, and helps us be less theologically and culturally captive to the local region.

- Our unity across the world helps us inspire reconciliation work in local situations that are divided.

- There are many resources that can be brought to bear in local contexts, which draw from across the world.

- My church in transition from an anglo church to African Americans as the community has changed. Now growing. People are moving here from other countries (such as Sierra Leone, Ghana) and are coming to our church in New York.

- More people are moving to St. Paul MN from Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone. A lot of the people coming are United Methodist. They bring excitement with them. They are not declining in numbers. Keep reminding my people of the connection.

- My community all same color but many different tribes in Nigeria. Our seminary has students from all over Africa—yet we are in Christ. We treat each other as brothers in Christ. We are connectional.

- We say “open, hearts, minds and doors.” In our church in Liberia we live that! We allow our brothers and sisters from other places to come to school there. From Sierra Leone they come; we educate and they go back home. We invite brothers and sisters, they come from across the Atlantic. We reach out to Guinea, refugees settle in Ghana. Liberian pastor has a ministry there.

- We (Holston, TN) have a partnership with South Sudan. Have relationships with the school. We are so enriched because of the world wide connection.

- Being the connectional church enables my people to see, breadth, height and depth of body of Christ.

- Arizona State University has a great influx of students and others who come from various places. Bulgaria, Sudan, etc. We understand the global nature but don’t work with as much as we should.

- In Nashville any UMCs travel here like Africa University and we get to experience that.

- Every UMC I have served has had an international connection. It is not just us going there it is a mutual relationship—it is so life giving!

- We have partnerships with missionaries. We send groups to Panama, Haiti, Kinga, Zimbabwe

- We have a large number of Puerto Ricans moving to the Dallas area for jobs and are looking for a church—and know the Methodist Church. We have a new worship service in Spanish and Puerto Rican culture.

- Clergy serving from other countries. Navigating the Book of Discipline with these clergy can be challenging.

- We receive help for our outreach programs
- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry provides funding to train pastors

- We need to understand that the church is not limited to us.

- People “connect” directly and want immediate connections

- There should be a sense of “oneness” and partnership. Manifested in ministerial unity with each other.

- Connections take place via language commonalities across geographical boundaries.

- There can also be ecumenical connections. UM’s influence other denominations.

- There is a hunger for real connection

- Missionary conference: we don’t have clergy membership, resources not strong but good presence in the community, people telling the stories, glad to share with different people

- It gives us reason for being worldwide connection

- We want to be a global church but we are not honest about it, we are not really having equal voices and resources. For example, Africa needs more bishops and resources but we are controlling it.

- In Germany, small but worldwide connection is important. We belong to the larger diverse community of the same “style.” Seminary gets considerable funds from the denomination. Brazilian missionaries come to serve in Germany and it is an exciting connection.

- Strong presence of UMCOR relief, still rebuilding from Katrina, Sandy UMCOR was first to get in, Florida conference with church in Cuba, Haiti, Amazhi connection

- Traveled across Europe and Africa—what a joy to have brothers and sisters united to pray, grieve, worship. Excited to see and be with brothers and sisters across the world

- Had partnerships and interns from other countries like Africa University. How can God use what we have to bless everyone else serves in affirmation?

- Blessed by global connection but feels desire to be apart

- People from five continents worship in the church, Africa included. Found Wesleyan ideas to be uniting, unifies us.

- When at Africa University, to stand at institution to share in that experience, made me proud to be a Methodist.

- Conference paying 100%, Africa University big encouragement, many cross cultural congregations, commitment continues to grow

- Last three years held dual role, D.S. and Pastor. Pastor, where I served for 23 years, trying new model—bringing DS to the ground. Congregation has many countries represented and reflection of the 66 churches in district.

- Ability to combine resources bring people together to speak to common reality and different ways unity in difference.
I think because we in UMC can dream big and the cost is that we can take on huge goals and when we align ourselves with UMC goals around death from Malaria it was only possible because we are connected around the world so because we are UMC it means everything in my context.

Some things can bring us together because we are a global church. We have the same mission, to make disciple of the world; same spirit, same word of God, same Father. All of this brings us together and that makes all the same people of the UMC.

People’s ideals are not God’s ideals. I was taught to learn English but I asked myself why do need to speak English when we speak Swahili. Challenge missionaries from the West but they never learned to speak my language and I never knew theirs so we just looked at each other.

Most important thing about global connection is that it is what brought me here from the Congo.

Church brings people from all walks of life and they are friends.

Better able to do things together than apart. Being a part of global church allows us to be in partnership around the world to make a difference. Unique partnerships in Nigeria & Zimbabwe, on board of directors at Russ(?) College – small church can have connections around world.

Zimbabwe is small country in terms of population – amazing the gift of Africa University – so many flags on our soil – experience the gift of connection more than any other because they gather there.

We aren’t lonely. We have brothers and sisters out there. When we see partners coming to Zimbabwe, we feel there are people concerned about our situation. It was through our missionaries that the church started in Zimbabwe. Now we can send missionaries to other areas as we are growing in our faith.

Russ, a worldwide college before the church called themselves a worldwide church. Students and faculty international in 1920s. No difference for us, we have always been worldwide in our institution.

Charlotte area – people coming from other places. We have several clergy from Africa coming to us – my role to facilitate process by which they can be credentialed and appointed in North Carolina. Our BOM collected funds to support e-Readers to partner with theological educators around the world.

Speaking in English with you because of our connection. I was given a scholarship by a New York Annual Conference. I am from Mozambique, educated in Zimbabwe, funded by USA. 😊

We are connected, its our Wesleyan tradition, our form of organizing things is unique. We are open and inclusive – that’s why we communicate with the entire world through education, programs that are United Methodist, and it is open to the whole world. Missionaries who came to Mongolia – we remain connected to those who sent him.

Connectional system – we have a reach that goes beyond any one of our congregations.

Houston flooded a few weeks ago – UMCOR responded. Allows us to be locally responsible for the dirt we cling to – and know that someone across continents and across oceans claims their dirt in God’s name too.

Expanding our children’s understanding of the world – Fijian connection, when people showed up in our back yard, we could connect with Fijian Methodist Church to care for them well, and receive from them.

Hawaii – encompass the Pacific ring – worship in nine different languages – the connection allows us to all participate.

Chicago Northwest District, 23 languages of worship every Sunday – also travel worldwide & learned about others.
2. In light of our commitment to be a world-wide connectional church, what is most important for a truly worldwide General Book of Discipline that undergirds and empowers the mission of the entire United Methodist Church?

Response:

- Book of order that lists the things every church should comply with – Book of Discipline should be left to regional bodies
- Some consistency around processes is helpful – some consistency of educational requirements – for example, deacons not present in some African contexts
- We need to work as one church all over the world. We need to make the church actually use what is written in the Book of Discipline. For example, in Mozambique we still ordain persons to be deacons first and then after 2 years they are ordained elders.
- According to the BOD that we use I think its similar to the one used in Mozambique, they are for procedures that are old. The difficulty is that people who do translation sometimes omit some words or information that is relevant. Our situation is that some procedures that are ideal for the church in America are not ideal for our context in Africa. Sometimes we question, “Are we really United Methodist?” We wonder why do some Methodists proceed in a way, and we go in a different way, if our BOD is the same? This is difficult for us to understand. It makes us harder for us to see the connection.
- Things are different around the world, and that takes away from us being united. I don’t know the answer.
- Not sure about content, but what is most important is that we are committed to it, whatever it is.
- Theological core is important, especially union of social and personal piety. Also processes that are transferrable (across context) but not identical (so they can accommodate specific contexts).
- Technological experience gap, ability to provide the resources to all of our church worldwide. I hope we agree on the primacy of grace.
- Social and personal piety. Need flexibility to adapt to our contexts. Core value is still there but need to be flexible.
- Commonality of who we are as a people, our character as Methodists, has to be in the BOD. We are a global church with people who move all over the world, they need to find some similarity whenever they go to a Methodist church anywhere.
- Credentialing systems & educational systems are complicated when clergy move across countries.
- Zimbabwean bishops do not itinerate. In the USA they do. If a missionary can come into Africa, why can’t a bishop go? We are united by our MISSION. That mission must be worldwide.
- Maintain our doctrinal standards. Our distinctive features of United Methodists should be clearly evident wherever we are.
- A common core of Wesleyan theology and doctrine that we hold as the basis of our unity
- A smaller, less USA focused Book of Discipline
- There is an urgent need for timely, accurate translations of the Book of Discipline, especially into French, which widely used in Africa.
- Provisions in the Book of Discipline which more proportionately share resources and leadership positions on denominational boards and agencies.
• Sometimes the structure replaces relationships. If we can find a way to strengthen relationships and reduce need to develop parallel structure.

• So much of the current 2012 Book of Discipline does not apply to parts of Africa such as pensions, ministry requirements, and property.

• Doctrinal standards should be consistent in the Global Discipline. Ordination (with some flexibility) and our mission to make disciples should also be in the Global Discipline.

• Much of what we have in the Book of Discipline applies to the US and does not apply to Africa. Guaranteed appointments is different in the Africa Churches.

• In US you go to graduate school, in Africa the only thing we know how to do is Pastor. If we lose our guaranteed appointment we cannot do anything else.

• If we have different Book of Discipline we are concerned we will lose the connection.

• We would have to be very clear of all we want in a global world-wide Discipline and then supplement with regional disciplines for different regions of the world.

• I am originally from Jamaica, In the Caribbean context, there are certain things that applied to England but did not apply to us when we separated. A lot of discussion about what we keep the same and what we change. We should keep the categories but allow change in the areas.

• Around ordination, why would we not have the same discipline? I am very ambivalent about this. Property stuff does not seem to affect our mission to make disciples. There are different property rules through the US let alone throughout the world.

• Many people did not know anything about the Book of Discipline. It needs to be taught and made public. People don’t have the money to purchase it in Nigeria.

• Social principles are being translated in one of the Phil Languages.

• Doctrinal standards—wish this could be printed separately for teaching and evangelization.

• Belief in an educated clergy, even if the methods are different.

• Local church organization is very helpful for order and systemization.

• If the church in the US were to split it would be a big blow to the UMC in the rest of the world.

• Unclear whether it would help for conflicted cultural issues to be pulled out of the Book of Discipline. Several said it would hurt the church outside the US.

• Clear mission statement relevant to all.

• We don’t want to break any part of the Book of Discipline without it we are not united. How can we adjust without losing it all?

• Order of worship—who we are keeps us unified at the same time.

• Book of Discipline allows cultural diversity and flexibility.

• Common doctrine is essential, the centrality of grace and strong Wesleyan theology.

• Openness of UM theology/social principles.

• Polity may look different in many different contexts. May need to have more freedom.

• Many issues may be luxury for us. If we have life threatening situations would it matter?

• I have a respect for our differences.
• I think the first statements of the Book of Discipline are most important, everything afterwards seems contextual. I value that we believe in social and evangelical gospel, creed and deed, but our practical ministry should be contextual.

• We are a global church but we don’t act like it. We come here but don’t educate each other on the way we understand problems or differences. Most important thing is a global church, listening to each other. I listen to them and they listen to me.

• Since we are a global church we have differences in our expression of faith. The true importance of global church is what we share in common. That is our common faith. What I see that ought to be in the Discipline is what it is that still unites us. That is what we should focus on and not what divides us.

• What we should bring together is the word. If I didn’t believe in Christ, if I were Muslim, I wouldn’t be here. I am here because I believe in Jesus Christ. Despite our differences this is what unites us.

• Developing a book of Discipline that allows for regional differences (ex: pensions)

  Must acknowledge that our context is not all there is to the Kingdom

• Tired of amending the amendment, there should be things that are just rules.

• What is essential? To all

• Remember that God’s ways are not always our ways

• Doctrine is important

• Our book can unify

• Less can be more—“breathing” room in various regions

• Gives identity to leadership—gives legitimacy to leaders—less of Bishops

• Gives “official” identity to the church

• Accountability in financial matters—administrative wisdom