

# GREATPLANS GP GREATPLAINS

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

- Jeremiah 29:11

## **Possibilities and Options for the Great Plains Annual Conference**

God has great plans for the Great Plains. God's plans are rooted in Jeremiah's story, with God at the center to guide us through change. The United Methodist Church is in a seismic shift, from a focus on membership to discipleship. The transition team has been leading the three annual conferences in discerning answers to the question, "How are we to be the church in this area we call the Great Plains?"

We hope all three conferences vote to create a new annual conference. Such a move gives us the best opportunity to rethink our ministry, reinvent our connection, and strengthen our focus on increasing the number of vital congregations. Creating a new conference gives us the best possible opportunity to make important changes so we can be more fruitful for Christ.

The principles and timelines in our proposal will be followed if the motion is adopted. At the same time, a "yes" vote will set in motion more planning and decision-making to fill out more details.

Nothing has been decided other than the principles stated in the proposal. However, conversations have been going on in many places, and we want to share with you what we know about the state of those conversations. Decisions will be made over time by the various committees and boards of the three conferences with important large-scale decisions being made in the One Conference Plan voted on at each conference session in May-June 2013 and the Uniting Conference session in August 2013. This would include the structure of the new conference's committees and eventually the election of leaders for them.

All of the material in this document should be seen as the fruit of prayer, conversation and brainstorming. There are possibilities and options which might be approved or might never be approved. Some might happen quickly and some might never be implemented. But we sense the Holy Spirit at work among us to help us become more fully the Church God wants us to be. We share these clarifications, questions and ideas to keep the conversation alive and growing!

## **CONFUSION? Here's some CLARIFICATION**

The Transition Team's recommendations come after lots of listening and discerning. We've tried to gather feedback and share our process with everyone along the way. Now Dream Teams, made up of dozens of lay and clergy, have begun to look at the possibilities of shared ministry. Add that to three conferences, hundreds of churches and thousands of people involved in the conversation, and there is bound to be some confusion on some of the important points. Here, then, are nine items of confusion we've heard about, and some (hopefully) helpful clarification.

**CONFUSION:** Why do we keep talking about one conference instead of calling it a merger?

**CLARIFICATION:** It's a matter of perspective. A merger of three conferences might contain a lot of redundancies, consolidated boards and duplicated efforts. To create a new conference means (in theory) that we're open to new thinking, to being open to ways of doing ministry that none of our existing conferences have ever done before. The more we keep the "new conference" mindset, the more open we will be to innovation and inspiration.

**CONFUSION:** In a new conference, will our mission shares (apportionments) go up?

**CLARIFICATION:** Mission shares (apportionments) may go up, go down, or stay the same. We recommend that no church's share go up or down by more than 10 percent annually.

**CONFUSION:** Did the Transition Team plan on recommending one conference from the very beginning?

**CLARIFICATION:** Not at all. Many different ideas were discussed. Over lots of time and discerning of more than a year, the members of the team became convinced this was the most faithful way our three conferences were being called to proceed.

**CONFUSION:** How can we vote on this plan when we don't have details (like a budget) to look at?

**CLARIFICATION:** The details are essential, but we can't fully assemble them without a framework to hold them together. That's what we're voting on this year, the framework for a new conference (with some of the details we already know). If the vote passes, then committees and boards can begin, in earnest, to tackle the many details ahead of us. In August 2013, at a uniting conference, all of this detail work will be presented. That's when we will vote on specifics. It's a long, deliberate process that requires our patience as we live into it. **In short: this year, we vote on the outline. Next year, we fill it in.**

**CONFUSION:** Will becoming one conference mean more centralization and less people in leadership?

**CLARIFICATION:** It's hard to know how every board and ministry area will respond. It's safe to say that some boards (like the Board of Ordained Ministry) may merge into a new board with fewer total members. Other groups, like Campus Ministry, are looking to keep their existing structures and boards in place, with the possibility of unification if they so choose. Ultimately, the ministries a new conference undertakes will require extensive leadership throughout our areas, just as they do now. We also need to redefine what leadership means. Serving on a committee does not turn a person into a leader. We hope to move some of our leadership from institutional leadership to missional leadership. **In short: there are bound to be changes, but our need for leaders will never diminish.**

**CONFUSION:** When do we have to have our pension/benefit plans figured out?

**CLARIFICATION:** Jan. 1, 2014. The plan is to have things ready for voting by the uniting conference in August 2013, but if the issue isn't settled then, we can vote electronically or hold a special conference.

**CONFUSION:** If we vote "No," does everything remain the same?

**CLARIFICATION:** The reality is that, regardless of our vote, our three conferences will become one episcopal area this fall, governed by one bishop. That, and the need to address our ongoing vitality and relevance, will drastically change the way we do some things. **In short: change is coming – we're voting on how we want to structure it.**

**CONFUSION:** Can I be forced into an appointment outside my former conference?

**CLARIFICATION:** In the "Good Ole' Days" pastors would show up at Annual Conference, receive their new appointment, and go home to pack. The reality is that our appointive system hasn't functioned like that in a long time. Pastors today have some degree of input about when and under which conditions they desire to be appointed. Having a larger area means better possibilities for pastors and churches. **In short: these days, your input plays an important role in the cabinet's discernment.**

**CONFUSION:** Will existing districts be redrawn?

**CLARIFICATION:** There are no plans to do that. It has not been part of the Transition Team discussion. Of course, that's something that could develop as the shape of a new conference begins to develop.

**CONFUSION:** Are one or more of the conferences carrying debt?

**CLARIFICATION:** None of the three conferences are in debt. Nebraska has some decisions to make about how it will fully fund health insurance for those who retire prior to Jan. 1, 2014. Those decisions will not impact our merger. If we become one conference, a new policy will be put in place that equally supports all retirees.

## How a Conference Board Might Work

We hope that every area of ministry will prayerfully vision new ways of doing their work, including considering what their work really should be. Here is one hypothetical example using the Board of Trustees:

There would be a single Board of Trustees for the Great Plains Annual Conference, nominated and elected in the normal way. It would have the same kind of diversity of race, gender, lay/clergy status and geographical representation we currently build into our leadership teams. The board might meet face-to-face once a year for a long meeting. It might meet by video conference two times a year with members driving no more than two hours to one of four locations. It might meet by video conference with persons in their own homes. It might meet by telephone conference call.

The board might subdivide into four or more regions for closer supervision of conference properties (such as district parsonages) with reports back for approval by the entire board. For example, a sub-group who live in western Nebraska might meet for issues related to conference work there, and a separate group for southeast Kansas would do the same.

## Dreaming a New Future

Over the past year five different Dream Teams have been praying, thinking, talking and learning about the possibilities for ministries in specific areas of interest. We invite you to consider these updates on their work as a way for you to begin brainstorming as well.

### Small Membership Church Dream Team

The strength of our witness depends to no small degree on the vitality of hundreds of widely dispersed small membership congregations. Located in almost every county of our two states, small membership churches include nearly half of our weekly worship participants and some 83 percent of our congregations.

The Small Membership Church Dream Team recommends that we seize this restructuring moment as an opportunity to replace our geographic organization insofar as possible with a lively network of churches by size and ministry setting. We know that “one size” does **not** fit all circumstances. This applies to leadership needs, programming possibilities, and even evaluation methods. Small membership churches would gain new strength and energy in a new conference which intentionally structures within itself a peer connection particular to small and rural churches. This includes the deliberate recruitment, training and deployment of both full and part-time pastoral leaders who love the small membership church and who *choose* to serve there as a specialized ministry rather than as a default appointment. A new connection must also include structures which gather peer leaders together for encouragement, learning, renewal, and mission partnerships as well as an electronic network for learning and outreach that is accessible to all, no matter how remote or small. We believe a new conference must be purposefully designed to foster new ways—both structural and serendipitous—for small membership churches to be connected in vital and collaborative ministry.

### Youth Dream Team

#### First Impressions:

The *Youth Dream Team*'s initial concerns had little to do with what our ideas would be, but more the process of how to accomplish the task. After our initial meeting online (to get to know one another and hear our experiences) we determined the need for and chose a facilitator and developed a list of evaluative and projective questions that needed to be answered. The group then met to answer these questions, offer ideas, write everything down, and trust that key principles would start to surface. And, by God's grace, they did.

### Discovery of Possibilities:

The item that kept emerging was that the best way to help youth ministries is to assist the local church. Life-changing decisions may be made at an event, but helping the places where the students gather and learn consistently would have the most long-term benefits. All other principles became secondary to this, and that is why everything filtered through our phrase of “making disciples, in, with, and through the local church.” From there, we discussed *how* the churches could be helped, honing in on three key areas: training and supporting youth workers, offering a clear curriculum and framework plan, and developing and empowering young (middle and high school) leaders. In dealing with the challenge of our churches being varied in size, location, and uniqueness, we determined that much of our efforts needed to be principles-based, accessible online, with individual follow-up being not only available, but proactively offered.

### Hope for the Future:

The *Youth Dream Team* believes this plan would be best developed with us being one conference. In doing so, we could utilize the resources of our three areas to design and implement high-quality, high-caliber resources and training materials that would be available and helpful for all. Within this, we see it being possible to have online trainings that will help local churches hire, train, support, and care for their youth workers. We also see the local church having access to a “road map” with ideas of what to teach their students, resources available to help their students grow, and even online, video-based lessons that can be used to teach them. For youth workers, we see cluster gatherings where they can be trained in ministry, cared for, and coached to be the best they can. We also see our best conference events being made available to all, but will focus attention on localizing many of our events by utilizing churches who are planning “already-excellent events” and encouraging them to invite other churches to join them. Finally, we imagine developing a key leadership event, connected with *Annual Conference* and the *Conference Council on Youth Ministries*, where young people are given the opportunity to grow as leaders and influencers in their homes, youth groups, churches, and schools.

Want a full presentation? Go to: <http://prezi.com/14juytb-qwuh/great-plains-youth-dream-team/>. Still have questions? Contact Justin Lefto at [jlefto@kswestumc.org](mailto:jlefto@kswestumc.org) or 800-745-2350.

### **Young Adult Dream Team**

The team had its first meeting during the January Joint Called Clergy Session. Time was spent getting to know one another and dreaming for the future.

### **Ethnic Church Ministry Dream Team**

The team started its work with team-building, communications and trust-building group exercises and a time of personal storytelling. The group spent considerable time discussing expectations of the conference, its leadership, its staffing and building for the future. Although no recommendations have been developed, the team continues to meet and dream.

### **Technology Dream Team**

As we first met, we were excited about the possibilities of how technology could impact the way we do ministry in the proposed Great Plains area. First, we discovered that our current technology was apt for us to meet, even when we were physically so far apart. At times we were a little bit overwhelmed by the task and it was difficult for us to find a starting point. We found out about the different ways in which the three conferences currently use technology. This contributed to several conversations as to what would be the most helpful way for us to use technology in our new area. As a way to move forward, we invited the Nebraska and Kansas areas' communications personnel to help us sort out our thoughts and help us identify the

possibilities for the future.

Our subsequent meetings were all done using communication technology. We combined conference calls, Skype, Google meetings, and the video conference equipment our conferences already own. One of the things we found out was that through any of these means, we were able to have successful meetings. But just because the technology is available, that doesn't mean that meeting this way is entirely possible for all clergy and laity in the Nebraska and Kansas areas. There is a huge disparity in the pace of technological adoption across our annual conferences, churches, clergy and laity. Still, the potential for the use of technology is worth any changes we need to suffer by bridging the disparity. We see the potential in two basic areas:

- Leading Across the Area
- Connecting People

How will technology help a person from any geographic area be part of a leadership team? How will we provide technology to people across the area in order for them to participate in the work of the conference? Will technology increase or decrease people's availability to serve? How could technology increase our accessibility to training and continuing education events? What kind of technology could help us build relationships among the people across the area? When would meeting in person make more sense? These are the questions we are still wrestling with as we take into consideration all of the people called United Methodists in Kansas and Nebraska.

Even though we have so many questions that still need answers we are excited for the possibilities. We believe that the tools that are available to us now can make a positive impact in the way in which we leap forward to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the Nebraska-Kansas area. As a result of our work we have compiled some possibilities

### **For Clergy and Staff**

- Email – Ability to use email as a means of communication
- Common Email – Email addresses that remain constant over various appointments, via Google Apps or Microsoft Exchange.
- Social Media – Presence on a social media network, for example, Google+, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- Training – The districts/conference should find/promote or create courses which seek to raise comfort/ability with social media / video conferencing.

### **So, that... Why would we do these things?**

- Increase the ease communication throughout the annual conference across appointments
- Be present online at the places where the people of our communities are present
- Equip those who are sent. Before you could send out a circuit rider you had to teach them how to ride a horse.

### **For Local Churches and District Offices**

- Bandwidth – High speed internet access available
- Email – An email address that is used regularly
- Website – Presence of, or ability to create, a public website
- Computer – A computer available that has the requirements to run Skype
- Establish recommendations for parsonage standards/utilities packages for clergy compensation that include providing high-speed internet access, where available, as a standard at parsonage and church.

### **So, that... Why would we do these things?**

- Be present online at the places where the people of our communities are present
- Remove barriers of participation in committees, boards and agencies
- Make it easy for new people to find information about our churches
- Save time and travel expense by having local churches be “virtual-meeting ready”

### **For the Annual Conference**

- Connectivity Centers - Sites available to access communication technology if not available at the local church
- Technology Strategy - Area wide strategy for technology usage including standards of web presence (no ugly websites!), social media policy and boundary training.
- Staff Role – Establish a position for a trainer to work with clergy and congregations in increasing proficiency in use of new and existing technologies for the purpose of connecting with each other and with their communities.
- Leadership – Conference and Area Leaders to gain a working understanding of communication technology, such as Skype and regularly implement them in their communication.
- Continuing Education – Establish recommendations for continuing education to include training in use of technology for purpose of developing competencies among clergy in utilizing new tech as it is available.

### **So, that... Why would we do these things?**

- Training and equipping could be done systematically and effectively across the area
- Remove barriers of participation in committees, boards and agencies
- Conference and area leadership models new connection strategies, helping to motivate/normalize the idea of meeting online

### **Technical Teams**

We have intentionally avoided many of the details of becoming one conference like naming the staff and committees that will be needed. Our collective priority must remain the vision and openness to the Spirit. We have, however, named two technical teams to do some of the hard, specialized work that could cause legal or financial difficulties if not done well. Their reports follow.

#### **Asset Allocation Team**

We have met twice since last annual conference, once in Topeka and once by Skype. We all felt that having the time to be face to face with each other was not only necessary, but went a long way toward building relationships and trust. Using the technology proved to be time and cost effective and we will need to continue to use the technology in order to be good stewards of our assets. Regardless of the topics of conversation, it became apparent that this whole process is as much about relationships as it is about anything else. Very few of us missed either meeting. These meetings became a time to look forward to, and we all made new friends.

We spent some of the first meeting doing some basic mapping. Where were the districts and their offices? Where were the camps, campus ministries, Hispanic ministries and other related institutions? It may be possible to take advantage of those organizations that already exist. In Nebraska, we operate with one overall board that deals with all the camps – Nebraska United

Methodist Camping Inc. In Kansas, we operate all the campus ministries under one united Campus Ministry Board. So, it may be possible that we could keep all camps and all campus ministries that are now operating and that they would each be governed under their own corporation, one for camps and one for campus ministries. Soon, a feeling of possibility and excitement was generated by some early discussions and a spirit of cooperation.

Very early in the process, it became obvious that we would need to get conference attorneys involved in the legal process because of the difference in state laws. We also began to discern that many issues would have to wait pending the votes by the three conferences this year. In many cases, we will have to live into our new relationship for a while and not everything has to be decided, or can be decided by September 2012.

Housing for the Bishop while he or she is in Nebraska is a matter for the Nebraska Board of Trustees, at least for the 2012-13 year, and they are working on that at this time.

There are a lot more issues that we will be dealing with in the future. For more information and details, please contact Rev. Steve Flader, 402-489-1641 or Rev. Gary Beach, 785-272-9111.

### **Joint Distributing Team (JDT)**

The team has actively been discussing: (1) Pre-82 pension funding, (2) Retiree health care, (3) Equitable Compensation and minimum compensation, and (4) Welfare plans.

**Pre-82 past service rate** – “The Book of Discipline” currently requires all retirees within an annual conference to receive the same Past Service Rate (PSR). Legislation is before General Conference to allow retirees from different annual conferences to receive different PSRs when their annual conferences have combined into one new one. GBOPHB actuaries have studied our situation and have concluded that we have sufficient funds even if the legislation before General Conference fails to pass. Kansas West surviving spouses of clergy will continue to receive 100 percent of their spouse’s pre-82 benefits per the requirements of the plan.

**Retiree health care supplement** – The JDT is recommending a move to Extend Health for retiree health coverage. This will have little impact on retirees from Kansas East and Kansas West, since neither annual conference currently subsidizes retiree health care. Nebraska clergy who retire before the formation of a new annual conference will continue to receive a health care subsidy in accordance with the conference policies as of July 1, 2012, as long as funds held in escrow last and the churches of Nebraska are willing to pay a separate mission share to support the benefit.

**Equitable compensation and minimum compensation** – Calculations differ among the three annual conferences. The JDT has established a task force consisting of the three conference benefit officers, three pastors (Karen Jeffcoat – KE; Jim Graves – KW; and Jim Brewer – NE) and treasurers Gary Beach and Robin Kilgore, to recommend components to be included in computing minimum salary and rules for equitable compensation. This task force would begin work upon a vote by all three conferences to form one new conference.

**Welfare plans** – The three conferences’ Comprehensive Protection Plan practices also differ. The task force mentioned above has also been asked to review the current plans, identify the core values, and make a recommendation for a unified Comprehensive Protection Plan in the fall.

## Endorsement by Large Church Pastors

Last May the senior pastors of some of Nebraska and Kansas' largest churches gathered to discuss the implications of becoming one conference. They released the following letter at that time indicating their support along with some valid questions and concerns that we will continue to keep in mind

May 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Two weeks ago 25 pastors from Nebraska, Kansas West and Kansas East got



together to discuss the proposed creation of the Great Plains Annual Conference. We came together for conversation because we share the common experience of being senior pastors of some of our larger churches. We are not

a part of any official group or caucus in the Kansas or Nebraska areas nor were we asked to gather by any of the formal leadership of either Episcopal Area or the Transition Team. We gathered for conversation to collect our common thoughts, feelings and hopes for a Great Plains Annual Conference.

We write today to share the results of our conversation with our brothers and sisters in Christ. What follows is not so much a consensus on every part of our conversation as it is a gathering and organizing of our various thoughts. Not everyone who attended that day will agree with this in its entirety. We humbly offer this as the product of our conversation.

We spent our time discussing three general topics: difficulties in creating a new annual conference, important questions and the potential and hope we see in a Great Plains Annual Conference. As we gather for Annual Conference we look forward to even more conversation as we all seek to discern God's best for the Nebraska and Kansas Episcopal Area.

**Difficulties:** The creation of a new annual conference can enhance our ability to

effectively and faithfully pursue our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ and transforming the world. We agree that a strong and vital mission depends on finding creative and faithful solutions to the adaptive challenges facing us; even so, there are legitimate technical issues that will need to be addressed. Technical issues are admittedly not as exciting to ponder as are the adaptive challenges, but technical issues are significantly relevant to many of our congregations and pastors.

As pastors we have learned the importance of sensitivity when dealing with change in our local churches. Change is difficult and sensitivity to heart-level issues is important. One of those issues of the heart for some pastors involves being appointed to some distant charge in an area they never considered. For some, the issue has more to do with the fear of being cut-off from long-trusted collegial relationships and family rather than being a matter of geography. We are hearing that some smaller and rural congregations fear being lost in the shuffle. Admittedly we should not allow technical matters or fears to slow our progress, but for many the ability to meet adaptive challenges requires confidence that their fears and anxiety have been truly understood and honored.

**Important Questions:** Our questions are not a questioning of the potential of a new annual conference, but a hopeful wondering of how we might best advance our mission in Kansas and Nebraska.

- **Q:** How will we organize annual conference and District level staff to support our new understanding that the purpose of an annual conference is to develop faithful and effective leaders and local congregations?
- **Q:** What broader role could elders play in assisting superintendents for providing leadership in newly designed districts?
- **Q:** How might the Board of Ordained Ministry be organized and function to respond to a vaster geographical area as well as to the increasing role of Local Pastors?

- **Q:** How will we ensure that our new annual conference is adequately represented at General and Jurisdictional Conferences?
- **Q:** How can we retain what is best about the distinct heritage and history of our three conferences and use that to take the most faithful advantage in a new annual conference?

**Potential and Hope** – It feels like it is time push the reset button. Yes, there are vital and faithful ministries and congregations in all three annual conferences. But the greater reality is that we have been and are in decline. Creating a new annual conference gives us the most dynamic opportunity to reimage what ministry might look like for the people called United Methodist in Nebraska and Kansas. Some ask why it takes the creation of a new conference to do this—why can't we do this in our three separate conferences? We admit that to date, in truth, we have not shown the willingness nor offered the leadership needed to do so. Retaining three annual conferences allows us to remain comfortable while never addressing the uncomfortable reality facing us. So we see hope and potential in discerning and creating a new way forward that forming a new annual conference offers us.

We realize that cost efficiencies to be gained are technical changes rather than adaptive but are none-the-less important to the long-term health of the United Methodist mission in the Great Plains. Realigning the financial resources of three annual conferences to meet our mission can only strengthen our work. But our resources are much greater than our finances; we can easily imagine that leveraging our three storehouses of spiritual leadership (laity, clergy and Episcopal) in the three existing annual conferences into one primary mission will enhance our effectiveness in exciting ways.

We see this as an opportunity to re-imagine the role of an annual conference and Districts. The role of the district superintendency can be reshaped to fit the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century ministry. We see an

opportunity for rethinking the concept of districts from entities that are regionally determined to mission centers configured according to our missional priorities. We see the potential of having greater opportunities to network with colleagues with similar experience, context or ministry challenges. We see the possibility of specialized ministry networks—learning from our colleagues and congregations who are particularly effective in Hispanic ministry, or suburban ministry, or small church ministry, or county-seat ministry, or downtown ministry.

We see that creating a new annual conference provides greater potential for strengthening local congregations for ministry that serves the present age than would remaining three separate annual conferences. We agree that there will be a larger pool of clergy with special gifts and graces than can be deployed according to the missional need of the local church. With a larger conference we can more effectively direct resources for specialized training according to the needs of ministry in particular contexts. We have great hope that a Great Plains Annual Conference will ultimately help local congregations put more resources and creative energy toward making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We appreciate your allowing us to share our thoughts and feelings about the proposed Great Plains Annual Conference with you. We look forward to continuing the conversation with you during Annual Conference.

With you in the ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,

**ingering questions?** Contact Gary Beach at 877-972-9111 or [gbeach@kansaseast.org](mailto:gbeach@kansaseast.org), Carol  
ettmer Brewer at 402-464-5994 or [crbrewer@umcneb.org](mailto:crbrewer@umcneb.org) , or Tom Watson 308-293-1887 or  
[watson@gmail.com](mailto:watson@gmail.com).

The following pastors participated in or have signed onto this conversation:

- Patricia Ault-Duell: Kansas West
- David Bell: Kansas West
- Tom Brady: Kansas East
- Troy Bowers: Kansas West
- Lance Carrithers: Kansas West
- Lance Clay: Nebraska
- Fritz Clark: Kansas East
- Bruce Davis: Nebraska
- Nancy Davis: Nebraska
- Douglas Delp: Nebraska
- Junius Dotson: Kansas West
- Barry Dundas: Kansas West
- Bruce Emmert: Kansas East
- Nancy Gammill: Kansas East
- Michael Gardner: Kansas West
- Doug Griger: Nebraska
- Kevin Hopkins: Kansas East
- Jeannie Jensen: Kansas East
- Keith Johnson: Nebraska
- Ron King: Kansas East
- Brian Kottas: Nebraska
- Lawrence Lambert Jr.: Kansas West
- Steve Langhofer Kansas East
- David Livingstone: Kansas East
- Dennis Livingston: Kansas West
- Michael Marion: Kansas West
- Shelly McNaughton-Lawrence: Kansas East
- Butch Ritter: Kansas East
- Kay Scarbrough: Kansas East
- Nathan Stanton: Kansas West
- Nancy Tomlinson: Nebraska
- Cindy Watson: Kansas West

This document has been provided to offer additional background, information and discussion topics. We invite you to be in prayerful discernment as you and your congregation prepares your members to the annual conference session for the one-conference vote.

