

Redistricting in North Georgia for Mission and Stewardship

With an aim toward optimizing mission, ministry, and stewardship across the North Georgia Annual Conference, Conference leadership has developed a proposal to restructure our districts from 12 to 8. Working with a strategic growth consultant, new district lines have been drawn in a mission-focused manner more reflective of today's North Georgia Conference and the communities we serve.

This new structure has been thoroughly reviewed and unanimously approved by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration and by the Cabinet. Orientation to this structure has also been provided to all District Lay Leaders and District Committees on Superintendency, and District Administrative Assistants.

The structure will be formally presented to the 2020 North Georgia Annual Conference, but information, including a video presentation from our consultant, is available in advance.

District Restructuring FAQs

Why reduce the number of districts?

The current district structure was created during a far different era in North Georgia. Realigning our districts in a more strategic, mission-focused manner reflective of today's North Georgia Conference is the responsible and most opportune path to pursue.

How were the new lines determined?

The new lines were drawn with a few major guideposts:

- District lines will honor county lines and major interstates.
- Each new district will have opportunities for growth and include some high-growth counties.
- Each district will have a similar number of churches.
- The population (and projected population growth) is balanced between the 8 districts.
- Current apportionments and District Work Funds will be roughly balanced across the new districts.
- Six of the eight districts will have a United Methodist college, university, or seminary in its boundaries.

What will the new district names be?

New district names are still on the drawing board. Do you have a suggestion? Share name ideas with your District Superintendent.

What is the timeline?

It will take 1 year for the new district structure to fully go into effect. While we will accelerate planning for and begin living into this new structure after Annual Conference in June, the proposed date of full implementation is July 1, 2021.

What are the financial implications?

It is estimated that the change will reduce Conference expenses by as much as \$800,000 annually.

What has changed since the current district lines were drawn?

There has been great change since our current districts were established. Cell phones, email, and video conferencing have become commonplace communication tools. There has been a rise in ubiquitous public meeting spaces (like Starbucks). There are new highways with resulting new traffic patterns, new neighborhoods, and new communities. There is greater population diversity. There have also been shifts in worship attendance patterns.

Does Annual Conference need to vote on restructuring?

The members of Annual Conference will vote on a change in Standing Rules to adjust the number of districts from 12 to 8 in that document.

What does this mean to my local church?

Your local church will still be part of a district and still have a district superintendent. Being part of a more efficient and balanced district, that better reflects the regions and geography of North Georgia today, will be an asset to local churches and pave the way for an even more connectional, collaborative, and relevant approach to our mission of making disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world.

What does this mean for clergy?

With a more balanced number of clergy in each district and more similar contexts for churches in the same district, clergy should expect better synergy and an increase in opportunities for collaboration.

What does this mean for the role of District Superintendent?

The new structure represents more balance for the superintendents, as well. The districts themselves will be more cohesive, and the proposed structure will allow for greater collaboration on shared initiatives both within and between districts. Some of the innovative teamwork for the District Superintendents to pursue includes:

- Prototype new structures, and creative ways of engaging pastors as district leaders
- Bring about creative mergers and networks of churches
- Pilot new approaches to both urban and rural missions and ministries
- Study and learn from demographic shifts (e.g., gentrification, immigration) that should inform and help shape our ministry
- Develop partnerships with other denominations, ecumenical groups, government and non-governmental organizations, influential Methodists, and community leaders
- Innovating shared services

Have other United Methodist Annual Conferences restructured districts?

Yes. Many have been through this process. Since 2010, at least 24 U.S. Annual Conferences have reduced the number of districts.