

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES GATHERED AT 2010 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

7/6/10

Question #1 – What is the missional purpose of the annual conferences?	170
Make disciples of Jesus Christ	40
Resourcing and equipping local churches	38
Provide opportunities for learning/sharing best practices	21
Accountability, advocacy, inspiration, and enforcement	15
Relationship building/connecting	14
Combine mission and vision of Kansas and Nebraska together	10
Missions, justice, and inclusivity	9
Develop and deploy leaders	8
External communication and outreach	6
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	8

Question #2 - How do we best develop lay and clergy leaders for these three conferences?	166
Enhanced communication and training, use of new media and distance education	46
Small group, local, and/or peer-based training/share best practices	26
Concerns about representation, governance, structure	17
Identify strong, visionary leaders	13
Encourage unity, discourage controversy	8
Concerns about appointments, clergy processes	8
Emphasize children and youth	7
Continue what is currently working	7
Improved training, resources, and development of clergy	6
Empower laity/ lay training	6
Faith and spirituality	6
L3 Incubator	3
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	9

Question #3 - What factors should we all think about with regard to the configuration of conferences in this new Episcopal area?	163
Distance/ Geography	26
Questions on merging of conferences	16
Consideration for small churches, rural and/or Western areas	15
Build relationships with and learn from Kansas United Methodists	12
Improve communication, use of technology	10
Concerns about current process and leadership	9
Keep conference boundaries the same	8
Where will conference be held?	8
Concerns about presence of Bishop and DS's	8
Combine conferences into 1	7
Consolidate ministries, staff, and/or leadership positions	6
Concerns about appointment-making	5
Prayer, follow Jesus' teachings	4
Enhance the number and/or role of the districts	4
Urban vs. rural concerns	3
Make 1 conference for each state	2
Have Nebraska join the North Central Jurisdiction	2
Make 2 Kansas-Nebraska conferences, East and West	1
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	17

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Make disciples of Jesus Christ	19
Resourcing and equipping local churches	12
Missions, justice, and inclusivity	7
Develop and deploy leaders	5
Relationship building and connecting	2
Provide opportunities for learning and sharing best practices	1
Accountability, advocacy, inspiration, and enforcement	1
External communication and outreach	1
Combine mission and vision of Kansas and Nebraska together	0
Miscellaneous	1

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Empower laity/ lay training	8
Concerns about appointments, clergy processes	7
Improved training, resources, and development of clergy	5
Small group, local, and/or peer-based training/ share best practices	5
Identify strong, visionary leaders	5
Faith and spirituality	3
Emphasize children and youth	3
Continue what is currently working	2
L3 Incubator	1
Encourage unity, discourage controversy	1
Concerns about representation, governance, structure	0
Miscellaneous	3

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Make 1 conference for each state	0
Miscellaneous	7

1. What is the missional purpose of the annual conferences?

To serve God
Justice with broad diversity, cooperative relationships affirm the worth of all
To make disciples of all people for the transformation of both the rural as well as the suburban neighborhood for justice, loving kindness and humility before God
Seek justice for all people. Teach love of all people to all people. Support one another in ministry. Organize for the sake of the church.
Empower and equip ministry in identified mission fields
Outreach, support and growth of all churches with a goal of greater fellowship of all congregations
Share the gospel of Jesus Christ
First of all make disciples for the transformation of the world.
At the present time, I believe we need to disciple at the local church level to restore the church at its roots, and then work out from there.
To develop disciples of Christ
Are we promoting the general rule of discipleship of the United Methodist Church? (PP1159). It's equal for everyone.
Assist with connectionalism
To make disciples of Jesus Christ who makes a difference in their community and world. Keep reaching people for Christ in all communities – not just growing ones.
Conferences are “equippers,” resources for churches
Make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. Issues on pensions, health care, etc.
To make appointments and hold pastors and churches accountable. To provide network and connectional highways.
To support the local churches and local pastors to make disciples for Jesus Christ for transformation of the world
Make disciples to equip the world. Spread love.
To strengthen the local church in its mission of reaching individuals with God's love.
To support churches and their leaders. A “conference” can't make a disciple. God makes disciples via local churches.
We need more recognition and celebration and sharing of the good things local churches are doing to make disciples. Too often we hear only what we're doing wrong even if that isn't the case.
To grow new disciples while recognizing the change needed in how this is done – locating and attracting younger people.
To develop disciples. To prepare leaders
To support, encourage and train the leaders of our churches, particularly the clergy
To equip clergy and laity to work faithfully and effectively in mission and ministry together in this new Episcopal area
To promote peace within the churches. Helping each other to promote peace and harmony.
To continue to create ministry that is effective in communicating the gospel
Resourcing the local churches to make disciples making a difference

Develop disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world for God
To equip pastors and churches to create disciples
Efficiently organize limited human and financial resources for targeted missions
Make the world a better place for all men, women and children regardless of nation, color, culture, language, etc.
To support the local church
Making disciples for Jesus Christ
To create and sustain disciples. Develop and strengthen gifts
To equip local congregations and pastors for their mission of making disciples.
Empower ministers and lay people with tools and desire for disciple-making.
To continue to serve those who are in our churches and those who we reach out to if we need to change the way we serve them so be it. Spreading the love of Christ MUST be our main concern.
To help local churches, to make disciples, to promote transformation of people to the mission.
Make disciples: encourage, facilitate and hold accountable congregations.
To empower local churches to be in ministry locally and connectionally.
To make disciples for Jesus Christ. The annual conference needs to provide the leadership to help the local churches meet that goal.
Serve the poor as well as others.
To share the love and grace of Christ to people who live without love and grace.
Empowering/supporting local churches and faith communities in their work of bringing the gospel to all of God's people locally and globally.
Building and making disciples for the transformation of the world – and especially in Nebraska (and Kansas as we become one Episcopal area).
To help the churches feel the connection and to empower the people for justice and righteousness.
Support the local church in the mission of making disciples of Christ.
To resource local churches so that they may effectively reach out for Christ and to do the things that are needed which are beyond the resources of a local congregation.

2. How do we best develop lay and clergy leaders for these three conferences?

Have faith. One conference.
Make known the possibilities to local congregations
To me this needs to be done through both the districts and the conference(s)
Intentional opportunities, such as VIM, that integrate faith and action. Cultivate spirit of grace and collaboration.
High expectations, accountability and freedom
Bring new skills and concept to "local" churches in joint (2 – 5 congregations) workshops
Start by going to one conference. Call it The Great Plains Conference.
We need to keep recruiting and training and deploy pastors and lay leaders
Concentrate on CLMs and bible study leaders
Development of lay leadership – both lay speakers and lay leaders might be done by CD or even medium like skype??
How to provide meeting to keep clergy renewed and enthusiastic
Consider linking "sister" and "brother" churches conference-conference having lay support each other reporting to each other at home churches
Resource local churches to do training, L3, covenant, discipleship, Walk to Emmaus, spiritual formation, disciples bible study – ways to bring people together around God's word and prayer
Make training accessible
Find people that will accept this responsibility and then stick with it!
Focus on some continuing education events worthy of our attendance. Cultivate gifted people into the right positions.
Effective ministry in relevant ways – immigration, Micah 6:8, gay issues, Islamic
As a CLM, I see a need for more information on what a lay leader is – easy way to train so not have to travel hundreds of miles to train
Networking. Continuing education opportunities. Support (spiritually and financially) for professional development of young clergy
Get up to speed with technology. Use video conferencing, distance learning and or course annual training sessions. Use retired pastors as trainers, too.
I was saddened when the West office closed – I worked there for several years and I heard from so many how they appreciated a conference presence. Perhaps that would be a possibility if/when we were one conference. I also envision a conference prison ministry with real clout if we were one (OK has that).
I'd like to see more sharing of resources and ideas among the 3 conferences and across denominational lines
Note that when a pastor is moved to a culturally different community, provide them with people, technology, training that may help them transition into a more diverse population. Such as learning a second language or history of an ethnic group and religion.
Laity – on CLM side – allow to be trained much quicker than I have been. Being in community with others in ministry/pastoral roles.
Technology
How to seek a balance between good for local church and good for the clergy? (public image of process)
Use more technology

Change the culture of churches/clergy seeing themselves as lone leaders/entities. Then continue to provide training sessions so that we know how to use our tools and have similar senses of mission in each place.
Use all of the very best clergy and lay leaders these conference currently have – to equip and encourage those 35 years and younger to be future leaders in the conference(s).
Teach them to pray and visit future members – to learn from one another to love and nurture each other
Offer training/direction. Offer effective resources for ministry. Hold them accountable (don't do it for them). Develop meaningful measures.
Emphasize pride in being United Methodists. Provide training to youth to defend their faith against those who say they are in the wrong church and are condemned.
Focus on YAN and youth – how to target these populations. Focus on small and rural church development. Resources to help churches in transitions.
By offering training focused on “Developing Emerging Leaders”
Nurturing groups and mentors for student pastors and new seminary grads.
Video conferencing/teleconferences must be used more. Strengthen local accountability groups – 10 to 20 pastors “meeting” regularly again and some teleconferences.
Strategic planning and expectations for people who actually know what they're doing to train, support and hold clergy accountable.
I think by developing our youth and bringing youth into a loving relationship with Christ will naturally lead to new leadership.
Suggestion – satellite churches – pastor broadcasts from a central point. How do small churches stay connected? (Laity does balance of service)
Be open to possibilities. One way would be for clergy to pick 3 focus areas that they are passionate about. See where the similarities are – have focus group training sessions amongst the 3 conferences.
Have those people working with youth ministry, camping ministry, UMW, etc. in the 3 conferences meet and brainstorm together.
Prayer and mutual prayer above all. Experiencing the growth of environments which nurture leadership and vision.
Concentrate on youth/mentors.
Tap into what we are blessed with in clergy and lay leaders. There are many people who have a wealth of skills that can be used to continue the mission of the church.
Team efforts.
Multiple smaller gatherings either electronic or in person. More frequent gatherings are more useful than larger infrequent gatherings.
Start with a new Bishop so that we all begin fresh together. An intentional plan for lay leadership development.
By sharing ideas between the conferences. By sharing resources to track and develop leaders in each conference.
By working together to find and develop the best tools. L3 is a good model.
By pooling resources we can draw better trained and equipped leadership to lead training and equipping sessions.
Carefully, diligently and humbly!
Active youth functions, retreat opportunities, have these opportunities with ½ travel so logistically it can be attended.
Train lay and clergy in use of new communication.

3. What factors should we all think about with regard to the configuration of conferences in this new Episcopal area?

A huge concern is how a bishop will be chosen and who that will be. It would seem very unfair for Bishop Jones to be a shoe-in.
Older preachers could phase in one conference
Availability of transportation and opportunities to know new bishop and key staff in local areas
This has to be gifts based, aligned with the distinct and earnest needs of each community
New bishop for a new area. We need to help our jurisdiction support all good work, not just megachurches. Small churches and small communities matter – not huge revenue generators but significant care, justice and change generators. How do we continue to support and encourage diversity? Will we continue to support the gifts of clergywomen and clergy couples? How do we find our voice in a jurisdiction controlled by Texas? How about an Episcopal residence and office in Rulo? It would likely qualify for economic development funds!
Increase diversity rather than homogeneity – theologically, ethnically, rural/urban
Access/availability of bishop to local congregations as needed. If this (KS/NE) becomes one conference, how many delegates to general conference will there be? Will we lose voice/influence in general conference?
We might try to compare populations, not “sizes;” target the similar missions, not the differences; encourage strength and commonalities, not differences.
Maximum ministry. Bang for the apportionment dollar. Duplication of resources (conference staff) should be eliminated from the start.
We need to be open to new ways of being connected. However, change is hard and should be undertaken only if we are convinced it is the best to be faithful and missionally effective.
Travel time. Example: In the UMW Great West district for training of officers, meetings, school of mission, etc. usually the only ones that go are the older, retired women that can stay overnight if ladies come from McCook to Scottsbluff or Valentine areas. To get younger members to attend not just UMW gatherings, but church conferences, etc. because of work and children.
How can we use the data developed in the recently published report on church vitality to help us make the very best of what needs to be done?
The individuality of the local churches and their people
How comparable are the salaries (bases, etc.) of pastors in the 3 areas? Maintain the present conference offices in each area and combine as you go down the road with specialists that travel. Miles are expensive but salaries cost more! Share specialists!
2 conferences – East and West
How can we maintain connections between and among churches in annual conferences and among annual conference? Geography limits some of what we can do. Connectionalism is uniquely United Methodist – let’s not lose it.
Use Hwy 81 as a dividing line through Kansas and Nebraska as population similarities
Set a deadline/timeline – don’t leave open. Consider realigning panhandle with Colorado Wyoming?
Travel distance – communication – training possibilities – Facebook? – mega meetings – teleconferencing needs to expand. Growing areas – church planting.
Socioeconomic differences, political philosophy differences need to be carefully considered as decisions are made. Concern that perception of annual conference remain relevant to local church – particularly in greater Nebraska
Be careful that the average church member does not believe they have been deceived about keeping their NE conference
Fair and equal representation for our districts

I will be praying for your work.
How to transfer to the North Central Jurisdiction or the Dakota Jurisdiction. To offer pastors security in knowing that they will be appointable within their AC and if asked to change to KS they can decline without bad feelings.
Two conferences – eastern NE and eastern KS; western NE and western KS
Communication – keep it open. How can we reach those who are part timers?
Where we can share resources to staff. Political reality of South Central Jurisdiction and how we can work together to develop leaders for general church, jurisdiction and episcopacy.
Open minds!
Have one NE/KS conference – let's merge and serve Christ, not geography.
I'm sure there is much to be gained from becoming one conference. My concern is the vast geographic area that conference would include. There are inherent problems that need to be addressed. Hopefully we have gained insight from our experience with the Great West district.
If we go to one conference I would see a need for pastors to have a little more time (24-48 hours) to accept an appointment – taking into consideration family, gifts to serve a new appointment. Transition training, especially if going to a completely different culture (rural to city, rural to ethnically diverse city, etc.). Also, maybe have a consultant who can advise churches how to better use unused space in their building which might generate a little income too.
What resources can be combined? Will rural America be forgotten?
I like the approach the transition team is taking. It sounds like you are doing a good job. Keep it up.
What was mix/ratio between laity and clergy in this discussion today?
Financial fairness – pension and insurance plans/indebtedness – unfunded liability in pensions. Housing and salary policies be the same – parsonages, furniture, etc. concern one conference might have to make a big jump up = burden for local churches
Context is important – and each one of us has specific and particular gifts; this is true of clergy and churches. I assume this is equally true of our conferences as well. I would really prefer that the Nebraska conference would continue so that I can continue to serve in Nebraska, rather than Kansas.
Get real and cut to the chase and become one vial and effective conference! Use of good technology and networking.
To work out differences between us. To learn peach and happiness is very necessary for all of us. May God's peace and love guide us in our decision making.
Look at other churches who have similar size Episcopal areas (like Greek Orthodox) and see what has made their structure work.
Priorities - 1) state lines, 2) common ministries, 3) travel flows
Will the bishop be able to do all they need to do? Travel time and expense?
Technology sharing and training of staff/personnel. How do we get local church people to accept their power in the church within the conferences?
Don't lose the small churches – they have to continue to exist
1) Geography, 2) population, 3) economics
I like the idea of one conference – geographically. In the long term this would seem to work better.
Leave it three conferences with one bishop
The expenses to meet anywhere within the two states is about the same – but the possibility of putting together tremendous annual conference increases as we pool three conferences into one.

Be careful with ditching retired clergy. I wouldn't be thrilled about serving in Kansas. Will we all begin on equal financial footing? – very important!
Appointments
Combining as much as possible for better communication and financial stewardship
The struggles of Kansas West and Kansas East – laity struggles with feelings of being smothered away. Create immediate connections between KE, KW and Neb – perhaps churches can be matched with a church in one of the other conferences to support and mentor one another.
Expense of technology for a local church. Having a conference youth coordinator once again. How do the Kansas conferences do campus ministry?
I really don't know.
1 bishop should = 1 conference/3 divisions?
Above all, the ministry church should be the most important consideration. What would be the best choice for the Episcopal area that would make the best use of the resources that are available. Use our money wisely no matter what you do.
Travel concerns. How can we best use resources that we have. East vs. West. We must develop a feeling of trust.
My main concern would be those of the western part of the state traveling to per say KS for meeting or KS West people traveling to NE if only one conference is held.
Natural population flows, shopping trends, quality roads, schools, etc. (physical). Best use of resources, avoid duplications of effort.
The importance of geographic ownership and identity.
The importance of knowing the conference leadership.
Allowing pastors to stay in their original area of they choose.
How do we keep further distances from limiting the ability of laity to participate on the conference level?
Can we have more than one location for conference leadership to avoid the feeling that “Kansans run our conference,” or “Nebraskans run our conference.”
Keeping each conference so they have their identity. After a few years after getting acquainted then join the conferences together or change their configuration.
I believe this will lose contact with local church and you will become a dictator!
When possible when focuses are shared, we would be helped by working together. One annual conference would work well.
Questions: How do the KS conferences work with mission shares – do they have a similar system?
Look at what each conference is doing well.
How can we best strengthen/continue significant ministries?
What other ministries are needed in the Episcopal area?
How best to configure our structure to be flexible and responsive – and proactive – in ministry.
How to develop the use of the internet to enact our connectionalism.
Itinerary, conference distances.
Ways to communicate large distances.