

KS West Conference 5 Finger Vote Comments

800 ballots printed, 501 ballots submitted

5 finger vote: 142 total

- No comment (32 voted with 5 fingers and no comment left)
- “Go for it” or “Let’s do this” (8 total with this comment)
- “From the information I have received I believe this is very reasonable. Rural churches only lose their voices if they quit speaking” PS Gil’s talk was great!! “I’m excited about changing our format (annual conference) as we presently do things. Let this be God driven decisions”
- “I’m 100% behind the transition team, recognize the difficult task they have had and respect the plan they have presented. One conference is the best option and the sooner we get on it the better. *BOOM issues will definitely affect some people (candidates). I’m also hoping that the Deacons of one conference have a voice – I’m willing to move on 100% at this issue. I ask that UM continue to listen to people and to see each ones value”
- “It was very well presented. I think it will work”
- “Having gone through similar process in the Dakotas, I find it exciting and hopeful – the process there was extremely positive. We feared a loss of closeness & collegiality and discovered instead a broader sense of community. Our boundaries/territory expanded, our family/homes/live enlarged. My one concern is that, in spite of the process, the language (particularly in answers to questions) seems highly directive and “heavy-handed”. “Will” seems to assume facts not in evidence. These are opportunities & challenges, not givens”
- “Although making Disciples of Jesus Christ is our goal we must address the rising poverty in our country. For combining our resources & talent perhaps we can better be the church to all people. I feel we can learn from each other and work together”
- “Let’s be pro-active, not re-active to our changing world and embrace this new reality & charge forward. As a lay person, I honestly don’t care where the conference office is located, but I am concerned about using our resources in the most cost-efficient and responsible way possible. I am concerned about poverty and how we as a church can BE the church in the world and work to build a better world. Let’s move forward!”
- “From a management standpoint, it would be most effective to have one conference. Bringing strengths together from all three conferences & bringing them into one can be powerful spiritually. God will provide insight to make it work. Teleconferences are practical for a conference this size. Meet in two areas to accommodate most, linking bodies through technology”

- “To quote Nike – just do it! Don’t sit by and let things get worse”
- “I have dealt with major changes in my “former life” as exec. Staff in a non-profit. We dealt with a consolidation and with a property sale that had major emotional fallout but worked out in the long run. If nothing else, I learned the importance of dealing with grief/loss issues and that we can never communicate too much! There will be negative consequences in some of these changes, but a single conference will be more effective in the long run. I pray for thoughtful discernment and constructive action
- “We must survive but far beyond survival is moving forward to increase our ability to be in mission NOT maintenance”
- “It is time to move the process forward – answer some of the technical questions”
- “Let’s not be like our politicians, we can work together to be one body in Christ’s service”
- “Such a large area under the leadership of one Bishop must be totally reorganized and streamlined – do it right!! I pray for complete success.”
- “Thank you team for your work”
- “Prefer % of health premium regardless of compensation i.e. flat rate to be addressed/discussed @ annual conference. Flat dollars should be in are of \$100 - \$200 per doctor visit. I feel health insurance costs will rise
- “Let’s get on with it! Our focus needs to be less about organization and more about making disciples in new ways”
- “I believe the transition team has discerned the will of God to move us to one conference, for most effective ministry, for the future of UM ministry in the GP Area. My prayers and thanks are with the transition team”
- “The challenges for our future are great regardless of our choice. But, I think we are stronger together. May our hearts be one in this process”
- “A New Thang! Because the old thang is not working anymore. Raise up lay leaders, regional conferencing or demographical conferencing. Reduce barriers for effective leadership = empowering. Assist small congregation to make tech transition. Vision – 2 lenses, New church and vital rural ministry. This is different (looks different) than suburban vitality. I would serve on a “Dream Team”. Synchronized telecast, multi-site conferences”
- “Meeting our adaptive challenges is a must, regardless of how many conferences make up our area. The transition team has stated the challenges but have not stated how the formation of a new conference will help meet the challenges. However, it only makes sense to consolidate, and God will lead us to meet our adaptive challenges in the process”
- “One Body one LORD. May the Lord continue to guide and direct all of us. Thanks for all you have done and will do”

- “Continue to work with small membership churches. Support and leadership development”
- “Allow for more conversation and less presentation. All we needed was Gil Rendle’s talk. Too much talk from transition team. Let people express themselves”
- “Great idea. Thank you transition team for your hard work”
- “This is the best opportunity we have to truly do church differently. To “Re-think” we can no longer keep doing the way we have been”
- “I don’t think this will have much impact on my church. So, Be bold, let’s do it. Thank you for your hours and hours of planning work. I think it is the pastors who are afraid (of being assigned to “timbuktu, NE”). My pastor actively campaigned against to our leadership team who instructed me to vote NO – oops.”
- “Think through geography carefully. I support this concept. The size of the conference is not relative to local church membership. Will geography & travel hinder lay people to participate? Membership – church attendance is not the fault of the church – it is the result of our culture – society being invited to go everywhere except into relationship with Christ”
- “I trust that the transition team has studied, prayed, and discerned about this and I support this recommendation”
- “Never be afraid of change. We need to move with the belief that God is doing a new thing. Let us show our faith”
- “On a practical level, it makes sense financially & on a functionality level as far as the appointive process is concerned”
- “Possibly try a conference (one) for KS East & West first before one for all three. Prayers to transition team to work out so many issues”
- “Change happens. God is faithful and will lead us if we allow”
- “This seems to be the way to best use resources and decrease expenses”
- “Opportunity not only for growth but for stability; we must Remember that we are all one in Christ – NOT 3 in Christ!”
- “Combining conferences opens dialogue and other ministry opportunities for evangelism, education & cooperation among God’s people”
- “I’ve served multi-church appointments, and it ain’t easy. The Bishop needs one assignment”
- “Key issue is Leadership. I would serve on Leadership Dream Team!”
- “Must have extensive conversation and much discernment!!! To God be the Glory!”
- “I am hoping the lay leaders from conferences & districts can participate in a “Bd of Laity Dream Team” or a reasonable facsimile thereof”
- “Just make CHANGES”

- “There are many technical answers needed but that will come as we live into the GP for the GP! Bishop should NOT have 3 conferences. Each of the 3 conferences bring their own strengths... and could strengthen our work in new ways in our mission field! I would be willing to serve on a sub-committee discussing leadership”
- “Full speed ahead. A lot of work needs to be done on the logistics of how annual conference session will be handled”
- “Becoming one conference will help all of us to work together & combine (& create) resources, so that we can better be the church who makes disciples of Jesus Christ. As long as we continue to be intentional in our mission and even after becoming 1 conference”
- “I appreciated the comment of the Bishop – “ The conference to save souls. It deploys pastors into the field” And the four reasons given in the workbook”
- “We need to move forward with bold commitment, believing we can work out the details as we go. I trust that we can resolve the questionable issues”
- “I fully support this decision. I will be glad to meet new people and have more conversations. I also would be happy to be appointed to Omaha, Nebraska. I hope our Bishop will be able to continue be the Bishop of one great plains conference because I know how that feels. I wanted to be the pastor at a new point charge. New creates excitement. I am excited about this new opportunity”
- “Technology will play a large role in this new 2 state conference. Will small churches have help in this area in obtaining equipment and training to operate?”
- “I am for the proposal for 2 reasons: 1) most logical for Bishop & conf staff to lead the new area, 2) Does open the possibility for “deep” change.”
- “I’m still unsure about some things, but I trust that God has worked through the team. I also have desired an awakening for my beloved Methodist Church, nothing else has worked, so maybe this will!”
- “Prayer will be job one in moving forward. How can the transition team create a template for all task force groups working on transition so that prayer is not simply at opening or closing prayer formality?”
- “A future with Hope!”
- “Save money – best way for ministry, best for a Bishop, best to be a united front of Christians at work in helping others – it is just best.”
- “I am in support of this proposal. However, I am concerned for the area staff and how they will be impacted. We must “rethink” and this is a good start”
- “I am excited about the possibility of one annual conference across KS and NE and would love to be part of the conversation if there are ways that I could be helpful” –
- “I have faith! Faith in the transition team members and faith that God is in this plan. Go for it”

- “Have friends in NE and KS East. Trust the transition team. Believe KS West must move to change”
- “I would appreciate the use of technology to accommodate small distant church lay leaders. You are doing a good job to express this vision”
- “Listening events gave opportunities to participate. I see wisdom in the process. Thank you. As a new member of KWC Board of Trustees, how will we bring together Trustees’ responsibilities in one episcopal area and/or one conference?”
- “Concerns to be addressed in information: regional leaders development, connection & unity – this would be an “unsuccessful” move if it is a detriment to the small congregations”
- “New visioning has brought this question before us. It is modern & I think appropriate. I am available to serve on a committee to discuss issues”
- “Trust God to show us the way. Trust transition team to work through the details”
- “ I think this is a good thing. Change is good or we would still have circuit riders in our churches”
- “I am excited about this possibility! We shall boldly go into this risk-taking mission. I trust the work that has been done and is still to be done, and I give my support. In the spirit of our Wesleyan roots I am ready for risk-taking mission!”
- “In order to be able to vote most knowledgably, and confidently, details related to ordination requirements and pension questions need to be addressed and made available as well as retirement issues and health insurance differences. However, I think that it is important to remember, first and foremost, that we are a connection and not a congregationally based church. Our focus cannot be on the minutia but the mission”
- “I know about unintended consequences on our actions and on this vote. I believe with the current technology we can include More people in our conference with tele-conferences. Keep talking, including all concerned. Thank you for all the hard work from our dedicated transition team”
- “I feel this will work – do lots of praying”
- “I think our moving to one conference is a reflection of what we need to do as a nation – only we are stepping out in faith and listening to God’s voice”
- “Why stand in the way of progress? We will be under one Bishop – why not “pull” as one, instead of pulling as 3 w/3 different visions, missions, and projects. It only makes sense”
- “Though one conference will not be an automatic cure for our decline it will provide many additional resources for the discussion”
- “We need to move forward. I am more interested in where we can go as a church and conference than where we have been. I have some concerns about institutional rivalry”

- “I support this not just to jump on the band wagon, but to step out in faith that God has a new plan for us. I hope people will look beyond themselves to the good of the Body. I also know that sometimes the devil is in the details”
- “Let’s move on. Many objections will come up. Meet and overcome each”
- “It’s time we risk some new and creative things in order to be better organized to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and greatly diminish our overblown bureaucracy”
- “I feel this is a good move in our church. Administration will be more effective. Resources more localized and acceptable”
- “Provide as many specifics as possible once the technical teams have met and worked. Includes plans to resolve issues of difference in clergy comp, pension, health insurance, apportionments, and number of districts, and episcopal office location and why, annual conference location or locations and why. Also, further address the question: “what if I as a clergy person do not want to move to Nebraska, Eastern KS or Western KS” These are the issues of the most anxiety I hear”
- “Thank you for allowing so much conversation about this! How to do the annual conference seem to be of a lot of concern”
- “I would like to assist in working in this goal”
- “I believe there are emotional (and good) questions that we need more information and data to reduce the fear of people in the conference. Thanks for the work and I look forward to what can happen!”
- “Labor efficiencies. Capital & licenses efficiencies. Increased pool of eligible clergy. Structural change will no appropriately make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World. UMC Doctrine and Discipline and biblical integrity will transform lives. Intellectual honesty”
- “I am ready to stop talking and move forward. I have been wanting us to combine with other conferences for 13 yrs. It helps if you have lived and served in other conferences. There is to many differences between conferences and it would be better if they were all alike”
- “There are so many possibilities – it will be helpful to share as much information as possible as soon as possible”
- “Leadership and vision of adaptive mission is where we need to be”
- “I think the majority of questions/concerns can’t completely be addressed until we begin the process of moving forward on this. I trust those in charge of this process to seek God and look out for the needs of all the churches”
- “Let’s leap, we will have questions & obstacles but I am confident we have creative folks to work those out. I have heard concern about UMW and UMM”
- “All my questions would be for after it was done!”

- “Questions are being worked out. This is the only option that makes sense” – Bob Cox
- “This is a great way to move forward and set up our conference for the future because this is not for us but for our future annual conference. Question/suggestion: Why don’t you have a youth on your transition team? I think you should”
- “We need to be bold! I have logistical questions, but those aren’t important now! God will do His will”
- “I believe that this is a great opportunity to bring ourselves together and make disciples of Jesus Christ! And to also meet new people and overcome obstacles in front of us!”
- “My only comment is that I am excited for it”
- “A hope filled vote. May God richly Bless us with Faith over Fear”
- “I think change is inevitable and that we have the best chance to grow and transform ourselves to a church that is more appealing to youth ministries & those people not yet involved with the church”
- “I am in full support! I think that yes where people are going to stay and where annual conference will be held is important, but that shouldn’t stop people from passing this vote”
- “I am hopeful the 3 conferences can become more progressive in their thinking and join together to be a national leader in how it can be done well”
- “We need to be as one as we are one with God together. Separate we will fail or fall short of God’s will”
- “This will bring more unity to the church”
- “I am in favor of one annual conference or even other organizational changes that allow and support missional, spiritual affinity groups that because of demographics do not occur in the local rural church. With a congregation of less than 50 souls, often divided 70/30 or even 80/20% with the weight on the older and traditional, more provincial, ideas of how “church” works. I can envision more of a virtual church that not only would include Kan and Neb, but eventually expand throughout the world. Technology can be a challenge for small rural churches. Fiber optic broadband or satellite based networks will increasingly present options for small rural, remote churches but there will need to be technical assistance, probably subsidized by the conference or otherwise. I would cherish the opportunity to think, pray, and engage with a larger group of methodists and other Christians who will not just argue or take “liberal/conservative” positions, would love to help in this process”
- “I feel its time to do it; not discuss whether to anymore. Let’s get on with figuring out HOW to best make it work. Taking the best of each of the current conferences, make sure those are incorporated in the NEW one conference”

- “I am in full support and have no questions that would sway me. I am just wondering if health care would be all 3 conferences and possibly reduce costs because of an increase in numbers”
- “Too many “dinosaurs” out there that don’t understand capabilities of technology and modern “conference” methods. Could the conference bring in “corporate” people who could enlighten our “dinosaurs”? don’t think conference transition team is doing a very good job of it”

KS West Conference 5 Finger Vote Comments

501 ballots submitted

4 finger vote: 120 total

- Left no comment – (21 ballots with four finger vote and no comment)
- “This is a wonderful opportunity for growth and increased fellowship. We are United Methodist’s, let’s be united”
- “How will the combining of CCYMs work out? Will meetings be held via internet? Will this effect the budget for organizations?”
- “Let’s do this! There is great opportunity for growth! Only question: what’s the future of youth ministries look like?”
- “I think this needs to happen. We have to embrace the future. Transportation and a feeling of community within the conference may be an issue”
- “Differences in fund balances. How will they be reconciled?”
- “My questions are technical and I am positive will be workied out in the midst of transition and planning. Comment: Gil Pendle gave a great presentation – I think having questions following his presentation would have been more helpful. Then have the transition team speak briefly – the transition team speeches often felt manipulative and avoided the hard questions”
- “My concern is that bigger is not always better. But I feel that issue will be resolved. I cannot imagine a Bishop having to have 3 different annual conferences. I feel the best decision will be done through study and much prayer”
- “How will the Dream Teams be selected? Is there an option for perhaps agreeing to one conference and a gradual implementation (2-3 yrs)”
- “Keep going after the adaptive issues! How will this affect Hispanic ministry? How will, or can this, change hearts and minds, not just organizational structure? “Is this a road worth going down? – yes”
- “My question is: if the new annual conference will give the same support to the Hispanic Ministries? God Bless you”
- “As a young pastor, I want to know that our older clergy’s pension is not jeopardized”
- “I believe this will be a good thing, adding energy and opportunity to all three conferences. However, I do believe we have some work to do before we are eager to merge”
- “I would pray that #1 goal is how we move effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ. I agree it takes focused, well trained leadership – CLERGY & LAITY. What matters most is people finding Jesus!”

- “Generally in support. One concern: “Fully Funded” nature of pension program, including for surviving spouses”
- “I believe it is very important that because of sustainability we remain good stewards & thus be careful to not increase administrative costs to support the One Annual Conference. The small local church struggles to financially support their pastor and shouldn’t have to struggle more to support conference administrators”
- “Pensions, Foundation, Health Insurance. Some programs will need to remain autonomous. Such as UMCOR, Health Foundation, (was unable to decipher what most of this comment said.)
- “How will this look? Will all the meetings be by webinars? Leaves and fishes? Jesus didn’t say “how” will we feed them – just feed!”
- “So...how’s that working for you?” Not so well – let’s work smarter. Vision sound great....logistics seem problematic. BUT faith says GO!”
- “What was the honest rationale of the General Cong in making this decision? Was it to save money?! The management will be tremendous! Hopefully the Bishop will have time to breathe?”
- “My questions are in regards to the transition process which I understand will take time to figure out”
- “What kind of debt does Nebraska bring in – I heard a rumor about large debt”
- “I am concerned about growing the authoritative leadership of the conference rather than growing the laity and church as the body of Christ. I see a movement away from strengthening the church & the churches of the conference growing disciples of Jesus Christ”
- “There are many questions but also know that they can’t all be answered until it actually happens. There are always risks but also blessings. We have a vision and are in prayer for this transition”
- “Willing to help out. I believe the Call to Action report of the Bishops will influence the Local Churches more than 1, 2, or 3 Conferences. To really impact the local church the DS role needs to change and the training of Local Lay church leaders must change. Some mechanism must be thought of by which churches can feel like their input and influence has been increased and not decreased. To accomplish this I would suggest 6 super districts at which annual conference would be held with T1 connections linking them together. 6 such DS’s serving local churches and overseeing 6 counseling elders who relate to 6 local churches and whoever is serving them. Perhaps the biggest question is representation at Jurisdictional and General Conference”
- “My only hesitation (question) is the merging of upper urban areas but retaining our identity as a vital part of the conference”

- “I am excited about the transition of two states but I hope all conditions are considered – convention locations – so it best for all the churches? We need to work together but work through all the difficulties it poses. We need to take the Risk”
- “I’m willing to try – given a period (3 yrs) if it doesn’t work we can go back to how we had been doing. It can be a good learning tool”
- “How will it affect the individual churches? Especially small churches?”
- “Will the conference be held in the center of the area? Sometimes bigger is not the best. How will they decide who goes from each church?”
- “I wonder if the money, time & travel will be questioned for everyone. I think that after all we are all God’s people!”
- “Having been involved in successful acquisitions and mergers I am very aware of the fear this can bring. I think we need to trust our Bishop and the transition team to do their job with due diligence. I can see that one Bishop and 2 or 3 conferences would cause a lot of redundancy”
- “The area seems awfully big to be practically administered. From NW Nebraska to SE Kansas it must be 5 to 6 hundred miles”
- “Understand that the Jurisdictional Conference recommended elimination of one Bishop thus joining three conferences. Why do we have to wait for a unity of conferences to organize or change of visions?”
- “Mostly I am for this union – my concerns deal with possible lack of face –to –face contacts due to dependence upon video conferences, emails, etc. Yes, I’m old & my ability with computers etc is limited & of some trepidation. Will you be considering conf. purchase of a plan to be used by all within the conference with scheduling?”
- “Maybe we need to go to 2 conferences (Nebraska and Kansas). My concern is the travel to one place for conference. Technology will help but I feel we lose the fellowship, and being close close conference family”
- “Concern about “face to face” relationships between people (clergy, lay and bishop) Will we be too “far flung” to work effectively and serve in the name of Jesus Christ, as a body of believers? Will our bishop and DS be in an “ivory tower” & most laity will never see or even know them? Not all people can go to Annual conference to see & hear their leaders. I appreciate the visits in our local churches from our DS. God bless the team as they work on this important issue”
- “Where will the conference office be located? How will we afford all the technology we’re going to need to keep in touch?”
- “I feel that our numbers are less and we need to consolidate for money reasons”
- “1) How will this negatively impact smaller rural churches? 2) What support will be given to small rural churches in keeping abreast with technological advances? 3) and with the cost of the hardware and software?”

- “How will being one conference facilitate disciple-making?”
- “I think the positives need to be published and relayed MORE”
- “I am concerned about the total cost & the loss of or lack of support for small rural congregations. We do have a majority of rural (small) congregations”
- “I don’t have any questions at this point, only concerns”
- “I think there are still many details that need to be addressed. It is difficult to absolutely vote yes to a proposal when everything is not in place”
- “I am fully supportive of one conference and any questions I have are on the process or the “how” which I know will be the next step. I am excited, especially if we can retain the “vision” of the transition team”
- “I have concerns regarding the large geographical area. But excited about the opportunities that will develop in ministry”
- “How do we build relationships when we meet via teleconferencing? My friendships w/in the conf. developed through servency w/people across the table! What happens w/pension will it change? Distances concern me – but not enough to stop the issue”
- “I do not think that the vision is totally clear. It is developing however.”
- “I’m concerned about how it will affect small churches financially – paying M&M’s, pastor’s salaries, and insurance, pension, etc. There was also a good point of finding someplace large enough and located centrally for annual conference as well as rapping up in 3 days. I take vacation from work to attend now!”
- “If our idea of “cluster churches” didn’t materialize several years ago, will we stick with this new plan until we can get it implemented? Are the western parts of KS and Neb. Connected to the internet enough to be able to communicate adequately? Don’t cut them off before they get up to speed.”
- “Let’s do it – but can we be called Kanaska instead of Great Plains? “Kanaska – It’s more than just a game”
- “The world is my parish and I shall go where God sends me. As the church we must adapt, grow, and change with creation. The questions I have are related to doing more effective small church ministry that spans the whole area with more effective use of technology”
- “Any reluctance is not from questions. I have as much as a recognition of the emotional difficulty change creates. W Bridges wrote a book for the corporate world saying change happens. It’s the spiritual/psychological work that needs to be done to ACCEPT the change. How will that be accomplished?”
- “Larger clergy pool will be good. Much more convenient for Bishop. Will small churches be lost in a bigger pool? Will delegates be able to afford conference? Will there be any sense of community when we gather? Convenient locations for western areas?”

- “While I have some questions, like most people seem to have, regarding details. But I trust that God will lead us and be at work in the process”
- “I heard a lot of people excited for change and changing the way we do church, but no answers as to how we are changing other than uniting 3 conferences. How in specifics is this going to happen?”
- “How will the three conferences be consolidated for all Annual Conference?”
- “In all of this, I still don’t see a compelling reason to merge 3 into 1”
- “How will existing reserve funds, available to various groups in each conf, be dispersed, or will they remain to support those groups? What are the possible negative effects on health coverage for clergy of all 3 conferences?”
- “Will any of the efficiency gained by combining 3 conferences be passed down to local church? Health insurance cost is a major cost for local churches. Will this allow for larger insurance group? Will these costs be minimized? Will our DS be serving more churches?”
- “As a clergy I have come around and now believe and support the vision so we can better do God’s work. My questions: My small churches would be greatly affected if M&M’s are raised, how will those be determined? What will happen to CHABADZA with Zimbabwe East?”
- “What will be the format concerning the annual conference? One, two, or three – if on conf. meeting – how many days?”
- “As the “church” is NOT a business, BUT, this is about the business of the church and THEREFORE, should be approached in a business like project. Alternatives, economic impact on major cities (Wichita, Topeka, Lincoln) conferences – travel etc, staff relocation, organizational alternatives. Will the differences in KS East/KS West/Neb go away so that a move from Overland Park to Great Bend to Grand Forks be seamless? In the great scheme of things does it really make any difference to the person in the pew?”
- “My questions are not a barrier to moving forward. Let’s move forward!”
- “One large conference could alienate the smaller, outlying churches. What is preventing our leaders from focusing on more disciples now?”
- “Concern for Location of annual conference meeting: an Annual Conference meeting held in the far eastern or southern part of the area would be financially and physically inequitable for those in the mainly rural churches in the western part of the proposed area. Please do the math.”
- “We are in great need for change. I hope creative work will be done to improve our connectedness, supervision and support”
- “Pension plan – how affected?”
- “Supportive but want to hear more details; appreciate the communication up to this point and hoping it continues in the next year of working details out”

- “I am in support and look forward to the challenge of meeting with use of technology. Also I hope this initiative and the vital church conversation will provide clergy with emotional, financial, and vocational support and encouragement to do new things and take risk.”
- “I would like to hear more plans and details on large episcopal area – what this would mean for availability and how would that change role for DS? I feel logistically this is the best option” – Ross Baker
- “I’m interested in the logistical details, of course, but even more interested in how we will turn such a major transition into an opportunity to change our functioning to better serve the mission of the UMC in Kansas”
- “How will Kansas West pension (clergy) be affected”
- “Technical challenges – these will happen. Keep the main thing the main thing”
- “I am in favor of moving this conversation forward. The transition team gave an excellent presentation. Local congregations need this year to ask further questions. I am interested in serving on a team to help facilitate this conversation”
- “As long as God stays the main motive – go for it!”
- “U.M. Women or UMM has not been addressed. How will this affect or General Bd of UM Women?”
- “I’m concerned of effect on UMW and UMM organizations. Now that I’ve heard the issue of “where” such a large group could meet, I’m anxious about that”
- “I’m in full support of reducing higher government in church as well as Federal and State. Virtual conferences might be an idea worth considering”
- “I’m getting close to a 5. What about 3 sites with visual connections? Where would a conference this large meet? Would we gain 3 times as many lay employees? Would we save money or will we pay 3 times the Salaries? Will the small local churches continue to lose a voice as things center around urban areas? Youth ministry doesn’t reach the small western churches now”
- “The training of our clergy and laity is so very important if this is to be a success. There must be education and prayer to get this accomplished. The devil is in the details”
- “1 +1+1 = 1 is not a new concept. Hope that in planning our vision can get more creative”
- “I do have a few questions – how will the one bishop be elected? How will it be decided where he lives? What happens to the properties of the bishop not remaining? Will this more reduce the money the church has to give to the conference? I know these things will all have to be decided”
- “Risk Taking Mission – worth it as long as we Keep God as our Leader and Guide with His divine Blessing. May we pray for this Change but keep our Spiritual Heritage”

- “Today I have moved from 1 finger to 4 due to Bishop Jones sharing – not the transition teams. The latter’s input was “over-kill”! Too 1 sided! I sense we are not ready for this – share with us why you believe we are please!”
- “Change is hard, but the path of history is littered with organizations that refused to change. In the interest of economics of scale, this makes sense. My only concern is that it allows equal voice and representation of all w/in the larger conference”
- “I’m anxious to hear of the technical team’s work. I’m concerned about the role of laity in leadership in the new area. This shouldn’t be decreased, but shouldn’t cause more expense (travel, technology, etc) for them. I also have a concern about small churches getting lost in the shuffle and distance”
- “After annual conf from the KS East and Nebraska, we 3 conf Pres. of UMM of these Conf will get together to formulate discussion on this transition. With some (?) there are a few questions. My thought and vision for this would not affect the ministry of MEN, but should enhance the ministry”
- “Other states have merged their conferences. I am for this if we may become more efficient and more cost effective in making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world! We need to continue to communicate our mission and train the laity and clergy. I was honored to be on the task for for “Equipping the Laity” and the “Hays District VIM Training event” and agree with the 2008 UM Discipline that Mission should be emphasized and implemented at the local level. We need passion and I appreciate the KS West conference giving us vision and training and would like to be a part of this leadership”
- “Details not know. Needs to be cost effective (virtual conference in various areas?)”
- “My concern is mileage & price of fuel as is. Where will episcopal office be – hopefully not on east end of each state due to mileage of the west!”
- “Crowd control – what about a central conference with satellite feeds. Check with other events with large attendance”
- “It is important to me that this means Real change, and stream lined administration, while maintaining care and connection at all levels (local church, district, clergy, state, conference...)”
- “We should be aware of cutting duplicate expenditures to be good stewards of God’s money. Procedures should be standardized to make accountability easier. We must remember, we are all God’s family regardless of where we live”
- “I am serious – Jewel county is central for Neb/KS – we have 3 schools that are empty – Burn Oak is the best – that could be a conference center and committee and groups that need to meet could gather there. Great catering in the area”
- “My mind works in a logical, rational, reasonable way. Therefore, when I get the other side of the story – technical, I will be totally on board”

- “It’s such a large area – are these plans for “area” meetings via skype or another visual means so that we may “gather” often in connection?”
- “I am excited about lots of possibilities. But always with questions about how details can work and become smooth in the new annual conference”
- “I am in favor of one administration/organizational area. I see potential on leveraging the strengths of the 3 individual conferences”

KS West Conference 5 Finger Vote Comments

800 ballots printed, 501 ballots submitted

3 finger vote: 88 total

- Voted with no comment (total = 7 ballots)
- “How to handle pensions? Conference (annual) meeting location and expense? Please do more to show how the “plan” meets the needs – “4 compelling reasons” And how those needs cannot be met now”
- “Annual conference arrangements – especially so that western KS –Nebraska lay members are not disenfranchised – because they refuse to drive to large urban area. Districts in Annual Conference – how will that many DS’s work with one Bishop? Institutional (colleges? Hospital camps?) support”
- “As laity I cannot see the advantage. For organizational efficiency it looks very advantageous. For clergy it could cut both ways, ie I don’t mind moving anywhere or I want to stay in one area. However, it seems that the transition team has already reached their conclusion & they are attempting to steer us to a preconceived conclusion”
- “The 4 missional points were not addressed from the local church perspective. There is little energy in this room right now. Some leaders are trying....”
- “Why worry. You must take the lead! One conference will take 3-5 yrs to transition! If this is the most important thing God is directing you to – go for it! We left last evening discussing “communication”. In all practicality, how do we in this room ever meet in one room ever again? The cost of technology, new support for the Bishop”
- “We need costs – what does it cost to do this? What will the budget be as on conference? Will the apportionments be higher? I know Nebraska apportionments are higher. We need to know where we are financially proformally before we do a done deal”
- “Concerned about small town rural churches in Western KS who have difficulty connecting to the annual conference today! The church I serve hadn’t sent a lay member to AC in years but now have with my encouragement. Will they attend an AC in Topeka or Lincoln? I would like to have seen greater representation in the transition team by persons from small town rural churches”
- “Just the expanse of the conference concerns me. How much more expense for the churches for travel and other related issues of this size of conference?”
- “Where will the conference be held for this increase in size due to one conference?”
- “I believe that there are many issues that need to be resolved in regards to settling property issues and expectations. We need to look at what each can add and concentrate on the strengths”
- “Just want to make sure we don’t do the same old thing on a bigger scale. Hear the talk but have heard that before”
- “How will finances be handled? What about how will pensions be affected? Small attendance churches priority? I like the 4 major points.”

- “I am neutral. Neither side has convinced me”
- “Just take it slow and with long term ramifications in mind”
- “I came into conference on a 4. I like and trust the team but the presentation is vague and seems manipulative. The descriptions of each finger, particularly #2, are frankly insulting. “Block”- why can we not really engage in discussion instead of exhortations where the why’s, how’s, and what’s don’t seem to be aligned? Becoming 1 conference is not a cure all and doesn’t necessarily achieve the laudable dreams. It has no automatic change on itinerancy, for example, but a speech in “support” dreams of change in that process. How do we change culture, not just org chart? How exactly is combining offices more effective – not just hopes and dreams but plans. This 5 finger is premature, so tempted to vote 1, but I do think good things could come from a union. Yet, issues like where 1 AC would meet need some serious answers – some sites, like Grand Island, that have been mentioned, do not, on simple research, have enough hotel rooms for current delegate counts. How does technology help when many parts of our two states don’t currently have reliable broadband access? Can existing positions really be combined or will we actually need similar staffing, just in teams rather than by conference? Too little ground work done”
- “Main issue is geographical distance. Technology is helpful but does not address the issue of presence”
- “I believed this has been decided and shoved down our throats even before today – I don’t know why we are even doing this. I don’t like Pass it and we’ll work out details. It reminds me of the Healthcare Bill process”
- “How does becoming one conference help us to adapt & rethink church? How does 1 conference help the declining membership and help smaller churches? Most questions asked this week are about logistics, have they truly been looked at by the transition team? It feels like they have not. How does this effect BOOM and the ordination/candidacy process for those of us beginning candidacy and moving forward in the process? Each conference does things differently, how will this be worked out so as not to make the process more complicated and discouraging for us already in the process of candidacy? I am a young adult and open to change, but I have many concerns”
- “Will be important to make sure the smaller churches still have a voice and know they too have a position of influence”
- “How will we make decisions & maintain community? Travel requirements are a huge concern or ability to communicate w/technology – can we afford it and how do we know how to use it? What model is most workable for Bishop and district superintendents? I DO believe we can get along with each other.”
- “I really believe the vision is there! But, what are we going to do with CCYM,CHABADZA, and continuing to make disciples of Jesus Christ? Where will Justin Lefto move to?”
- “Where will meet with that many people? How will this affect the budget? Will the days be extended to cover materials? Where will the Bishop office be?”
- “What efficiencies will be gained? How is this more effective? How does your pres.(presentation?) yesterday have anything to do with this decision? Sounds like it’s

change for change sake, ie we need to change so lets make it a BIG change as opposed to let's do it because it makes sense. The questions from the debate coach are the the questions that need answered!"

- "I have a serious question that one conference will impact the present membership loss trend. This "1" Bishop move seems to be a cost effective move and not a move to allow the local church be able to minister more effectively. I think empowering the local church does not directly relate to one conference. I feel the present trend of membership loss has causes not really addressed & not generally affected by the present merger"
- "My questions are technical in nature. They are primarily concerning pastors: Benefits, salary, assignments. Another concern is for the economic impact on smaller rural churches and their having laity and pastors traveling long distances at great expense. These churches are having financial stress already."
- "Concentrate on the definitive goals in detail"
- "I see us doing the same thing as we are currently doing. I would suggest that we think much larger than what I am hearing"
- "There are so many questions, where will this be held? Such a large gathering. Our conference is made up of many older and retired who won't want to travel a full day just to get to destinations (?) and many other decisions!"
- "I propose to the transition team that a "rural church transition conference" be held for all 3 current conferences combined in a central location to discuss rural church concerns and talk about solutions AND what one combined conference can do for rural churches. I would very much like to plan and help lead such a conference"
- "If a large episcopal area necessitates less physical travel for communication & decision making AND more technical and internet communication SINCE MOST SMALL CHURCHES are not equipped for this & many older members/leaders are untrained in this, will these churches/people just be left out or overlooked? IF 90% of our churches are small membership/rural BUT half our pastors don't want to spend their lives in the small rural churches and are only waiting for appointments in non -rural areas, how will this new supersized conference solve this problem in a positive way?"
- "Would hate to make the vision not able to be implemented, but have the presentation to be one-sided. It feels like corporate take over."
- "Vision is necessary, but it must have the means to make it happen – money – rural areas pay 100% of M&M's. How about the urban ones? Have you considered sub-conferences?"
- "Change": essential but scary. "Rural Churches – Priceless, Protect them. Big Projects need Priceless "parts". "Prayer is the Key to Heaven but Faith unlocked the door" What would Jesus do?"
- "How can that many people gather for an annual conference meeting every year such as we are doing here and have access to microphone, be able to see and hear and ability to network? Also – a good meeting place in a central location would be important"
- "Need more explanations"
- "How will we address the concerns of distance in the new HUGE geographical area. Technology is great for some of the time, but you need face to face conversation. I strongly believe that God will guide us if we listen"

- “Most of my questions are technical and will be answered later. But also, how will this help us to focus on equipping both clergy and laity more than is now possible to serve our mission to make disciples outside our comfort zones?”
- “I’m concerned about the size of new conference – How can we maintain intimacy, how can everyone feel heard and supported – clusters? – more districts that have a new job title and those representatives attend a longer meeting??”
- “I am not quite sure of where the conference will be held to support that many people. Also travelling to Nebraska to hold conference would be expensive at the price of gas”
- “I believe this new conference could be very exciting!”
- “We have many questions. We are extremely concerned that this could increase our M&M’s. Presently we pay 100% and have for many years, while larger churches do not. Our church can’t afford more expense.”
- “I see stepping out in faith takes risk but I see this as God’s open door to enlarge the Kingdoms view!”
- “1) When the 3 conferences merge will the health insurance merge? Will this lower the risk? 2) What about the buildings? 3) Where will annual conference be? Who pays the expense? We are talking a large distance 4) I know we have to use the internet, but what about the churches who don’t have anyone with the knowledge to do so? 5) Will the Bishop’s assistance have more influence than the DS? 6) I think the Bishop will have to have secretaries/assistant/etc who will play a very IMPORTANT part . 7) So many questions have been asked from the floor that are excellent, I hope we can have some feed back on the questions and what the answers might be” – Mary “mert” Curtis, Antrim
- “My struggle relates to the pai and potential loss of positive momentum from teaming up with a conference(s) (KS East at least) that has a passion and focus on anti-biblical (positions) issues. However, perhaps the Kingdom can advance in these areas rather than be overcome by darkness. (Paul Stephens) I also like, for theological as well as geographical reasons, the idea of 2 conferences (West and East) w/Kansas and Nebraska West being 1 conference and Kansas and Nebraska East being 1 conference”
- “The Nebraska conference has been very active in Bridging gaps between Elders and local Pastors that would greatly benefit KS West and East. Would you look into this?”
- “Logistics, location, getting even more lost in the crowd”
- “My local church has not studied the process very much in detail, as yet. While supportive of the one conference, we await a good deal of more information. Keep up the good work.”
- “The vision presented by transition team for what we could be is beautiful. But, I fail to see how one AC is the action that will get us to realize this vision. Change for the sake of change alone will not help us reach our goals. I’m not opposed to change. I’m not afraid of moving to Nebraska – it is part of itinerancy and what I agreed to. What I am fearful of is that we are piling expectations on this change that will not come to fruition. If I preached every Sunday morning standing on my head – that would be bold & drastic change. But it would not achieve the desired effect of making disciples just because it is bold and drastic change. How will this bold and drastic change (1 AC) get us to where we want to be?”

- “I am very supportive of big change, but it needs to be better defined before spending the massive time, energy, and dollars proposed here – especially given no one has done the math to see if this will save more resources than it costs. Besides, a smaller, nimbler organization is capable of being much more flexible! Dramatic change is good – propose some!”
- “I think logistics are a BIG problem & size”
- “What about financial condition of each conference and how will that be handled?”
- “1)I am concerned about the reduction of delegates to General and Jurisdictional conf. Is it possible for General conference to make adjustments for the loss of voices? 2) I fear that attendance at annual conference will falter – especially small churches. 3)Will opportunities (additional) to develop relationships be set up?”
- “If this vote is to form one conference for one Bishop to govern and cut costs, why are we discussing how “churches” are going to change? Is that not a completely different topic? I am concerned about the distance we will have to travel to conference. Communication will be a big problem and communication is most important so the right hand knows what the left hand is doing. It sounds like there is going to be more committees and many more miles of travel which is going to cost money. I am for a combined Kansas Conference and a Nebraska Conference with one Bishop who will have 2 conferences to cover – as he has to do now.”
- “Can we maintain and obtain Biblical and Wesleyan integrity throughout changes? Will small churches be at greater risk of forced closure when we have such a large area to care for? Will we be able to reduce “upper management levels” & reduce apportionments even more to allow local churches the financial ability to choose missions? Will a larger pool of pastors decrease health insurance premiums? Can we meet as districts for annual conference & be connected to each other electronically (if we so choose)?”
- “I would like to hear the transition team address the financial concerns of becoming one conference – ie sharing assets, sharing debt, clergy pensions”
- “Electronic meetings. I am willing to help organize and work on technical aspects”
- “My hopes: A merger process would help us refocus on mission and stop focusing on ABC’s (attendance, building, cash). I hope we will in this process redefine a)role of DS, b)Role of pastor, c) Role of laity to be more mission focused for each. We ought to be able to save budget \$ by joining together. Saving something like 25-30% of current budget ought to be goal AND very doable. My concerns: I am concerned how big a distraction this has been and will continue to be. If it does not assist us in re-visioning/refocusing the process will have failed. (Whether the merger is approved or not). While one can hope this will help us refocus indications are it will not. For example, this push to “vital signs” weekly reporting suggests leadership does not “get it” in terms of moving beyond A-B-C’s. Weekly reporting gives us no better measures for accountability than annual. We have the data already, we are just not doing anything productive with it. If we just “shuffle the deck” of staff without moving to mission focus rather than ABC’s we will be in worse shape because we will have wasted time, \$, and energy.”

- “I have many questions about Becoming One Annual Conference. These questions include the geographical size of the new conference, where the annual conference would be held, how the differences between the 3 existing conference would be handled, and how the monetary issues & differences between the existing conferences would be handled”
- “We continue to questions service will change from conference especially for small city and rural church. We feel we would have to rely even more on Dist Supt. Question on how large churches in KS East and Neb would over shadow smaller populations in Kansas West. I understand the need to eliminate one Bishop. Effective use of Bishop Jones’ abilities and time it is necessary to reduce number of conferences. Local church spend more \$ to send their pastor and delegate to annual conf.”
- Need to pump new leadership & new ideas into the process. How can the same leaders that got us in this mess be expected to get us out of it? Changing only structures will not change the decline & downturn we must pay attention to our morals, values & focus upon Wesleyan Holiness.”
- “I am concerned about the issue of Support Structure. Further, it is my opinion that little consolidation of technical structure will change. What does concern me is the loss of human interaction or remoteness of leadership, and all effects of that remoteness. Is technology going to be a provider for tech conferences & communication”
- “more information”
- “We have to address the huge difference in our pension funds. K.W is 100% surviving spouse and the other s 75% funded. This translates to many millions. How are you going to include retired pastors who make up a LOT of Pastoral votes that is very under represented and has some history that I believe is needed?”
- “Small & rural churches. Youth program coverage. ? of district restructure & DA responsibly”
- “I have doubts about the way we can overcome logistical issues such as where we can meet as a conference. I like the spiritual renewal, but doubt that becoming one conference will initiate that. My laity are all very concerned.”
- “I have fears! Vision is great but I don’t see that becoming a new conference will bring about that vision without great and careful effort. Furthermore – we need that vision regardless of the structure of our conference. If one does not support this new structure it does NOT translate to a lack of support for the vision. You have my support BUT I want more vision/details of how this HOW this will be”
- “What is the cost going to be? What cost savings if any? What local support will there be for clergy, especially those in rural areas? What will this mean for itinerancy?”
- “The idea is there, but many of the issues have not been faced, but Pushed aside”
- “Will very small churches be lost in the shuffle? The expenses involved in driving long distances will be critical”
- “I have questions about the distance and theological differences between east and west. Have you considered a split? 2 conferences divided East & West, thus including Nebraska in both?”

- “The focus of ministry, growth, service, and witness must be centered on the local church. The organization of the conference or conferences matters as that organization affects the local churches. Each congregation and pastor deserve some level of attention from the Bishop and the District Superintendents. If having 3 groups of 6 districts works well, why change it? If having 17 districts in a single group would work better, explain how. Take time, be thoughtful, be careful, the benefits and the challenges are in the details.”
- “There still needs to be a lot of work done to figure out the administrative functions of combining the 3 conferences”
- “The team has been in relationship with folks from KSE & NE, the rest of us haven’t. We need to make relationships, hear more answers (not “we’ll look at that later”) and focus on change, not merger”
- “Questions about Ministries – MAM, Camping, Most Importantly Making Disciples of Jesus Christ, Training Leadership”
- “My vote is for two conferences. I believe we need to consider 2 conferences whether 1 KS and 1 NE or GP East and GP West”
- “It seems that a good deal fo the focus is on \$. I believe the focus should be more on the benefits of salvation for those in this large area who are currently no saved. I believe we need to take advantage of this opportunity to set aside the differences we have geographically and focus on the similarities we have because of our beliefs”
- “How can we expect a 3rd leg to this joint conference venture when we have been unable or resistant in the past to combine to two conferences in our own state? Questions about logistics, finances, funding, connectional ministries are going to be have to be addressed to the memberships of the 3 in order to get this off the ground”
- “I think small churches will lose. More will close. Community ties will diminish. Members will choose no church. I think it is workable as a conference but I think it will lessen our mission of increasing discipleship. The “cost of Discipleship” will be greater. Read Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s book the “cost of discipleship”. Small churches are closing now. People say it is too far to travel to another larger church. I feel now there is NOT a strong attempt to fill Pastor positions in small churches. This will get worse”
- “I should hope there is much education where meetings will be held? How long a meeting & what time of year? Will each church be represented?”
- “Concerns: size of conference mtg, Difference of Moral and Ethical Positions. Agreements: Combining strengths of each conference”
- “I have no concerns with pulling off the details of having 1 conference. I believe with technology 1 conference could gain efficiency in use of resources, financially and spiritually. My biggest concern – it is going to be better, but how?”

KS West Conference 5 Finger Vote Comments

800 ballots printed, 501 ballots submitted

2 finger vote: 62 total

- No comment left (total = 9 voted with no comment)
- “This would be so big and would be hard to have a close fellowship with those around you”
- “Unmanageable. Too much travel for many to go to conference. Too much deterrent to our calling to further the Gospel”
- “I’m conservative and need more information”
- “How many delegates would the old Kansas West have to General Conference? KS West would have fewer people on Conference committees. New conference would have too many people at Annual Conference. One conference would not make minister better necessarily if the same people are making the decisions. Changing the organizations rarely improves the outcomes. Are we willing to learn from churches and denominations that are growing – making disciples to make disciples? How will we be more willing to let God’s Spirit work in us in a new conference more than the old? Joining Liberal East conference and Nebraska will make our Annual Conference more contentious”
- “I have seen many schools unified in rural KS. I do not know of any of unifications that made for a better education for the students. Only a cost savings”
- “Concerns about distance, size of new conference. What kind of expense changes will occur? How will this affect youth?”
- “We have been given a talent, the Kansas West Conference, and we shouldn’t bury that talent, but make it grow. Growth takes sacrifice.”
- “Size of annual conference – impersonal nature”
- “What about the connectional system? Pastors are not connected now: what will it look like in 5 yrs? What will happen to the small churches? Will they feel like they belong or will they feel on the outside? Big churches don’t or can’t survive without small groups! We need to remember our Wesley roots!”
- “I bow to the inevitable, but may we please have answers to the “adaptive Questions” and the “Technical Questions”? I would rather be LED than PUSHED!”
- “I am not really for or against. I am/will be willing to change my mind when some technical questions are answered, ie: conference location, pension, M&M’s insurance, explore moving, what the mission/vision may look like. We are entering exciting times! Thank you for starting to Lead us through this!”
- “Less number of representatives. Look at fears. Big is not always better.”

- “More concerned with the high cost of Insurance. Will this give us less representatives to general conference? G/C reps and more Imp. Jurisdictional Conf reps”
- “I believe that there will be a Top Sided Power to be transferred from the Local church to a Centralized Governing Body. Do no turn this into a direct Dictatorship”
- “The conference will be so large, too large!, the Bishop can hardly know his D.S.’s, let alone his preachers. Small churches can lose their identity. And vote! Come to agreements? We can’t agree today. Is all carings (?)/missions/ projects comparable? Yes. Will small churches be dictated to? Will training spots be too far away? Money is small churches hard put to send delegates.”
- “I have not heard much talk about technical task forces to deal with pensions or health insurance issues. I assume when this begins those already serving on these boards would be on the task force? How can this adorn ourselves to be pleasing to God and not just shift focus on more structure? I would like to serve on this task force – pensions and health benefits.”
- “My suggestion is to go to 2 conferences (KS and Nebraska). While clergy are required to attend, I am concerned that laity numbers will fall off based on travel distance and expense. Also, I am concerned that smaller churches will be at a great disadvantage with voice and vote. Please consider two conferences.”
- “Do not want to pick up NE debt”
- “Is it possible to look outside the box? Have one conference office, one BOOM board, & other needed Boards become one. And then have 3 Regional meetings where the rural delegates would be able to meet. I have great concern about the rural delegates that are retired & struggle to come to the conference. The 35 year old generation do not become delegates because they are working and cannot travel the distance to Omaha or to KC. We are not an organization, the church is an organism.”
- “I cannot envision how becoming one conference will be more sustainable. How will costs be reduced?”
- “It’s not that I am opposed to a single conference, but I do not believe that it will accomplish major change at the local church level. The technology issue concerns me greatly in terms of availability to all churches and potential leaders”
- “I don’t feel like I have enough information as to how this would work. Could be an exciting opportunity, but we’re not ready to commit yet”
- “The team tried to hard to sell it. The whole thing is rooted in anxiety that is coming down from the top. Decreasing the number of districts was supposed to free up money for radical new ministry. Did not happen”
- “I feel as if NO other options were honestly looked at. I’m wondering if a model such as the relationship between KS East and KS West work together where it makes sense, but leaving the conference boundaries”

- “I am not against moving forward but in 1964 we merged with EUB for some of the same reasons and now we want to merge conferences. I have many many questions. What is going to be in 5 to 10 years?”
- “One conference sounds good, unless you live and worship 500 miles from the conference center. We on the southwest, west and northwest sides of the conference feel we will lose vital contact with the center. We fear we will be required to pay for programs that only work in large churches or urban churches. 2 conferences, West KS-Nebraska and East KS-Nebraska. That way we would only be about 300 miles from conference”
- “We need more specifics as to how it will come to be implemented and of course where will the conference be? Omaha or Kansas City?”
- “The area is almost too large to control. An efficient annual conference would be an extreme challenge. Without answers to the control buttons, I would be hesitant to go forward with this plan.”
- “Opposed to consolidation”
- “I fear we are doing this because the assumption is it’s going to happen no matter what. Where is the positive? How can we see this as moving forward in mission? I’ll be there for it when it happens – but lets find ways to celebrate!”
- “At this time I am opposed to becoming one conference, but could support it in the future. I think we have two issues: #1) church revitalization, #2) Administrating 3 separate conferences which could be difficult and expensive. I believe the committee overplays the local church benefits of uniting. Distance to conference events for both lay and clergy is a big issue. Please look at other alternatives”
- “Until we have the concerns and questions answered I am opposed to the merger”
- “We don’t need a new conference to address vision and leadership. My concern is that it will be too large to really make change. It will create more layers of management. Most often when merging there is a loss of identity. Big concern of losing our vote in General Conference. Want to see details on the benefit differences and what impact that will have on small churches”
- “What actual changes will the local church see? Other than increased cost for travel to meetings etc? How will this affect our representation at G.C. and Jurisdictional? There is a sense that the large churches in the east will dominate the decision making process. Money and people power”
- “1) Please address the mileage burden on smaller more isolated churches as their pastors are required to travel further for meetings, conference, etc, and the decreased time for being in our churches when travel is increased. 2) Would it be possible to combine congregations by building new churches central to several dwindling congregations so that they can somehow be preserved either by

sharing a building or by joining together with one pastor serving all the congregations in one place?”

- “I am afraid the expenses for 1 conference will cost a lot more money. Our church is barely making expenses now. How can we serve & hear each individual at such a large conference?”
- “I do not believe our Bishop can maintain connections with any clergy and laity beyond those in urban, politically involved positions. I also believe it will be extremely difficult to maintain connection and collegiality from great distances. I do not believe one conference of such great size will be beneficial”
- “1) Will reduce participation in AC. 2) Will not save any funds 3) New communication makes change unnecessary 4) Change for the sake of change is not good”
- “Concerned about opportunities of small churches to be a part of conversation during forming of 1 conference”
- “The local churches feel so diminished. Traveling further costs more. Bigger is not better”
- “I would be a one finger vote if not for the extra load it would place on our Bishop. This is the only solid presentation that has been made by the team.”
- “I feel we will lose laity participation. Will Annual Conference be over internet? How & where will physical Annual Conference meetings be held? I don’t understand the logistics of how it will work and really save money. Can’t we implement changes and still remain 3 conferences?”
- “We need more concrete details. Where will Annual Conference and Conference office be? Where will Bishop Residence be?” – Wayne Flanders
- “We don’t have a vote on the basic issue – one Bishop or current 2. It’s voting in a communist country – like yes or no to a candidate put forth by the “authorities”. The church is not going to grow thru administrative measures but thru preaching the Gospel. Salvation thru Jesus.”
- “Hearing the comments for and against has left me doubtful but not beyond convincing. I do not think the Methodist members in three areas are that different, and eventually I can see us meeting in front of a media screen to vote, but I need to think and study on this”
- “I am concerned about the possibility of losing the small rural churches. I have farmed with livestock & folded in 2002 because of the larger farms taking over small ones. Our school district consolidated for the 3 time. Our education is no better now than when we had 1 room schools. Bigger is not always better. With our older populations, how many would not go to KC or Omaha because of driving? I would not attend. We would also lose the closeness of the smaller meetings.”
- “With all the talk of consolidation will that translate into lowering our M&M’s? How much representation from the small churches in the composition of the transition

team? Do we want to lose the number of delegates we can send to General Conference and Jurisdictional conference? I'm still looking for the connection with the plan that says we will have changed hearts and spirit filled people. How will the small rural church that may not have access to technology survive and thrive? I agree – deep change is needed – we need to take a risk”

- “Lots of passion. Not a lot of substance as it relates to our hearts- transformation. The change of structure does not equate or equal the change of hearts as it relates to making disciples of Jesus Christ. How will lives be transformed as a result of structure change? Is this more about dollars and cents and survival?”
- “I'm worried that the small western churches will become smaller and less noticed. Would it be possible for each district to have a meeting and elect a few to go to conference to represent us? This would save each church to paying one expense”
- “The visions are things we can and should do as we consider the missions for the future where we live. God is not thru with us yet”
- “My concerns – with 3 or 4 times as many participants at conference, either there will be less opportunity for each person to speak at microphones, or else the conference will be much longer, more expensive etc. Longer travel distances, too. I am in favor of sharing resources, between the 3 areas, but that does not require merging into one annual conference”
- “I am not sure alternatives were seriously considered. Some sort of “co-op” might be worked out. One person mentioned “lemons” – we could make lemonade instead of lemon-meringue pie”
- “I'm concerned of the numbers of members. And the distance we will have to travel for meetings”

KS West Conference 5 Finger Vote Comments

800 ballots printed, 501 ballots submitted

1 finger vote: 85 total

- No comment left (total = 11 left no comment with their vote)
- “Will speed up the decline”
- “Combining for the wrong reasons!!”
- “There are too many unanswered questions” (total = 2 responded with this)
- “The appointment process would be changed in what ways? Would pastors be moving from state to state? That’s a major concern in local churches, especially ones striving to stay evangelical and not liberal in social issues.”
- “This will close our small churches and travel time is a concern as well as cost”
- “This transition may prove to be the right thing to do – However, I feel and my church feels that you would lose laity support and thus in our rural area our small churches would dwindle, and look elsewhere. The laity is so important it would be a shame to lose them”
- “I have too many questions to say yes. I wish this midpoint said “I see many advantages, but also many questions”
- “I cannot help that this has been rammed through without careful thought and consideration from the people of the annual conference. There is a great fear of small having to follow the voice of the large, and West swallowed up by the East”
- “I feel that we should be divided into 2 Annual Conferences – Eastern part of the Area and the Western part. Each conference would be working in the area of knowledge”
- “I feel the Transition Team has addressed many issues the Church needs to address in order to be effective in it’s mission. I don’t feel the team has addressed very well how a joint Conference would affect those changes that need to be made. Change must happen, but while I believe there are some efficiencies that might be achieved with one conference, I have not heard any arguments that convince me that one conference is necessary to affect the changes we need, for our mission to be achieved. After listening to the Friday morning discussion, I’m convinced we are creating an animal we can’t control & the local church will be lost in the process”

- “Distance, Annual Conference site, Theological issues. Love small and believe ministry can be enhanced with leaders of the KWC – Jurisdictional Conf. rep
- “If adopted (one conference): This will exclude small rural churches who already feel cannot afford conference lay member expenses or internet fees. We feel left out now in KS West and with 1 two –state Conference we will be lost beyond recovery. An East-West Conference would be a better alternative for us in the far West part of KS West”
- “Making us one annual conference will give up 2 votes at the General conference. This will give the coastal areas the stronger vote and it will move United Methodist to the left. The transition team are great salesmen. They don’t even consider the possibility of 3 conferences. There is only one transition team member West of Hays. The Garden City telegram explained the geography of KS as seen from Topeka; KC to Topeka = Eastern KS . Topeka to Salina = Central KS. Salina to Hays = Western KS. Hays to Colorado = Out Back. Nebraska is about the same. The transition team seems to think the body of Christ should be an eye”
- “As it is currently proposed I am not supportive. I would consider my support of a GP East/GP West as I do not feel that this proposal as currently presented does not give us a compelling reason to pursue one conference. The Bishop is not the ministry”
- “Overuse of words “Conversation, vision, dialog” Under use of allowing opposing views. Goals for the Bishop bad for little churches in Western Kansas”
- “What will happen to the Media Resource Center? Will the smaller churches not send representatives to Annual Conference because they wouldn’t drive in large cities? The size of the Annual Conference concerns me. There are major differences in the 3 conferences that need to be worked out before I am willing to support the idea”
- “What’s wrong with 3 conferences? I like the way it is now with crosslines for appointments. Consider the 2 conferences with east and west please. Once conference will be too large and cumbersome”
- “If we would combine I would not attend – I would not be able. I believe it is a bad idea”
- “While I applaud the 4 objectives the team as put forward, I feel that going to one conference would impede these objectives. The time, energy, and personnel needed to implement these changes would occupy all our efforts. It is neither workable, feasible or practical”
- “I felt like you were intimidating with your presentation. One statement made me think this: “if we don’t become a new conference, God is through with us””

- “Need more positive facts. Why we should change to this direction! I FEAR that our UMW theology will go too LIBERAL.”
- “I don’t think we need to rush the process. It has been proven that gradual change is more effective we need to consider the small rural churches”
- “I am opposed to this as Presented. Lets keep the 3 conferences for at least a few years to see how we can all work together. Take a slower pace – not so fast. One Episcopal Area is fine”
- “There are too many questions unanswered. There have to be other options that allow us to not be so large. The individuals will be lost – 0 opportunity for networking”
- “I am concerned that the Small Rural Churches will be gradually phased out, because they do not meet the financial, worship and Sunday school number requirements of those in Power. Also, none on the transition team has served in a real small church in 40 plus years!”
- “I feel we are moving WAY too fast. Too many questions to be answered. We feel we are being pushed into this. I cannot see it as cost effective at all. Bigger is not always better. Think before we jump!”
- “I am concerned about the small churches”
- “Why did you waste our time with all the slogans and platitudes and rhetoric? Bring us the reports and show us the data. Bigger is not always better. Wesley started with small groups. The church is not called to be efficient, it is called to be effective in care and compassion which is not very often efficient. We are serving people not widgets. Has UMW been asked to participate in the conversation along with the you, etc? Very interesting the people not invited into the conversation!”
- “Too many unanswered questions. What is this going to do to our M&M?”
- “Not feasible! Our congregation has felt for several years now that, other than our required contributions to the conference, we really have received NOTHING there from the conference! Eastern KS and Nebraska would Take over the West!”
- “Maybe it’s time to combine KS East and KS Wst – but adding NE makes the area too bulky & inconvenient, too inaccessible to many”
- “Leadership will be more removed. Will need regional Directors – more staff, more red tape. Local churches have 1/3 less voice in the conference. Local input is reduced. Radical change can come without consolidation. Leadership will become more top down, instead of bottom up”
- “I believe in “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” The system may be slightly cracked, but a little cosmetic repair would be in order and put our people back to making disciple’s for Jesus Christ instead of spending time, talent, and resources on meetings”

- “I need clearer answers and vision to be able to support this”
- “I love the conference because of my participations. The people of my church feel they own the conference”
- “Look at a 2 conference option that respects cultural differences in the 2 states”
- “It would be nice if people who do not support this would not be characterized as weak in faith and/or afraid of change. Maybe we are just of a different opinion. There is no compelling reason. Nothing recommended is anything that cannot be done as 3 conferences. Technology and use of retired Bishops plus the Bishop relying more on others would solve the logistical problem of 3 AC sessions. A full time Bishop’s assistant should manage all staff - Laity voice seems minimal now, and for small “fringe” churches may disappear. Cost will not be reduced. The may be higher. There are theological divisions – deep ones. Distance is a factor – and – if 2200 people attend AC it will be a logistic nightmare, plus disenfranchise rural folk. No one wants to talk about politics, but 2 votes on Jurisdictional Episcopacy listed of 6 votes will further marginalize this “northern” area. Also, getting 21 people to buy into a vision is on thing – getting nearly 190,000 is something else. If General Conference allowed radical realignment of structure plus reduction of staff/structure/committees, I might have a different opinion. Resources used for transition might better be used for spiritual development. Merger has never resulted in growth in membership”
- “More factual information is needed without being overshadowed by fear and emotionally charged personal stories. How will the merger of the 3 conferences be better than merging two KS conferences? How will merging the conferences increase church attendance and membership? How will increasing the number of Pastors for the Bishop to work with be able to give the attention needed? Currently a rural church was neglected by the district, conference and the bishop. A wild fire came within a half mile of this rural town and caused mass destruction of property, livelihood, and sending the area into a Dust Bowl. Even the governor declared it an environmental disaster and emergency, conveying his thought and well wishes for the area. Yet the conference, District, and Bishop were not heard from. Why the neglect of looking to merge just the KS conferences? How will ALL clergy & lay members be able to travel and attend annual conference? Would web conferencing be an option? Change is needed, but more information is needed!”
- “No evidence this merger will prompt a change in the loss of members. Bureaucratic change will NOT alone encourage evangelism, growth, and true discipleship. Limited info, excessive emotion in presentation. The proposed

seems based on fear mongering with limited info. How will more clergy & more churches help already forgotten small rural churches? The decision team is predominantly from Wichita and baby boomers – needed wider spectrum including the generation targeted to reach & small congregations – the backbone of KS west”

- 1) I fail to see how the combining into one annual conference will benefit the mission of the church. 2) Also, I believe the added cost to local churches to send clergy & laity to annual conference will have a negative impact on the churches and discourage laity attending. 3) I am also concerned that the desired connectional relationships within our conference will be even more difficult to nurture. 4) I do not feel that the laity of the UMC is really being given a choice in this matter! 5) With a conference that large, how will there be adequate time for all who want to speak, to do so?
- “It seems that they annual conference and Bishop are to serve the local church but instead the structure is forcing the churches to be servant to the conference – we are already moving to disconnectedness”
- “I would prefer 2 separate annual conferences (Kansas & Nebraska). 3 would probably require live television broadcasting and more days at conference, which is more expense to local churches; plus, a loss of connectional collegiality; in short, to combine all into one would be 3x’s the size and problems of what we currently experience”
- 1) Where will the episcopal and conference office be located? 2) Where will Annual Conference be held? 3) What will happen to clergy benefits - i.e. pension, insurance, etc
- “After much prayer I do not sense the presence or leading of God’s Spirit. I fear that this is simply a political decision driven by the episcopacy of the General Conference”
- “Being lay member to conference I asked that a copy of this be handed out to each was asked to vote no for this”
- 1) I am concerned about a place for conference & where conference would be held. 2) I am very concerned about small church representation. 3) I would also like to add this is a hard decision between 1 finger and 2 finger vote. 4) I also think it is time for change – however, I do not know how to achieve this change.
- “Lots of inspiring verbiage. But...we live in a real world. First work out the details – things that affect the daily lives of clergy and our congregations. Then ask for a decision. *How will our relationship with the Kansas Health Ministry change?”
- “I feel the M&M’s will go up and the insurance will go even higher. Small churches will not be able to pay these. I am afraid small rural churches will be

lost or ignored except when it comes to wanting their money. Can they afford or the pastor afford the travel in expenses it will cause?"

- "Too much difference in retirement, insurance, and size – no place large enough for the number involved. Cost too much to attend conference"
- "The bigness is my concern –I am rural and I feel small churches are almost forgotten. As a family of God I feel we will become further apart and lose our values if we become larger"
- "I feel there are too many issues left unanswered. Distance is major issue and accommodations for conference"
- "I do not oppose having one bishop over 3 conferences. But, I do not agree to combining 3 conferences as one until we have more details – such as insurance, pension, and other details, mim salaries, meeting locations"
- "I have no desire to go to Nebraska. I find the western part very desolate. Truly, I am near retirement so maybe my vote should not count. Jay Anderson hit the nail on the head. If East & West cannot come together, how will adding to Nebraska help?"
- "Who wants to have an appointment in Western Nebraska?"
- "Aren't all the visions for our future mentioned in speeches available for us now? Why aren't these young people excited about who we are now? Are we going to share technology, or share Jesus? Some are making the new electrical technologies God."
- "Direct questions in Q & A sessions avoided direct answers. Need concrete info from technical teams to see what 1 annual conference looks like. This is what local churches are asking. Costs to local churches to upgrade technologies to meet new demands/requirements? Who will pay? None of four reasons on page 14 require a new Annual conference. All can/should be done now. Increase disconnect between local churches and conference. All politics is local & so is the church – local. How does any of this increase the mission and effectiveness of an anxious clergy, overburdened laity, and lessen the concerns about big church/big city vs. small church/rural area? How does 1 AC unshackle local churches for mission? Total disconnect between video showing decline and how 1 annual conference is the solution to problems UMC has faced for 50 yrs. Don't see their relationship/connectivity at all. UMC continuously runs out of programs to "fix" #'s problem, to no avail. How is this different?"
- 1) How is it going to enhance the growth of our local churches? 2) What is leading us to believe that the gifts of bishop would be utilized better? 3)What renewed mission and the four compelling reasons seem to negate the idea of a new annual conference."

- “I cannot in good conscience support one conference. I do believe we need to reduce to 2 conferences (Kansas and Nebraska) - even though this will be a stretch. My concerns – large geographic area, limited locations to hold conference (far east) and the expense to the local church, potential (likelihood) of longer conference with even greater expense, loss of voice of smaller churches secondary to expense and location of the conference”
- “I worry about small member churches. Will we lose our identity further in a larger organization? There are only two reps from small member churches out of 21 on the transition team. (Perhaps 2 conferences – Nebraska and KS or East and West)”
- “I am disappointed that there was not an offer for 2 conferences. Also I have geographical concerns”
- “I believe more research/conversation/credibility needs to be given to 2 conferences based upon West and East (KS and NE)”
- “Bigger is not always better. I am hearing the union as a management issue and have not heard or read anything different to help us make Disciple that we couldn’t do as we stand. I’m afraid small churches will be lost in numbers”
- “There seems to be only pros on the question. What are the cons that the teams have encountered? Logistics of having one annual conference seems to be one consideration we need to consider”
- “I have serious misgivings about diminishing the number of general conference and Jurisdictional conference delegates from the area. Also the reduction of leadership positions. For example, reducing from 3 BOOMs to 1, etc...”
- “Concerns: difference of diverse theological positions, difficulty of meeting place – distance, difficulty of finding housing”
- “I am a member of a rural south central KS church. I am afraid that my church & other small churches will be overlooked & the larger churches will take control of all votes and decisions”
- “It seems that they one Annual Conference was Decided by the Leadership – details to be worked out later. We need to reverse the process. Jurisdictional Conf. Representation”
- “The jurisdiction merger is necessary; the merger of the three conferences is/are not necessary. One step at a time. Show us the way to successfully transition – then ask us to come along”
- “I have not heard a good reason why we should do this. Making it bigger is not going to make it cheaper (more cost effective). I have heard it will be easier for the Bishop to make appointments. I do not believe that is a good enough reason. I am not against change. Change is needed”

- “The sheer size of the mega-conference will cause great difficulty in the future. Housing the crowd, the time length increase of the conference itself, and the logistics of working with a large group of people cause me to oppose this change”
- “I cannot in good conscience vote for a proposal in which 2/3 of the questions asked cannot be answered!”
- “Bigger is not better! What is good for the bureaucrats is SELDOM good for the people! There was no information presented considering the obvious problems – size and distance – cultural differences.”
- “ I am uncomfortable with the 1 conference plan. I feel it does nothing to advance the mission of the conference for all of us to drive to Omaha for a meeting. I am very much more in favor of a two – conference alignment”

Five Finger Vote Comments
Two vote, in-between vote or illegible comment sheets –

KE Clergy

- 2 to 3 – I am clearly in between many and a few questions. I would love to be involved in any dream team. I believe I could help with the pensions, and health benefits questions and considerations.
- 4 finger vote – penmanship is legible about every 3 words (and I can read about anything) it was unsigned and upon returning to the office I will scan it and send it to all of you.

Kansas West

- Between 2 and 3 – I am ambivalent – the rural county churches already feel a disconnect from the leadership of the conference – the DS already acts less like spiritual leadership and more like administrators – there is already little connexion beyond paying apportionments – will they matter even less with a more distant (culturally) leadership?
- 5 – If KS and NE can be shifted into the North Central Jurisdiction and the name is not “stream” related.
4 – If jurisdictional boundaries stay the same as now.
- 1 ballot marked with 2 and a 4 with no comments
- 1 ballot marked with 2 and a 4 with comments
2 – Why not try combining the 2 KS conferences and see how that goes and then move on to combining the 3. There are clergy concerned as well as laity as to the time and expense for the distance that will have to be traveled. We will have to stay 1 extra night to be on time.
4 – We are a small church like many others in KS and NE. It is already a hardship on our church to send us to annual conference. If we have to go a long ways, we may not get to go to annual conference.