

Jeremiah Teams
District Alignment

FAQs

Will new District lines include diversity in church size and location, so that bigger churches will not all be in the same districts?

Yes

What provisions will be made for churches involved in current litigation?

Currently, all UMC churches involved in litigation are still legally part of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Decisions made by the courts will determine the next steps.

Are 10 districts financially sustainable?

There is enough in the Conference Contingency fund to financially sustain 10 districts for approximately two years, hence the reason for phased-in, gradual downsizing.

Will the district names be changed and, if so, will the districts have any input on naming?

A transition team would address possible name changes, and that process would include input from the districts.

How will the District Superintendents' travel budgets be affected?

Currently, we budget \$13,500 per District Superintendent for travel expenses. This would be adjusted as needed, based on the number of districts that would exist.

What provisions will be made for staffing in those districts that might be dissolved?

These decisions are made at the discretion of the bishop in consultation with the Conference Staff Relations Committee.

Update #1

From the September 24, 2025, Informational Zoom Session

(Answers provided by the Rev. Cathy Mitchell and other members of the District Alignment Jeremiah Team.)

Can you tell us how many churches are currently in litigation?

About 60 churches are in litigation. Can't speak to litigation beyond that.

Since we're already at 10 DSs, will the actual savings be less than the \$400,000?

The numbers that have been calculated have already included our figures for this year. The two DSs that were decreased last year, that was this year's savings.

Have we looked at housing district offices within churches with space in their physical campus?

There are several options. One option would be to have one district office for more than one district. That might be two districts with a full-time admin. Or no district offices, and both DSs and admins would work from home. A third option would be to have a centrally located administrative office with all the files.

If we did use church offices, generally there is still a cost, because we're renting space in those churches. We do have some offices located in churches now, and we pay rent.

All four of those options would take a little time. That doesn't mean that either one of those options might not be an option for the next phase, but that wouldn't be something that we could do within the short distance time between here and July 1.

Will we only be voting on the recommendation, or are all the options on the table in October?

Our recommendation is to vote on the option that is presented. It is a motion from the Jeremiah Team. As always, there may be persons that might like to amend or, alter the current recommendation. We hope that people will take into consideration all of the information that's in the packet.

Can you expand a little on the impact on the current district committees?

Will all of these continue, but just have a great span of oversight?

We will still have the same district committees. I will use Greenville, for example. Right now, I have about 13 or 15 churches in the Greenville District that are shared with the Spartanburg District. If the Greenville District is dissolved, those churches in my coverage area will have representation on Spartanburg District committees.

What have been the results already from shrinking from 12 districts to 10 districts?

There are three district superintendents who have our own districts, and then we're sharing responsibility for churches in the Greenville District, and then another three district superintendents who are sharing responsibility for churches in the Walterboro District.

It's been difficult. I can't speak for all, but we basically have some of the same issues. For me, traveling from Spartanburg to Greenville, because of the traffic, takes time. I can't be in Greenville as often as I would like to be.

There was one day that I had early morning meetings in Greenville. And some evening meetings, so I spent the day in Greenville. That meant leaving home at about 7.30 in the morning, and not returning until 9.30 at night. That was a tiring day. I'm a single person, and that wasn't good for me. Just imagine this same scenario for district superintendents who are younger and have small children.

We are doing more things via Zoom to be able to accomplish with a larger number of churches and pastors what we need to do.

I think it'll be easier with 10 districts, because those churches will then merge into their new district.

Does each district also have a district parsonage? If so, how will changing the location of the two district offices affect costs of the realignment?

What are the plans for selling houses and district offices and procuring new ones as a result of these changes?

Each district does have a district parsonage. All of our district parsonages are currently paid for, so what we're paying for is basically insurance, upkeep, and those kinds of things.

The cost of a district parsonage, for example, Anderson in 2024, the cost of that parsonage was \$5,930, because that was basically homeowners association insurance. There might have been another year when a parsonage was \$59,000, because there might have needed to be some major work, like a roof, or HVAC, or some major remodeling, which is a one-time thing.

If we sell the parsonages, then we would have to then provide each DS with a housing allowance. That would be different in different areas, buying a house in Myrtle Beach, buying a house in Greenville, or Charleston is going to be much more expensive.

Eventually, you will eventually run out of the money from selling parsonages that you are using for a housing allowance. That doesn't mean that that might not be a possibility. It was not a major cost savings at this time.

As for moving the parsonages and the offices in the Anderson and Marion districts, the money that we would receive from the sale of the parsonages would be the money to purchase a new parsonage, so that would not be a big deal. Most of the district offices are rented.

While it can't and shouldn't be used exclusively, video conferencing and technology is getting better all the time. Are we leveraging technology to reduce travel time and extend connections? Are there plans to increase the use of such technology?

Yes, we are constantly doing that, but we have to realize that in different areas, for example, in some areas of the Spartanburg District, getting a good Wi-Fi connection is very difficult. For those of us who live in cities and towns like Spartanburg and Greenville, that's pretty easy, but for those who live in areas like Union, that becomes very difficult.

Also, we have to remember to bring people along slowly. It's not about people that are older, there are a lot of people who are uncomfortable. We just recently had a leadership convocation talking about changes in technology, and so we just have to take our time to do that.

One of the things we have to consider with technology is security. Confidentiality. For example, right now, when we are in a District Committee on Ministry meeting, and we are looking at psychological assessments, we do not send those out electronically to our team members because of confidentiality. It's too easy when you do that, for people's personal information to be shared. So, we have to take that into consideration.

There are always growing pains with change.

How long did problems last in the annual conferences you talked with?

Some of them are still ongoing. The ones that downsized gradually had fewer problems. The majority of the issues that they had were that they didn't take time to communicate to people about the changes. Sometimes things look really good on paper, but then communicating it to people, there was some loss of Connectionalism.

It might have been a little less confusing if the process were a slow process. So, as we've looked at those that downsized quickly versus those that started, from 12 to 10 to 8 and took time for transition and educating people went a little smoother.

How will the home life of the superintendent and family be impacted if their home becomes a district office?

I can only speak for me, but I think we all have that in common. That'll be difficult. It's workable, because it has been done in other conferences, but it would be difficult. It would mean that I would spend more time utilizing the churches in our district, because we would not meet with our pastors and our church members in our homes for Safe Sanctuaries reasons. That would then mean that we were doing a lot more via technology, and sometimes that's a good thing, a simple thing, and sometimes it's not.

What positive hopes beyond reduced finances do Jeremiah Team members see in this proposed right-sizing?

It's not just about finances, it's about trying to be more effective in our mission and ministry. And, again, that's a reason for not downsizing too quickly. We think this gives us opportunity for people to think of new ways and new opportunities in sharing and ministry.

If it is determined that 10 districts are still too many, what is the anticipated timeline for another reduction? What factors will be considered in making a potential further reduction?

Transition teams will be continually monitoring our finances and our conference needs. There's not a particular timeline, but annually, this is going to be a continuous process as we see our needs change.

Let's just say in a couple years we see that there is a need for a further reduction. A lot of the work has already been done. The MAP team has already begun that process. We've already looked at the impact of going to 9 and 8 districts. So, it will be a continuous process. We can't really tell you it'll happen again in 2 years or 1 year, but as needed.

Why are we only talking about reductions instead of plans to grow?

If you will look at the Missional Priorities report and the Black Church & Ethnic Ministries report, those share a lot about planning to grow, how the conference plans to look at our conference priorities. Those reports share a lot about what we're prioritizing moving forward.

Update #2

From the September 25, 2025, Informational Zoom Session

(Answers provided by the Rev. Cathy Mitchell and other members of the District Alignment Jeremiah Team.)

Why didn't you look at the entire conference with redrawing lines instead of the areas that you chose?

When you try to redraw for all the districts, it gets more and more difficult, because a lot of churches in outlying areas end up being further away from the proposed district that you're putting them in. That would have a negative impact on Connectionalism. Down the road, we could easily move further down in numbers, depending on what happens over the next couple of years

Are we mission-driven or money-driven?

We can't ignore our financial situation, but we are mission-driven – and that's why we believe that it's best to begin slowly, with 10 districts and slowly downsize as needed. We have to realize that we have not lost as many churches as some of the other conferences have lost. So, there's not a great need to do this immediately. That gives us more time to try to figure out. Also, look at the reports of the Missional Priorities Team and the Conference Staff Alignment Team – the ways they're looking at what we can enhance, looking at our growth, revamping how we do things. We're going to have to live differently.

Does this truly benefit the district superintendents from a workload standpoint?

I can say for myself, I think it would be helpful not to be a district superintendent for two different districts, as six of us have been doing for the past year. It has been very confusing for our districts, and I'll give you an example. Today, the Greenville District Committee on Ministry met. At 9 a.m., Rev. Chris Lollis, the Greenwood District superintendent helping cover the Greenville District, did his first interview with a candidate via Zoom. Then I had the rest of the morning, and the Rev. Steve Patterson, the Anderson District superintendent helping cover the Greenville District had the evening. That's additional travel for us, but also, there's a district team that has to work with three different district superintendents. We work as best we can, but that's been difficult.

What is the sustainability of the plan, based on expected apportionment giving?

As of right now, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration tells us that we can comfortably sustain 10 districts for at least two years – which is another reason for us to continue the process of looking at the options of further downsizing. So, there will be transition teams assigned to get us to that point. But we should be a people of hope. Things could get much better, and there might not be a need for further downsizing.

Why did the Florence District have to be divided into three other districts?

Our goal was to ensure that the churches impacted in the Florence District were actually placed with the closest district office possible, so that they would not have to be further than 50 miles away from their district office. And so, the Hartsville District would receive some of the churches on the western side of the Florence District. The Marion District would receive churches on the eastern side of the Florence District. The Orangeburg District would receive some of the churches on the southern side of the Florence District. Do keep in mind, though, that the final decision as to which churches are assigned to which districts is at the discretion of the Cabinet.

A concern has been raised about the redistricting lines separating churches that have served alongside each other for generations – specifically African American faith communities in Williamsburg County.

District lines shouldn't really separate churches if they're working together to enhance missions and ministries in their communities. There's no reason why a church in one district couldn't continue to work with a church in another district. We did keep charges together. We did not separate charges.

If the Columbia District is the smallest, why weren't they divided?

Primarily because then, when we look where the district offices are, other than maybe Orangeburg, you don't really see a close district office. If we divided up the Columbia District into the surrounding districts, there's a really good chance that a number of those churches would be more than 50 miles away from their new district office. We did not see that as a viable option, based on the number of churches

When distances are so great, why not utilize Zoom?

We do use Zoom in the Spartanburg District, but you do have to always come alongside people. If you live in Spartanburg, if you live in Boiling Springs, doing Zoom is fine. If you live in Union, with scanty Wi-Fi, that can be problematic sometimes. Also, there are a lot of people who are not comfortable with technology. Even though we offer free resources to help people, they're terrified of it. So, we can't just say, "Well, they'll just have to come along." We have to consider all people and where they are.

Update #3

From the September 28, 2025, Informational Zoom Session

(Answers provided by the Rev. Cathy Mitchell and other members of the District Alignment Jeremiah Team.)

If we vote to decrease to eight districts, how would that work?

First of all, it would not be effective as of July 1, 2026, because additional work would have to be done. Eight districts would mean that there would be more churches per district. We would have to have transition teams that would then figure out how to make that happen. Most of the conferences we talked with that downsized to smaller numbers quickly, there was a loss of communication and Connectionalism. People were confused. It will just mean that we have to do things a lot differently.

Is there a possibility to have in-person meetings sometimes, to strengthen our communal bonds with each other?

That would depend on the district. A lot of our districts are still doing in-person meetings from time to time. If we get to the point where we're down to eight districts, that would probably mean fewer in-person meetings. If we have eight districts, more churches will be farther away from their district office or a central location for in-person meetings. The farther away the churches are, the less participation you're going to have.

Why is the distance between churches and their district office, and the travel of our district superintendents, such an important factor?

There are so many things that district superintendents do other than charge conferences. Sometimes there are special call charge conferences with churches having to sell property. There might be issues churches are having. So, we travel to churches for many different reasons. We travel to worship with churches, to get to know our churches and the ministry that they're doing.

The Greenville District already has a leadership and communication disconnect. How would further reduction help the situation?

The problem right now with Greenville, is you have three district superintendents that have another whole district to cover. We do the best that we can to keep everybody in communication. If we go to 10 districts and maintain 10 district superintendents, each district will have one district superintendent, not sharing district superintendents.

Update #4

From the October 5, 2025, Informational Zoom Session

(Answers provided by the Rev. Cathy Mitchell and other members of the District Alignment Jeremiah Team.)

Instead of dissolving the Florence and Greenville districts, why not take a comprehensive approach and redraw all district lines across the conference?

The Map Team of the District Alignment Team looked at that. We've looked at several different options. The first consideration was to make sure that districts were not too large, because that was the main issue that we found problems with when we talked to other conferences. The Map team was very intentional about trying to make sure that we maintain diversity in race, ethnicity, size, and financial strength.

We've had many suggestions. Why not have regional districts? Why not an Upstate, and a Midlands and a Lowcountry region? If you had regions, we would end up with most of our African American churches in the lower part of the state, most of our white churches in the Upstate. You would have financial strength in one region, and not in another. We did look at all of the options, and that'll be a continuous process.

Will "Greenville" and "Florence" be added to the new district names?

That would be up to a transition team that would be responsible for getting input from those districts that will be dissolved and those that will remain. We wouldn't want the Greenville churches just to be dissolved into the Spartanburg, Anderson and Greenwood districts, so that they would lose their identity. By changing names, and getting input from all involved, it will feel like they have not lost their total identity.

Where can we get a job description or task listing for district superintendents?

[Paragraph 403](#) in The Book of Discipline describes the work of bishops and district superintendents.

What will happen to organizations such as the United Methodist Men and United Women in Faith that currently operate within the districts being dissolved?

The conference cares greatly about those organizations, and those will continue. They will be affected by the redrawing of district lines. That's why we need a team to talk about Connectionalism and helping people with the transition, because you've gotten used to a certain covenant group in a certain area. So, we do want to take time to get input from those groups about how that transition will work.

With so many disaffiliations having occurred, the Florence District is now predominantly African American. Under the proposed changes, it appears that many of our Black churches will be divided and could lose their shared identity and sense of community. That's a real concern for many of us in the Florence District.

And we are concerned about those changes. If the motion passes, the Cabinet would have the final say on the redrawing of district lines, and we would consider those things. We're thankful for the experience of knowing our churches and areas, so that we could take a lot of that into consideration if we have to make some adjustments.

Are you confident that the financial savings are enough?

It depends on how well apportionment giving comes in. Right now, CF&A has told us that 10 districts are financially sustainable for two more years. That's the purpose for having transition teams to continue to work to see how we might be able to further reduce our costs. So, that might mean further reductions, but we just don't want to rush into that, because that was the issue with other conferences that worked too quickly. They had to go back and revamp a lot of things.