



Guide to Postponed  
**2020 General  
Conference**

April 23-May 3, 2024  
Charlotte, North Carolina



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*Cover photo:*

Rachael Sumner, delegate from the Florida Annual Conference, raises her arms in prayer during the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference in St. Louis. Seated behind her at left is the Rev. Sharon Austin, also a delegate from the Florida Conference.

*Photo by Kathleen Barry, UM News.*



# Episcopal Welcome



**Bishop Carter**

Greetings!

Grace and peace to you from God our creator and our Lord Jesus Christ. On behalf of all North Carolinians, we welcome you to Charlotte April 23-May 3, 2024. Psalm 46:10 sets the theme for this important gathering: "... and know that I am God." In all we do, God guides our every decision.

We are honored and privileged to host visitors from around the world and to introduce you to this place we call home. Our Charlotte Area Host Team looks forward to showing you the best of the metropolitan area. The Western North Carolina Conference, of which Charlotte is a part, and the North Carolina Annual Conference will co-host the event.

Our people are hospitable and friendly, and we trust that all who gather for what promises to be an historic conference will be blessed by the city of Charlotte and by the warmth and beauty of the state of North Carolina.

Hundreds of volunteers eagerly await the opportunity to greet and assist you. Our goal is to provide radical hospitality – an environment in which you feel safe and cared for as you meet with others at the Charlotte Convention Center and discern where God is calling us as a denomination.

Jesus Christ invites us to bear witness to the breadth of his church, where, through baptism, we are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation. As our Holy Communion liturgy so eloquently says, we "offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith."

As we gather in this setting, may we witness the Holy Spirit breaking through. We encourage you to join us in praying daily for the Holy Spirit to use each of us and the General Conference to make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world.

On behalf of all North Carolina United Methodists, we look forward to having you join us in Charlotte. We look forward to welcoming you and to witnessing the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as one body of Christ.



**Bishop Shelton**

Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr.

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton

Resident Bishop, Charlotte Area  
The United Methodist Church

Resident Bishop, Raleigh Area  
The United Methodist Church



# A Message from Dan Krause

United Methodist Communications



**Dan Krause**

Greetings!

This spring (April 23-May 3), 862 voting delegates from around the world and thousands of visitors will gather for the United Methodist General Conference at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The voting delegates will come from the United States (55.9%), Africa (32%), the Philippines (6%), Europe (4.6%) and concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church (1.5%). Half will be clergy, half lay. As you probably know, the denomination's 59 bishops preside at General Conference but do not have a vote.

Whether you are attending General Conference as a delegate, a communicator or an interested church member, you know that this will be an important event in the life of our denomination.

United Methodist Communications has designed this guide as a resource for you. It contains information about all aspects of your General Conference experience. You will find the agenda for the assembly, details of the legislative process and summaries of key issues. You'll also discover information on the history of The United Methodist Church, as well as overviews of its structure, membership and finances.

As in the past, this guide is available in multiple languages (English, French and Portuguese) as we embrace our global connection. It also is available as a print edition and on <http://gc2020.umc.org>.

You also may find that this guide will serve as a helpful reference when General Conference ends.

United Methodist Communications will be providing photos, daily news, feature stories, video interviews with key people and social media updates to help interested people follow the events and stay current.

Please remember to share information about the assembly with your annual conferences and local congregations and encourage them to watch via livestreaming video.

Peace and blessings,

Dan Krause  
General Secretary  
United Methodist Communications





# General Conference: An Overview

General Conference will meet April 23-May 3, 2024, at the Charlotte Convention Center in North Carolina. Steps from Uptown's hotels, attractions, dining and nightlife, the 600,000-square-foot Charlotte Convention Center is an accessible meeting and convention space with a bustling cityscape on its doorstep. The convention center recently completed a \$126.9 million expansion. Charlotte, known as the Queen City, is the 16th most populous city in the U.S.

Co-hosting the event are the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, with 642 congregations, and the North Carolina Annual Conference, which has 439 congregations. The Charlotte Episcopal Area is part of the Western North Carolina Conference.

The 2020 General Conference was set to happen in Minneapolis, Minnesota, until the pandemic made it necessary to postpone the quadrennial legislative event until 2024. At the upcoming conference, the Commission on the General Conference will follow appropriate protocols related to COVID-19 to safeguard attendees' health.

Delegates from Africa, Europe, Asia and the U.S. will attend the 11-day gathering, which could attract as many as 7,500 people. Some 862 delegates, elected from around the world, will gather to set policy and direction for the church, as well as handle other important business.

Meeting every four years, General Conference is the only entity that speaks for the denomination. The United Methodist Book of Discipline, updated every four years, incorporates changes made by General Conference.

The General Conference theme is "... and know that I am God" from Psalm 46:10. The entire verse (NRSV) reads: "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations. I am exalted in the earth." The verse number may vary in non-English translations. The General Conference Worship and Music Team plans to create a new focus each day by pairing the theme with different words, such as "love" or "believe."

United Methodist Communications designed the logo, which is used to maintain a consistent visual identity for the General Conference. The design incorporates the Charlotte skyline, along with the date and location.

The Commission on the General Conference, led by Kim Simpson, a laywoman and delegate from the Central Texas Annual Conference, planned the conference. Co-hosts are the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, led by Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr., and the North Carolina Annual Conference, led by Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton. Wanda Musgrave of Western North Carolina and the Rev. Trish Archer of North Carolina co-chair the host committee. Hundreds of people, many of them volunteers, will serve in a variety of roles, such as greeters, registration officials, marshals, pages, translators, guides, drivers, musicians, technicians, reporters and emergency responders.

The General Administration Fund apportionments for General Conference pay for delegate expenses; operational costs (convention center and equipment rental, publishing, petition-tracking software, worship, labor); language services (printed translation of advance materials and spoken interpretation on site); expenses of the offices of the secretary, business manager and treasurer of the General Conference; and expenses of several commissions and committees in support of the event.

The changing global nature of the church is due in part to the rapidly growing membership in central conferences. Voting delegates will come from the United States (55.9%), Africa (32%), the Philippines (6%), Europe (4.6%) and concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church (1.5%). Half will be clergy, half lay.

The percentage of delegates from central conferences, which was 16% in 2000, has increased significantly since the start of this millennium. The percentage of delegates from central conferences for the most current four quadrenniums was 29% in 2008; 38%, 2012; 42%, 2016; and 44%, 2020. This change in representation has resulted in two of the four major cost drivers increasing significantly.



# General Conference: An Overview

The budgeted cost of language and translation services in 2024 is \$1.45 million for oral interpretation and \$490,000 for written interpretation. In 2016, the average travel cost for delegates from within the United States was approximately \$765 for each delegate, while the average travel cost for delegates from central conferences was approximately \$3,365 each. As representation from central conferences increases because of growth in membership, so likewise does the cost of travel for delegates.

The Commission on the General Conference launched a ministry partner program for the 2012 General Conference with the intent of creating an income stream that may permit the payment of some of the accumulated costs. This program will continue through the 2024 General Conference. Ministry partnership net income (after expenses) provided in 2016 was approximately \$400,000.

Meeting in August 2019, the Commission on the General Conference approved a General Conference schedule that includes 22.3 hours for legislative committee work in the first week and 27.8 hours for legislative work during the second week's plenary sessions. Compared to the last regularly scheduled General Conference in 2016, that is 10 minutes less for legislative committee work and nearly three hours more for legislative work in the second week.

The commission approved a recommendation that all legislative committees set aside time for delegates to discuss regionalization and how it will affect the work of their committee. That discussion would occur as the first order of business when legislative committees meet on April 25. The committees will receive a resource, including [some questions for discussion, prepared by the General Conference steering committee](#).

Each day of General Conference will begin with worship and adjourn at 6:30 p.m. EDT, except for April 27, the last day of legislative committee work, which adjourns at 9:30 p.m.

The first-week schedule also includes the Episcopal Address and the Young People's Address on April 24 and the Laity Address on April 25.

For previous General Conferences, the commission approved a budget that included a daily per diem for each delegate's meals. However, with rising inflation, business manager Sara Hotchkiss said that was no longer realistic. She recommended and the commission approved having the convention center cater breakfast, lunch and dinner each day for all delegates. Hotchkiss is working with the convention center to ensure that cultural and dietary needs are met. On Sunday, April 28, no General Conference business will take place, and delegates will receive a \$50 per diem for the day. Lodging expenses will be paid directly to the hotel.

**Visitors will be asked to pay a voluntary \$10 registration fee each day they attend.**

View of the stage during the 2019 United Methodist General Conference inside the Dome at America's Center in St. Louis.

Photo by Kathleen Barry, UM News





# The Event Site

The site of the international gathering has traditionally rotated among the church's five regional U.S. jurisdictions. Since 1968, General Conference has convened in the following cities:

- **1968 - Dallas, Texas**  
(uniting conference)
- **1970 - St. Louis, Missouri**  
(special session)
- **1972 - Atlanta, Georgia**
- **1976 - Portland, Oregon**
- **1980 - Indianapolis, Indiana**
- **1984 - Baltimore, Maryland**
- **1988 - St. Louis, Missouri**
- **1992 - Louisville, Kentucky**
- **1996 - Denver, Colorado**
- **2000 - Cleveland, Ohio**
- **2004 - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**
- **2008 - Fort Worth, Texas**
- **2012 - Tampa, Florida**
- **2016 - Portland, Oregon**
- **2019 - St. Louis, Missouri**  
(special session)

The 2020 General Conference was slated to convene in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the North Central Jurisdiction. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made it necessary to postpone the quadrennial legislative event until 2024.

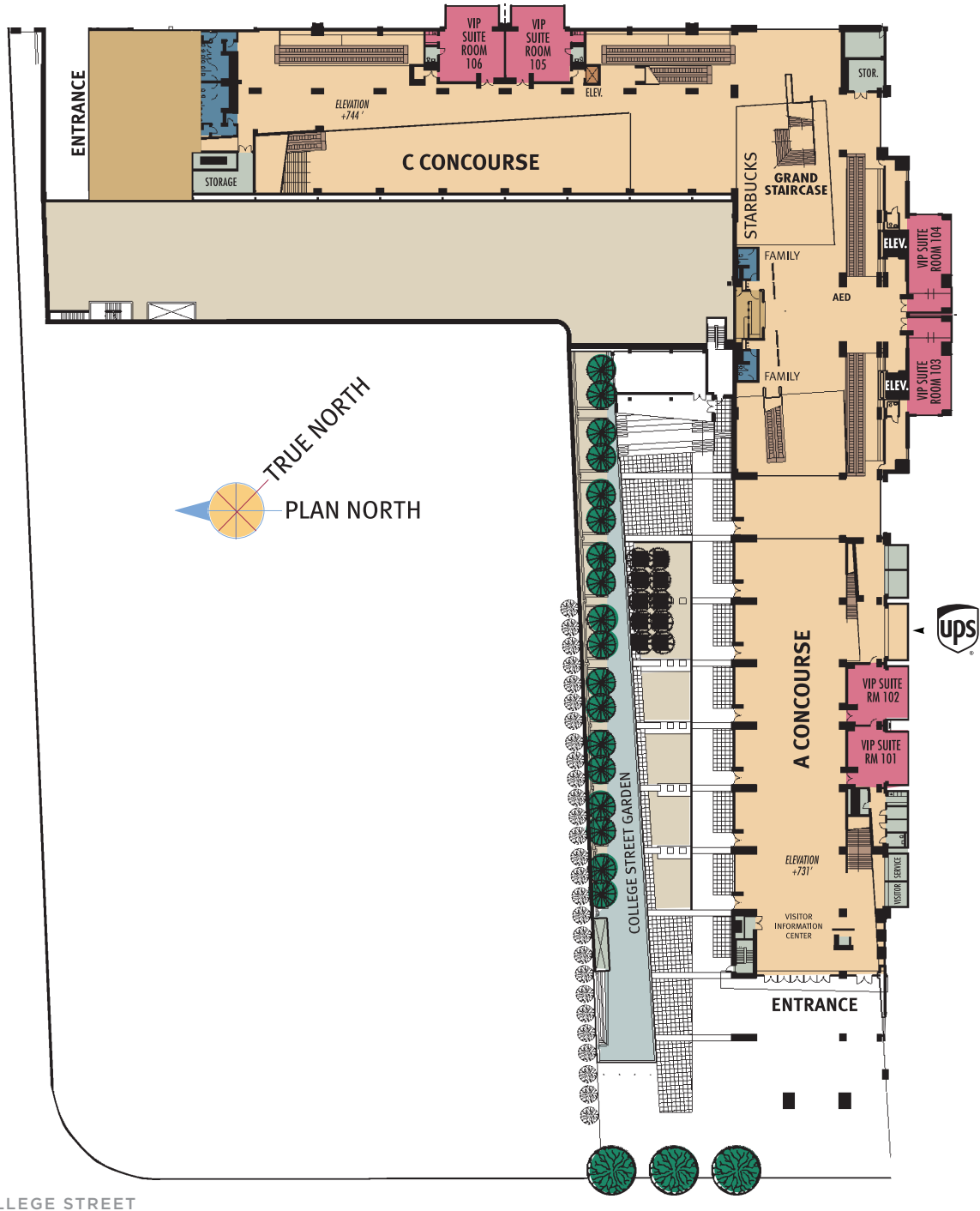
In November 2022, the Commission on the General Conference announced that the postponed 2020 General Conference would meet in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.



# Event Site Map

## STREET LEVEL

SOUTH BREVARD STREET



SOUTH COLLEGE STREET

EAST STONEWALL STREET

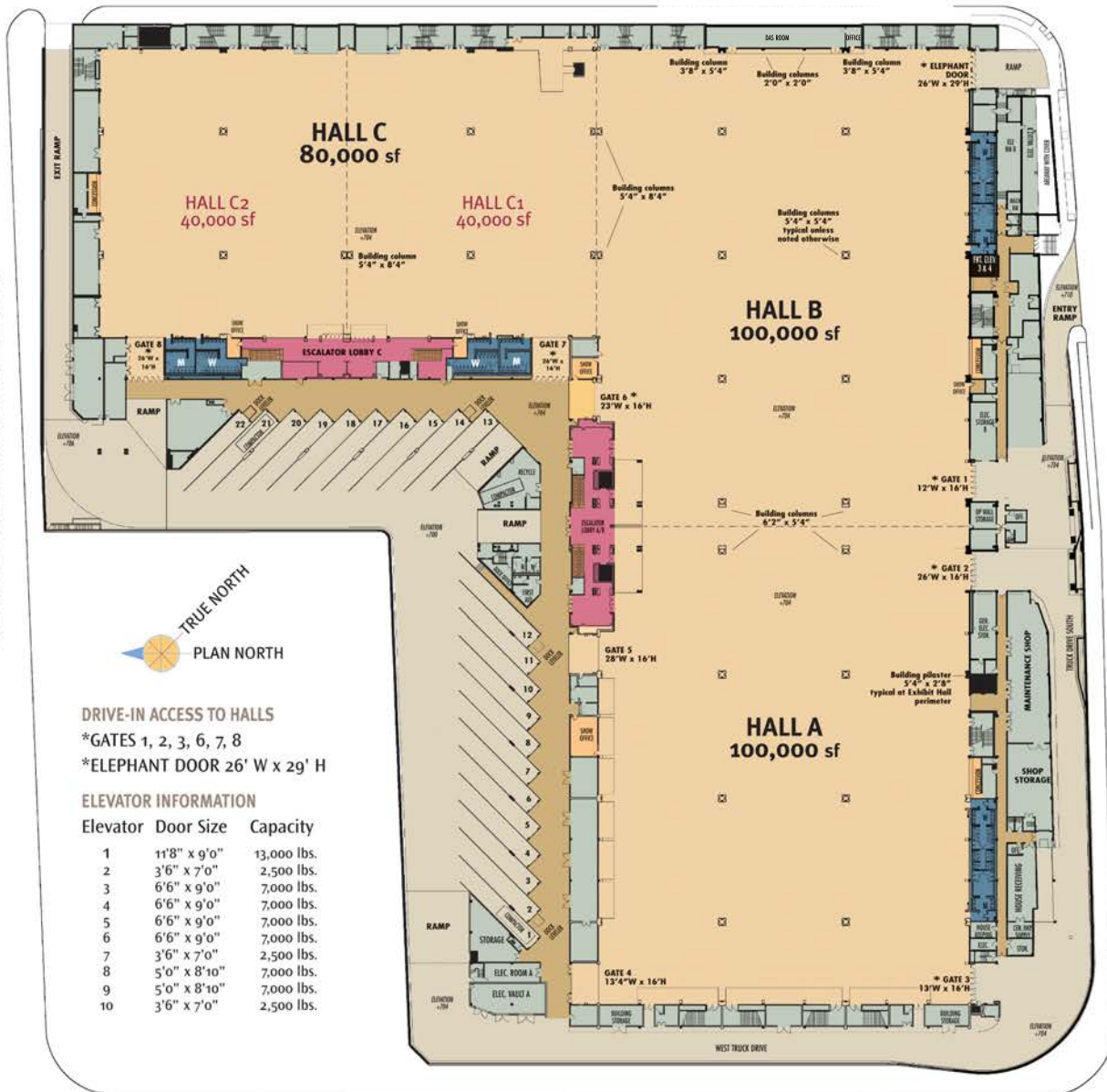




# Event Site Map

## EXHIBIT HALL

SOUTH BREVARD STREET



SOUTH COLLEGE STREET

EAST STONEWALL STREET



# Follow the Sights and Sounds of General Conference

## Keeping up with the proceedings of General Conference is easy!

Delegates and others can follow the proceedings on the General Conference website at <http://gc2020.umc.org>

You can also follow General Conference on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)



**follow along at #UMCGC**



**Scan to visit the  
General Conference Website**

Features will include news coverage in multiple languages, with daily summaries and videos – such as interviews with delegates, volunteers and other key individuals.

All plenary sessions; worship services; the Episcopal, Laity and Young People's addresses; and other special events will be livestreamed. Archived versions of these will also be available for viewing.

Users can obtain general information about the legislative process. Updates on General Conference will be posted each day.

Press releases will update users with official announcements about the conference, and the digital lounge will feature footage of press conferences and interviews held during the conference.

Resources such as frequently asked questions and background information will help members and others understand how General Conference works.

A daily schedule of events will be posted, as well as practical information for delegates and visitors, such as information about Charlotte, the convention center and maps. Delegates can go to the website to find committee assignments, seating changes and the delegate list. Journalists can access background information on General Conference as well as credentialing procedures.

The General Conference will see changes in the Daily Christian Advocate, which will be fully digital and available through a Daily Christian Advocate website. The Advance Daily Christian Advocate will still be printed, as well as items in the daily editions that require voting, but the proceedings of the General Conference, delegate lists and news articles will be on the website only. Improvements to the website include highlighting items that are currently being discussed so they are easy to find.



# General Conference Schedule

## REGISTRATION (ALL CATEGORIES)

**Sunday, April 21** 1:00–6:30 P.M.

**Monday, April 22** 7:00 A.M.–6:30 P.M.

**Tuesday, April 23** 7:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M.  
4:00–6:30 P.M.

Registration will continue from 7:30 A.M.–6:30 P.M. each day except for Sunday, April 28.

## AGENDA AND PROGRAM

Following is the overall program of the Postponed 2020 General Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. This schedule was still in development at publication time and is subject to change. Following the presentation and adoption of the report of the Commission on the General Conference at the opening session of the General Conference, the Committee on Agenda and Calendar shall immediately become responsible for guiding the order of business of the Conference.

All times listed are considered “Orders of the Day.” Announcements will be held prior to the end of each Plenary as necessary.

### Friday, April 19

1:00 P.M.	Orientation for Interpreters
	Orientation for Pages and Marshals
5:00 P.M.	Orientation for Central Conference Delegates

### Saturday, April 20

8:00 A.M.	Orientation for Central Conference Delegates
10:00 A.M.	Committee on Credentials

### Sunday, April 21

8:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.	Orientation for Central Conference Delegates
1:00 – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
3:00 P.M.	Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters
	Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision
	Orientation for Legislative Committee Recorders
6:00 P.M.	Orientation for Interpreters

### Monday, April 22

7:00 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
9:00 A.M.	Committee on Reference
	Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters
10:00 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
1:00 P.M.	Committee on Courtesies and Privileges
	Committee on Presiding Officers
	Committee on the Journal
6:00 P.M.	Orientation for Heads of Delegations
	Orientation for Pages and Marshals

## Tuesday, April 23

7:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
9:30 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	Orientation for All Delegates
2:00 – 3:30 P.M.	Opening Worship
3:30 – 3:50 P.M.	Break
3:50 – 6:30 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Call to Order</li> <li>▶ Roll Call and Setting the Bar of the Conference</li> <li>▶ Emergency Procedures</li> <li>▶ Greeting from Charlotte</li> <li>▶ The Role of Monitoring (5 minutes)</li> <li>▶ The Power of Communication (5 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Journey from 2016 to 2020 (15 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Speaker Recognition System Introduction</li> <li>▶ Testing the Voting System</li> <li>▶ Commission on the General Conference Report and Plan of Organization and Rules of Order</li> <li>▶ Elections               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Coordinator of the Calendar</li> <li>◦ Inter-jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy</li> <li>◦ General Conference Administrative Committees</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Report of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar</li> </ul>
4:00 – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment

## Wednesday, April 24

7:00 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
	Committee on Reference
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
8:00 – 8:30 A.M.	Worship
8:30 – 10:35 A.M.	Plenary Session Episcopal Address (45 minutes) Monitoring Report (3 minutes) Report on the Social Principles Revision (12 minutes) Nominations
10:35 – 10:55 A.M.	Break
10:55 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.	Plenary Session Young People's Address (30 minutes) <i>General Book of Discipline</i> Report and Dialogue (90 minutes)
1:00 – 2:30 P.M.	Lunch
2:30 – 4:30 P.M.	Organization of the Legislative Committees
4:30 P.M.	Dinner and Mandatory Leadership Training for Legislative Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs, Parliamentarians, Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Recorders, and Sub-Committee Chairs Recess for All Others
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing

## Thursday, April 25

7:00 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
	Committee on Reference
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
8:00 – 8:45 A.M.	Worship
8:45 – 9:30 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Laity Address (30 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> </ul>
9:30 – 9:50 A.M.	Break
9:50 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.	Legislative Committees
12:30 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
1:30 – 4:00 P.M.	Legislative Committees
4:00 – 4:20 P.M.	Break
4:20 – 6:20 P.M.	Legislative Committees
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
6:20 – 6:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion (Legislative Committees)
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment



## Friday, April 26

7:00 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar	
	Committee on Reference	
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)	
8:00 – 8:45 A.M.	Worship	
8:45 – 9:50 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Financial State of the Church (15 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Connectional Table Report (20 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Jurisdictional Study Committee Report (15 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> </ul>	
	9:50 – 10:10 A.M.	Break
	10:10 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.	Legislative Committees
	12:30 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
	1:30 – 4:00 P.M.	Legislative Committees
	4:00 – 4:20 P.M.	Break
4:20 – 6:20 P.M.	Legislative Committees	
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing	
6:20 – 6:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion (Legislative Committees)	
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment	

## Saturday, April 27

7:00 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar	
	Committee on Reference	
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)	
8:00 – 8:45 A.M.	Worship	
8:45 – 9:50 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Wespath – New Retirement Plan Overview (45 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> <li>▶ Consent Calendars</li> </ul>	
	9:50 – 10:10 A.M.	Break
	10:10 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.	Legislative Committees
	12:30 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
	1:30 – 4:00 P.M.	Legislative Committees
	4:00 – 4:20 P.M.	Break
4:20 – 6:00 P.M.	Legislative Committees	
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing	
6:00 – 7:30 P.M.	Dinner	

7:30 – 9:20 P.M.	Legislative Committees
9:20 – 9:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion (Legislative Committees)
9:30 P.M.	Adjournment

## Sunday, April 28

Sabbath

## Monday, April 29

6:30 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar	
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)	
8:00 – 9:20 A.M.	Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Consecration of Deaconesses and Home Missioners for Lifetime Service</li> </ul>	
	9:20 – 10:00 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> <li>▶ Consent Calendars</li> </ul>
10:00 – 10:20 A.M.	Break	
10:20 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Voting Demonstration</li> <li>▶ Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Trustees of John Street Church</li> <li>◦ Secretary-designate of the General Conference</li> <li>◦ Commission on the General Conference</li> <li>◦ General Agencies</li> <li>◦ Judicial Council</li> <li>◦ University Senate</li> <li>◦ Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	12:00 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
	1:30 – 3:40 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Africa University Report (20 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Higher Education and Ministry Report (20 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
		3:40 – 4:00 P.M.
	4:00 – 6:10 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Abundant Health Initiative Report (10 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>



5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
6:10 – 6:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment

## Tuesday, April 30

6:30 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
8:00 – 9:30 A.M.	Worship Ecumenical Introductions (30 minutes)
9:30 – 10:00 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports Consent Calendars</li> </ul>
10:00 – 10:20 A.M.	Break
10:20 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
12:00 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
1:30 – 3:40 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Recognition of Retiring Bishops and Presentation of New Episcopal Leadership (10 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
3:40 – 4:00 P.M.	Break
4:00 – 6:10 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ 80th Anniversary of UMCOR and Migrant Ministries (10 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
6:10 – 6:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment

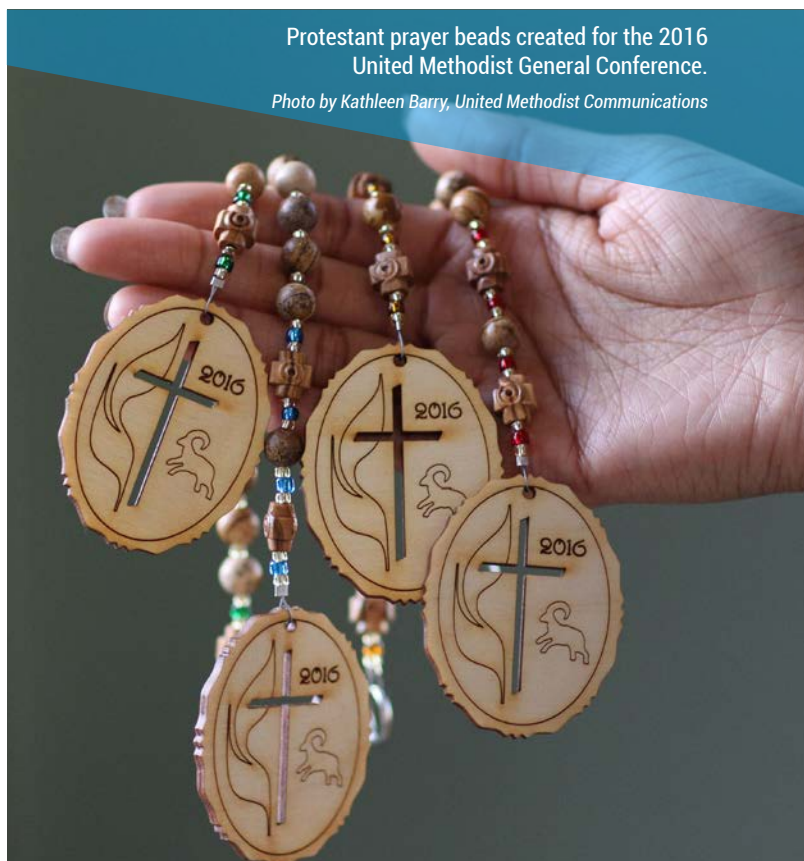
## Wednesday, May 1

6:30 A.M.	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.	Registration (all categories)
8:00 – 9:00 A.M.	Worship

9:00 – 10:00 A.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Methodist Family Day (30 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> <li>▶ Consent Calendars</li> </ul>
10:00 – 10:20 A.M.	Break
10:20 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
12:00 – 1:30 P.M.	Lunch
1:30 – 3:40 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ 100th Anniversary of the United Methodist Building (5 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
3:40 – 4:00 P.M.	Break
4:00 – 6:10 P.M.	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
5:00 P.M.	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
6:10 – 6:30 P.M.	Evening Devotion
6:30 P.M.	Adjournment

Protestant prayer beads created for the 2016 United Methodist General Conference.

*Photo by Kathleen Barry, United Methodist Communications*



<b>Thursday, May 2</b>	
<b>6:30 A.M.</b>	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
<b>7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.</b>	Registration (all categories)
<b>8:00 – 9:00 A.M.</b>	Worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Commissioning of Missionaries</li> </ul>
<b>9:00 – 10:00 A.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Mission Bicentennial (15 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports Consent Calendars</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>10:00 – 10:20 A.M.</b>	Break
<b>10:20 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>12:00 – 1:30 P.M.</b>	Lunch
<b>1:30 – 3:40 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Recognition of New Judicial Council Members and those members completing their service</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>3:40 – 4:00 P.M.</b>	Break
<b>4:00 – 6:10 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>5:00 P.M.</b>	Daily Deadline for <i>DCA</i> Printing
<b>6:10 – 6:30 P.M.</b>	Evening Devotion
<b>6:30 P.M.</b>	Adjournment

<b>Friday, May 3</b>	
<b>6:30 A.M.</b>	Committee on Agenda and Calendar
<b>7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.</b>	Registration (all categories)
<b>8:00 – 9:00 A.M.</b>	Worship
<b>9:00 – 10:00 A.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Monitoring Report (3 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Administrative Committee Reports</li> <li>▶ GCFA Report</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business Announcements</li> </ul>
<b>10:00 – 10:20 A.M.</b>	Break
<b>10:20 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>12:00 – 1:30 P.M.</b>	Lunch
<b>1:30 – 3:40 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Recognition of General Conference Staff and Local Host Committee (25 minutes)</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>3:40 – 4:00 P.M.</b>	Break
<b>4:00 – 6:00 P.M.</b>	Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Opening Prayer</li> <li>▶ Calendar Items &amp; Conference Business</li> </ul>
<b>6:00 – 6:30 P.M.</b>	Closing Worship
<b>6:30 P.M.</b>	Final Adjournment

## A WORD ABOUT SCHEDULES

Because of the fluid nature of General Conference, it is impossible to tell exactly when delegates will discuss a particular issue. Even when an item is scheduled, it can be delayed if other issues have taken more time than expected. Items can also be added at the last minute if more time is available than expected.

A committee meets each night to plan the agenda for the next day. This proposed agenda appears in the early-morning Daily Christian Advocate. Even then, there is no guarantee that the schedule will be followed. Occasionally, delegates schedule an order of the day to discuss a particular subject in plenary sessions.



## Opening Worship, Addresses, Other Special Events

General Conference will open at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23, with a worship celebration that will include Holy Communion. The preacher will be Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton of the New York Episcopal Area, outgoing president of the Council of Bishops.

The Episcopal Address by Bishop L. Jonathan Holston of the South Carolina Annual Conference will be April 24 at 8:30 a.m. The Council of Bishops selected Holston to prepare and deliver the Episcopal Address on behalf of the entire council, composed of 59 bishops presiding over episcopal areas in the United States and central conferences. The council also includes retired bishops.

Later that morning, the Young People's Address will open the 10:55 a.m. plenary session. The speakers are Senesie T.A. Rogers, Sierra Leone, and Alejandra Salemi, United States. They will share their witness for the church.

"The Young People's Address is always a highlight of General Conference," said Chris Wilterdink, director of Young People's Ministries for the denomination. "It is a chance for young people to declare boldly their hope for the future and the reality of the now, using honesty and transparency. It is a chance to speak life into the process of conferencing, so that potential harm can be both recognized and minimized."

The Laity Address will be part of the 8:45 a.m. plenary session on Thursday, April 25. LaToya Redd Thompson, Mississippi Annual Conference, and the president of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders will be the main speaker. The Executive Committee of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders coordinated the speaker search.

Other special events include:

- ▶ Consecration of Deaconesses and Home Missioners for Lifetime Service, 8 a.m. worship, Monday, April 29;
- ▶ 80th anniversary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Migrant Ministries, 4 p.m. plenary, Tuesday, April 30;
- ▶ 100th anniversary of the United Methodist Building in Washington, D.C., 1:30 p.m. plenary, Wednesday, May 1;
- ▶ Commissioning of Missionaries, 8 a.m. worship, Thursday, May 2; and
- ▶ Mission Bicentennial, 9 a.m. plenary, Thursday, May 2.

Special reports published in the ADCA include Revised Social Principles, General Book of Discipline, Ministry Study, Jurisdictional Study Committee, Full Communion with the Episcopal Church and a study on ecclesiology titled "Sent in Love."




# Main Tasks

As the top policymaking body of the global United Methodist Church, General Conference is the only entity that speaks for the denomination.

During the 11-day session, delegates will revise the Book of Discipline, which regulates how local churches, annual conferences and general agencies are organized. The Discipline includes policies regarding church membership, ordination, administration, property and judicial procedures. The assembly may modify most paragraphs by a simple majority vote, but amending the Constitution of The United Methodist Church requires a two-thirds affirmative vote, followed by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members voting in annual conference sessions. Revoking or changing the Articles of Religion or Confession of Faith requires a two-thirds affirmative vote of the delegates, and three-fourths of the annual conference members must concur.

Delegates also revise the Book of Resolutions, a volume declaring the church's stance on social justice issues. The statements in the book are considered instructive and persuasive but are not binding on members. Because of the delay in scheduling this General Conference, every item in the entire Book of Resolutions will expire in 2024 unless renewed by action of this General Conference.

In addition, the assembly approves plans and budgets for churchwide programs for the next four years and elects members of the Judicial Council and University Senate.



Rosie Rios, a delegate from the California-Pacific Conference, holds an electronic candle as delegates are encouraged to "let your light shine before others" at the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon.

*Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.*





# Key People

## DELEGATES

Each U.S. annual conference elects equal numbers of lay and clergy delegates to General Conference, and every annual conference is guaranteed at least one lay and one clergy delegate.

The number of lay and clergy delegates for each annual conference to elect changes every four years (known as a quadrennium). This is based on the number of lay and clergy members of that conference by comparison to all United Methodist annual conferences worldwide. The Book of Discipline limits the total number of delegates to 1,000. Article I of Section II of the United Methodist Constitution mandates that the General Conference shall be composed of no fewer than 600 or more than 1,000 delegates, half clergy and half laity, to be elected by the annual conferences in an open and fair process. For the postponed 2020 General Conference, 482 delegates (56% of the 862 total) will come from annual conferences in the United States.

Groups of churches in Africa, Asia and Europe are central conferences. For the postponed 2020 General Conference, central conferences will have 380 delegates. This is 20 delegates more than in 2016. Of the central conference delegates, 278 (32% of the total) are from Africa, 40 from Europe and Eurasia (5%), 52 from the Philippines (6%) and 10 from “concordat” churches with which United Methodism has formal relationships (1%). These represent special covenant relationships with Methodist churches in Great Britain, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the Caribbean and the Americas.

## BISHOPS

All bishops, active and retired, attend General Conference but do not vote and may not speak in plenary sessions without permission from the assembly. Individual bishops preside over business sessions, customarily serving for one morning, afternoon or evening period. A General Conference Committee selects presiding bishops, and each presiding bishop selects a bishop colleague to serve as a parliamentarian.

## CONFERENCE OFFICIALS

The secretary of the General Conference is the Rev. Gary Graves, a member of the Kentucky Annual Conference.

The treasurer is the Rev. Moses Kumar, general secretary of the General Council on Finance and Administration. Sara Hotchkiss, a staff executive with the General Council on Finance and Administration, is business manager. She is chief administrative officer of the Commission on the General Conference.

## JUDICIAL COUNCIL

The United Methodist Judicial Council will meet to address questions that may emerge during the conference. N. Oswald Tweh, a lay member of Monrovia, Liberia, and managing director of Pierre, Tweh and Associates in Monrovia, leads the council — the denomination’s highest judicial body, or “court.” The General Conference elects its nine members. The Judicial Council determines the legality, the constitutionality, and the meaning and effect of acts or proposed acts of the General, jurisdictional, central and annual conferences. It acts on these either on appeal of lower rulings, through review of all decisions on questions of law made by bishops, or through requests for declaratory decisions. It also rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the denomination conform to the Book of Discipline. This follows procedures established in the Discipline.

## WORSHIP AND MUSIC DIRECTOR

The Commission on the General Conference selected Raymond Trapp as the worship and music director for the postponed 2020 General Conference, a position also held for the 2019 Special Session. In this role, Trapp will develop the overall worship and music programming and provide musical leadership. Trapp is director of music at Vanderveer Park United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, New York, and has served as music director for New York Annual Conference sessions for several years.

## OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Thousands of visitors are expected for the duration of General Conference. These will include all members of the General Council on Finance and Administration and the Connectional Table. Chief executive officers of the 13 United Methodist general agencies will also attend. Members of the church and secular press will provide coverage. Numerous United Methodist members and other interested individuals will receive credentials to sit in the visitors’ gallery.





# Sources of Legislation

The primary sources of legislation are petitions and proposals from churches, annual conferences, agencies and organizations. Petitions must be submitted 230 days before the opening of the conference. Any organization, ordained minister or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference. Typically, about 1,000 petitions are submitted for consideration at a regularly scheduled General Conference.

The Rev. Abby Parker Herrera, General Conference petitions secretary, has the task of numbering each properly submitted petition and assigning it to one of 14 legislative committees or the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters.

The legislative committees deal with different subject matters and related sections in the Book of Discipline. The standing committee deals with proposals that affect United Methodist regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

These committees are the first stop where legislation is debated, refined and recommended to go to the full General Conference plenary for a vote. If a plan has multiple petitions that deal with different sections of

the Discipline, those petitions will be assigned to the committees that handle those sections.

The Committee on Agenda and Calendar can schedule petitions coming from multiple committees that need to be considered together, said the Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary.

In addition, a Committee on Reference meets at the start of General Conference and considers requests to reassign petitions to different legislative committees.

The Book of Discipline requires all valid petitions to receive a vote in legislative committee, and all petitions approved by a legislative committee to receive a vote in plenary.

All proposed legislation – from individuals, organizations, churchwide agencies and annual conferences – is printed in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate. Once this document is distributed to elected delegates, the petitions are posted on the General Conference website.



Bishops process into worship during the Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis.

*Photo by Paul Jeffrey, UM News*



# Legislative Committees

All 14 legislative committees of the General Conference will meet at the convention center. The meetings are open to everyone to attend as observers, including media representatives, though space may be limited. Names of people serving on each legislative committee appear in the Handbook for Delegates volume of the Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate.

The committees review, sort and refine legislative proposals. No action is final until approved by the General Conference in plenary session. Progress reports from each committee will appear in the next day's issue of the Daily Christian Advocate.

## The 14 committees and their assigned topics are:

- 1. CHURCH AND SOCIETY 1** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Board of Church and Society and the Social Principles, with the exception of paragraphs in the Book of Discipline dealing with “The Nurturing Community” (Par. 161), “The Social Community” (Par. 162) and “The World Community” (Par. 165).
- 2. CHURCH AND SOCIETY 2** – all petitions and resolutions relating to “The Nurturing Community” and “The Social Community” sections of the Social Principles.
- 3. CHURCH AND SOCIETY 3** – all petitions and resolutions relating to “The World Community” of the Social Principles.
- 4. CONFERENCES** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the composition and activities of General, jurisdictional, annual, provisional, missionary and district conferences, as well as missions – including jurisdictional, annual and district connectional ministries or equivalent.
- 5. DISCIPLESHIP** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of Discipleship Ministries.
- 6. FAITH AND ORDER** – all petitions relating to the work and concerns of the Committee on Faith and Order, the Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, the Ministry of All Christians, and the Meaning of Ordination and Conference Membership.
- 7. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (Wespath) and the United Methodist Publishing House. The budget and recommendations prepared by GCFA are submitted to this committee for study and review. When GCFA presents its report to the General Conference for action, the committee presents its recommendations and may propose amendments.
- 8. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the Connectional Table. The Connectional Table report is submitted to this committee for study and review.
- 9. GLOBAL MINISTRIES** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Board of Global Ministries.
- 10. HIGHER EDUCATION/SUPERINTENDENCY** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and schools of theology. In addition, the work and concerns of superintendency, the Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, including autonomous and affiliated autonomous Methodist churches, affiliated united churches and concordat relationships, and membership or relationship to the World Methodist Council, Councils and Consultations of Churches, and the American Bible Society.
- 11. INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONS** – all petitions and resolutions relating to commissions on Archives and History, Communication, Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner, Religion and Race, Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Men and United Women in Faith.
- 12. JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION** – all petitions and resolutions relating to judiciary concerns, including the Judicial Council, investigations, church trials and appeals.
- 13. LOCAL CHURCH** – all petitions and resolutions relating to the organization of the local church and its membership, programs, boards, councils, commissions and committees. The committee also considers petitions relating to local church property.

**14. ORDAINED MINISTRY**– all petitions and resolutions relating to the work and concerns of ordained ministry.

Delegates select their committees within 30 days of their elections. Selections are made in order of election. Only conferences with more than 14 General Conference delegates will be allowed to have more than one person in a committee. Most U.S. conferences will have either one or no delegates in a specific legislative committee.

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CENTRAL CONFERENCE MATTERS**

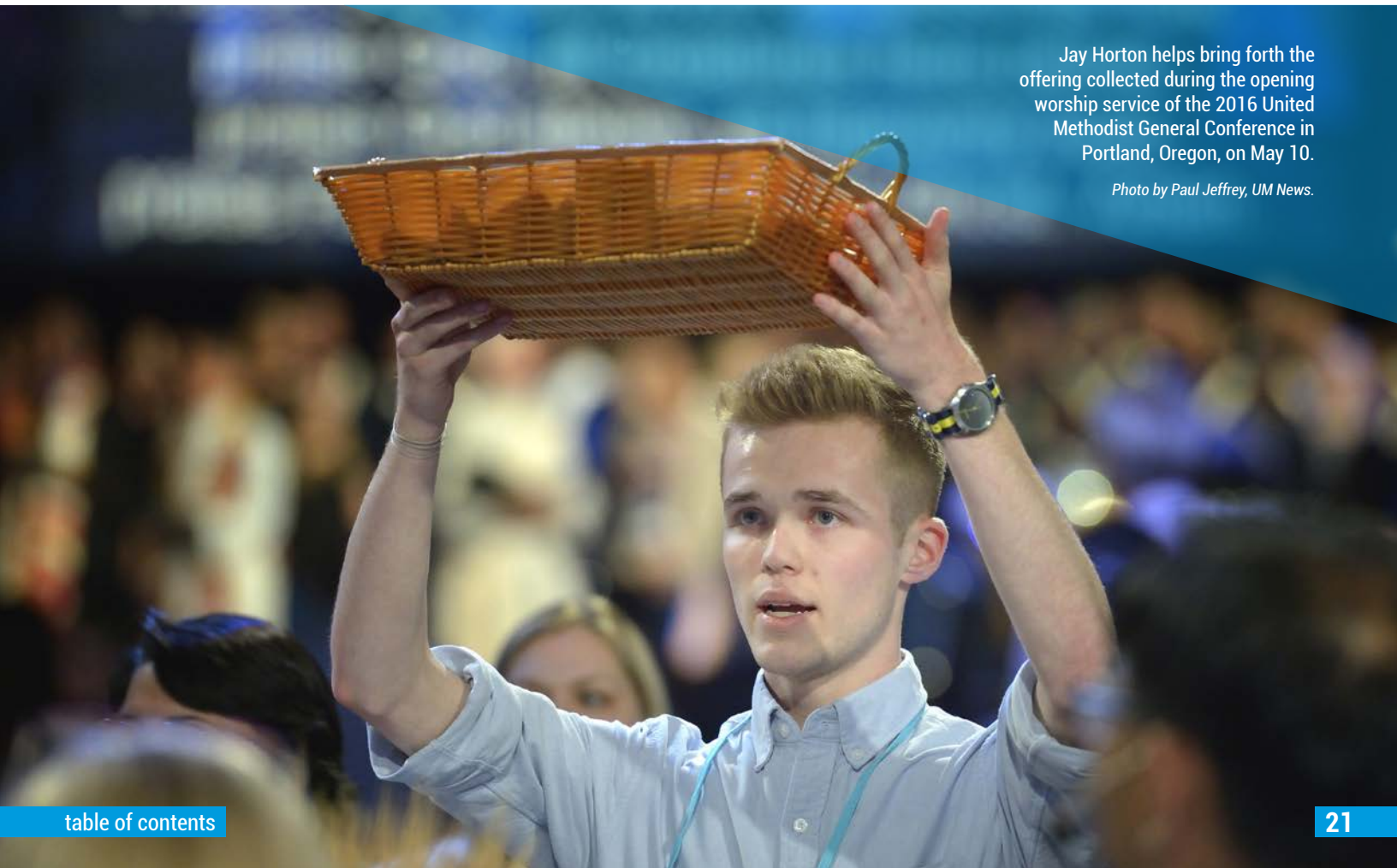
This committee, which also meets during the quadrennium, considers legislative proposals affecting central conferences. General Conference determines the committee’s composition.

Recommendations by a legislative committee emerging the first week of the conference are just that – recommendations. No action is final until it has the approval of the entire General Conference. Delegates take most final actions during the second week. Final action by the General Conference is required of any statement that speaks for the denomination.

If a plenary section approves legislation that involves funding, that action is referred to GCFA and the Connectional Table (or their committees or expenditure review groups) for advice and review. The groups bring the legislation back to the assembly with specific recommendations about sources and amounts. When GCFA and the Connectional Table present their report, the Financial Administration Legislative Committee may propose amendments to those recommendations and present its own recommendations. Only after the conference acts on this funding proposal does the legislation take effect.

If two-thirds of General Conference delegates approve a proposed change in the church’s Constitution, that action must be ratified by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of annual conference members voting at their yearly gatherings. A proposal to alter one of the Articles of Religion or the Confession of Faith requires a two-thirds majority of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths majority of annual conference members. No changes may occur until the Council of Bishops announces ratification.

Most legislation becomes effective Jan. 1, 2025, unless otherwise stated in the final petition text as approved by plenary or Constitutional Amendments.



Jay Horton helps bring forth the offering collected during the opening worship service of the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon, on May 10.

*Photo by Paul Jeffrey, UM News.*





# Tracking Legislation

Following the progress of legislation through the General Conference process can be a challenge. Most issues come before delegates in the form of petitions sent by individuals, groups, annual conferences and governing bodies of general agencies. These appear in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate and on the General Conference website, <http://gc2020.umc.org>

Each petition from an individual, local church, annual conference, general agency or other group receives a number and is assigned to a legislative committee. Each delegate serves on a committee and spends most of the first four days of General Conference in committee meetings.

Each legislative committee deals with petitions related to a series of paragraphs from the Book of Discipline. Petitions related to the Book of Resolutions are sorted by subject.

A legislative committee can recommend that the plenary session adopt, reject or refer a petition to another body. That recommendation is called a “calendar item.” The item is assigned a number and published on the Daily Christian Advocate website, [www.dailychristianadvocate.org](http://www.dailychristianadvocate.org), and will also be printed for delegates.

If a proposal has no financial implications, seeks no change in the constitution and receives fewer than 10 votes against the prevailing position in the legislative committee, it goes on a “consent calendar.” This means there are two kinds of consent calendars. The first recommends a group of petitions for approval (fewer than 10 in the legislative committee voted against recommending it). The second recommends a group of petitions for rejection by the General Conference (fewer than 10 voted in the legislative committee to recommend it). A vote of 20 delegates in the plenary session is needed to remove any item on a consent calendar to vote upon it separately. Any item not removed is voted upon with other noncontroversial items. This process conserves precious floor time in the plenary session.

## To summarize the legislative process:

- ▶ Annual conferences, local churches, general agencies and other organizations and individuals submit petitions.
- ▶ The petitions secretary (the Rev. Abby Parker Herrera for 2020) assigns a petition number to each. The number indicates the legislative committee, chronological order and source. Each petition is assigned to a legislative committee.
- ▶ Petitions are printed in the Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate.
- ▶ A reference committee reviews assignments by the petitions secretary. The committee combines petitions and makes new assignments to legislative committees as necessary.
- ▶ Legislative committees review petitions and make recommendations to the plenary session.
- ▶ Reports are sent to the Daily Christian Advocate. A copy is returned to committee officers for approval and sent to the General Conference secretary for a calendar number prior to printing in the Daily Christian Advocate.
- ▶ Delegates in plenary session act upon the calendar item.
- ▶ Adopted legislation is printed in the Book of Discipline or the Book of Resolutions. The Daily Christian Advocate becomes the official journal of General Conference.



# Major Topics

**The coming General Conference faces multiple proposals aimed at shaping the future of The United Methodist Church.**

## REGIONALIZATION

The effort to put The United Methodist Church's different geographic regions on equal footing crossed a critical threshold in August 2023 when the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters unanimously approved proposed legislation for the denomination's worldwide regionalization.

The plan's eight petitions will be considered by General Conference. The standing committee's vote means the legislation has already made it out of committee.

The standing committee, a permanent committee of General Conference, deals with matters in central conferences — seven church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The standing committee also acts as a legislative committee during General Conference.

"Regionalization is a way forward to keep the UMC alive and relevant in a worldwide context," Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco, the standing committee's co-chair and a retired bishop in the Philippines, said. "It addresses the mandate of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28 (:19), 'Go and make disciples of all nations.'"

The Connectional Table, a leadership body that coordinates denomination-wide ministries and resources, also unanimously [affirmed the regionalization legislation to move forward](#).

"The shift from central conference to regional conference is a recognition of the maturity of the current central conferences, which were once mission points of the then missionary-sending churches in the U.S.," Bishop Mande Muyombo, Connectional Table chair, said. "No region can claim to be the center and others the peripheries. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ remains the center of God's mission."

Under the plan, the seven current central conferences and the U.S. would become United Methodist regional conferences with the same duties and powers to pass legislation for greater missional impact in their respective regions.

The regionalization proposal aims to address what many United Methodists see as a longstanding problem limiting the denomination's missional effectiveness — namely, that the church in the U.S. and the central conferences have unequal standing in decision-making. At present, the U.S. tends to be the default to which central conferences must adjust.

The United Methodist Church's constitution gives central conferences authority to make "such changes and adaptations" to the Book of Discipline as missional needs and differing legal contexts require. No such structure exists to deal with matters solely related to the United States. The result is that General Conference is dominated by U.S. challenges and debates.

Under the regionalization legislation, regional conferences must uphold the denomination's constitution and the entirety of the Discipline through the current Part V (Social Principles). Remaining parts of the Discipline would be redrafted to clarify which items can or cannot be adapted by each regional conference. The proposal also requires each region to operate in harmony with The United Methodist Church's policies toward racial justice and ecumenical relations.

The petitions also include the creation of a separate Standing Committee on United States Matters as a General Conference legislative committee. The committee would include all U.S. General Conference delegates, as well as a clergy and lay delegate from each central conference.

The committee would serve a similar role for the U.S. as the current Standing Committee for Central Conference Matters does for central conferences. However, Standing Committee for United States Matters would dissolve upon the establishment of a U.S. Regional Conference.

The creation of regional conferences around the globe requires amending the denomination's Constitution. For ratification, amendments must receive at least a two-thirds vote at General Conference and at least two-thirds of the total votes from annual conferences. The regional conferences planned under regionalization would each consist of multiple annual conferences.

To become a reality, the proposed Standing Committee on United States Matters needs only a majority vote at General Conference. It also could remain in operation if the regional conference structure goes unratified.



The worldwide regionalization legislation does not address the different ways United Methodists around the globe handle the election of bishops. At present, the seven central conferences hold bishop elections in Africa, Europe and the Philippines, while five jurisdictions in the U.S. hold elections for bishops within their borders. Under the proposed legislation, regional conferences would handle bishop elections except in the U.S. where the jurisdictional structure would remain in effect for now.

The regionalization legislation also would mandate a study to update and perfect the new regional conference structure, including examining whether the U.S. should continue to have jurisdictions. Eliminating jurisdictions would require another large number of constitutional amendments and other changes to the Discipline.

## GENERAL CHURCH BUDGET

“Thinking about mission and ministry while trying to ensure stewardship for years to come is a delicate balance,” said the Rev. Moses Kumar, top executive of the denomination’s General Council on Finance and Administration.

In May 2023, the GCFA board proposed a 2025-28 denominational budget of approximately \$370.5 million to next year’s General Conference. That’s about \$3 million less than the budget the finance agency began working on in autumn 2022.

The new bottom line also marks a nearly 40% reduction from the denomination-wide budget that General Conference approved at its last regular meeting in 2016.

The proposal requires significant cuts to all funds that support denomination-wide ministries, including United Methodist general agencies and bishops.

It also will be the lowest budget to come before General Conference since 1984, when the international denomination had far fewer members on the African continent and had yet to establish Africa University, now supported with denominational funds.

In The United Methodist Church, local churches provide a share of church giving – called apportionments – to annual conferences, church regional bodies that in turn pay apportionments to ministries supported through the denominational budget the General Conference adopts.

The U.S. provides the bulk of funding for these denomination-wide ministries. In the U.S., the formula for determining an annual conference’s apportionments is its total local church net expenditures multiplied by a General Conference-approved base percentage.

In 2021, U.S. annual conferences saw an overall 7% reduction in church net expenditures due in part to church disaffiliations but especially from church closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. With that drop in mind, the finance agency adjusted downward its projections on net expenditures. With the large number of disaffiliations since 2021, GCFA has reduced the budget request further.

## NEW AFRICAN BISHOPS

In July 2023, the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters heard an update on adding more bishops to the African continent.

Four years earlier, the standing committee had submitted to General Conference a plan to increase the number of African United Methodist bishops from 13 to 18. But given the financial stresses the denomination is facing because of the COVID pandemic and church disaffiliations, the standing committee is discerning whether new realities will require revisions to the original plan.

West Ohio Conference Bishop Gregory V. Palmer told the standing committee that consultation is still ongoing between the General Council on Finance and Administration and African United Methodists. Palmer chairs the task force that has been working on African episcopal leadership.

The standing committee has the legislative authority to revise its previously submitted plan on African bishops when it meets in April 2024. Should it be advisable, the bishop suggested that the standing committee could map out a modified plan.

Establishing a new central conference requires a two-thirds majority vote at General Conference. The delegates, by a simple majority, also determine the number of bishops the denomination will fund.

The African continent currently has three central conferences – Africa, Congo and West Africa. Each includes multiple countries and languages.

The standing committee’s legislation renames the Congo Central Conference as the Central Africa Central Conference and splits in two the Africa Central Conference – so named because it is the oldest on the continent.

Ultimately, the General Conference will determine the boundaries of central conferences and the number of bishops who serve them.

Individual central conferences will decide the boundaries of episcopal areas and where bishops are assigned.

## REVISED SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

The United Methodist Board of Church and Society will bring legislation for a [full revision of the Social Principles](#) – the first such overhaul in nearly 50 years. The goal is for the statements that guide United Methodist public witness to be more succinct, more theologically grounded and more [globally relevant](#).

The proposed changes are more than eight years in coming. The 2012 General Conference referred legislation from the denomination's three central conferences in Europe to revise the Social Principles.

Church and Society held listening sessions around the globe to learn from United Methodists what they thought of the social teachings and how they might be improved. Six international writing teams, assigned to the six sections of the Social Principles, worked on an original draft, which Church and Society then made available to the church for comment. The version submitted reflects the work of both the writing teams and the international feedback received.

## DEALING WITH DISAFFILIATIONS

Over the past four years, the denomination has been grappling with disaffiliations amid the denomination's ongoing debates about homosexuality.

About a quarter of U.S. churches have disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church under a policy approved by the 2019 special General Conference that expired at the end of 2023.

That policy, the Discipline's Paragraph 2553, allowed churches to leave with property "for reasons of conscience" related to homosexuality, if they met certain financial and procedural obligations. Many that disaffiliated had conservative views on homosexuality and Scripture.

The coming General Conference faces a handful of petitions to extend Paragraph 2553, so that it can continue to apply in the U.S. and expand to churches in the central conferences. Another petition set forth a process for churches that seek to reaffiliate with The United Methodist Church.

## SAME-SEX WEDDINGS AND "SELF-AVOWED PRACTICING" GAY CLERGY

In all of their 2023 jurisdictional conferences and many of their annual conferences, U.S. United Methodists signaled their desire for the denomination to become more LGBTQ-welcoming. As they expressed openness to change some denominational policies, several annual conferences also reaffirmed that United Methodists remain steadfast in their commitment to core Christian doctrines.

In 2023, several conferences began their sessions by approving requested church exits. But after completing that painful work, many of the U.S. annual conferences showed an eagerness to move toward a more inclusive future focused on the good that United Methodists can do together in the name of Christ.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book, prohibits United Methodist clergy from officiating at same-sex marriage or union ceremonies, and prohibits United Methodist bishops from licensing, commissioning, ordaining, appointing, or consecrating as a bishop anyone who is found to be a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." Only General Conference can alter these bans.

However, annual conference votes do indicate growing energy in the U.S. portion of the denomination to reverse these policies as General Conference approaches.

Altogether, 22 U.S. annual conferences passed resolutions supporting the removal of anti-LGBTQ language in the Discipline. That total does not include conferences that passed similar resolutions in 2022, but it does include several conferences in the U.S. where the restrictions have received little pushback before.

The annual conference resolutions follow [all five U.S. jurisdictions' approval](#) in 2022 of similarly worded petitions that aspire to a future United Methodist Church "where LGBTQIA+ people will be protected, affirmed, and empowered in the life and ministry of the church."

Even those working to amend the Discipline's language on homosexuality recognize that no matter what happens at General Conference, the denomination will be home to members with differing views and differing legal and cultural contexts on matters of human sexuality.

Conferences also made clear that The United Methodist Church remains committed to the doctrines found in the denomination's [Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith](#). Those core beliefs are not up for General Conference debate. These reaffirmations came [as United Methodists have been contending with false accusations that the church is abandoning basic Christian tenets](#).

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Council of Bishops is asking General Conference to agree to full communion with a denomination that, like The United Methodist Church, [has historic ties to John Wesley's Church of England](#). Also, like The United Methodist Church, The Episcopal Church has experienced [its own divisions around the role of LGBTQ Christians in church life](#).

Full communion means each church acknowledges the other rightly proclaims the gospel, duly administers the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and properly orders its ordained ministries. Agreements on these three points (word, sacrament, order) permit greater levels of partnership in ministry including, but not limited to, the ability for each to share at least some of its clergy with the other.

The Council of Bishops is recommending a change in Paragraph 442 of the Discipline to reflect a wider range of The United Methodist Church's full-communion partnerships and to bring the terminology into harmony with that used by our ecumenical partners. The petition changes the name of full-communion consulting bodies from "joint commissions" to "coordinating committees," introduces changes in the way such bodies are populated, and creates options for such committees to combine with others or suspend meeting for a season.

The council also recommends an amendment that would give further expression to the ecumenical and interreligious responsibilities of United Methodist bishops, adding the following sentence: "Bishops are to model a spirit of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation and lead their areas in establishing relationships of peace, reconciliation and understanding across lines of denominational and religious differences."

An amendment to Paragraph 419.1 would clarify the ecumenical and interreligious role and responsibilities of district superintendents as extensions of the general superintending office of the bishop.

The council also recommends the following:

- ▶ Renew the teaching statement "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism" in the Book of Resolutions;
- ▶ Renew the teaching statement "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion" in the Book of Resolutions;
- ▶ Revise and readopt Resolution 3125, "Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom HaShoah);
- ▶ Adopt the report from the Committee on Faith and Order, "Sent in Love: A United Methodist

Understanding of the Church," as an official doctrinal teaching statement of The United Methodist Church;

- ▶ Update policies related to the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund to reflect the full range of ministries; and
- ▶ Update the name of the "Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships" to the "Advisory Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationships."

## CLERGY FOCUS

The Commission on the Study of Ministry, in consultation with the Committee on Faith and Order, is submitting a report on a theological framework for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. The commission proposes leading a churchwide conversation about the meaning of ordination and other questions about the tradition and practice of ministry addressed in the report, then offering legislation to the General Conference that will bring the church's polity related to licensed and ordained clergy into alignment with the church's understanding of a theology of ordained ministry.

The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry is introducing several pieces of legislation related to ministry to the General Conference. That legislation includes two petitions that for the first time allow associate members to serve in a conference other than their home conference and to transfer to a different conference.

## RESPONSES TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is introducing a resolution calling for an "Apology from General Conference to the Victims/Survivors of Sexual Misconduct in The United Methodist Church." Many victims/survivors of sexual misconduct, the commission noted, do not receive an apology from any person with authority in the denomination or from the institution itself. An apology is the first step to the process of healing, especially for victims/survivors who cannot file a complaint due to time limits. The resolution is being submitted as more attention is being focused on this issue through the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements.

The commission is also requesting an update to an existing resolution on "Sexual Misconduct Within Ministerial Relationships." The resolution would note that "sexual abuse, misconduct, and harassment in

ministerial roles cause great harm to all parties involved and the witness of the Church. It is critical that The United Methodist Church has proper accountability when sexual abuse, misconduct, or harassment occur and has committees and structures to prevent and address such behaviors.”

## STUDENTS AND SPECIAL SUNDAYS

Under legislation proposed by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Student Day would be observed on any Sunday in May, instead of the traditional observance on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. The move allows churches to coordinate observation of the Special Sunday with offerings with student graduation celebrations. The offerings support scholarships for United Methodist students.

The board also proposed legislation that would allow offerings for Native American Ministries Sunday to support Native Americans pursuing licensed ministry through Course of Study.

## TREATMENT OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

Three general agencies have submitted legislation on topics ranging from discrimination against women, sexual misconduct and support for clergywomen, to treatment of women as objects, advocacy for the girl child and global equality for women.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is introducing legislation that would add the word “gender” to the list of categories that cannot be used to discriminate against individuals by denying them membership in The United Methodist Church.

United Methodist Men is asking delegates to update a resolution supporting clergywomen. The statement acknowledges that United Methodist congregations “have not always welcomed the appointment of clergywomen and provided them with support following their appointment.” The resolution urges UMM organizations to welcome women to the pulpit and to participate in the studies and activities of local UM Men organizations.

UMM worked with the YWCA of Middle Tennessee to create “Amending through Faith,” an eight-week study designed to help men understand how their attitudes have

created an environment that treats women as objects and tolerates abusive actions. Commission members asked General Conference to include this resource in a listing of actions designed to “engage men and boys as allies in the promotion of gender equality.”

In legislation titled “The Girl Child,” United Methodist Women (now known as United Women in Faith) calls the church to engage in advocacy to rectify conditions that limit girls from reaching their fullest potential in healthy environments.

A second piece of UWF legislation, “The Status of Women: Towards Realizing Human Rights for All Women,” urges the church to work for women’s global equality in education and health care access and to reduce violence against women, among other issues.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRIES

Discipleship Ministries recently completed a rigorous, three-year process to create a more holistic, integrated and focused approach in assisting United Methodist leaders in their disciple-making efforts.

Included in the agency’s General Conference legislation is a petition that updates and simplifies the language and structure of the Division on Ministries with Young People by renaming it the “Young People’s Connectional Network.”

The petition calls jurisdictions to develop creative partnerships to network youth, young adults and young people’s ministries; support young people’s ministries in the annual conferences; and provide a more inclusive process by which representatives are chosen for the Young People’s Connectional Network.

Jurisdictional young people’s ministries also initiate and support camps, conferences and workshops; recommend priorities, concerns and policies to the Young People’s Connectional Network; promote awareness of the concerns of racial and ethnic individuals through caucuses, camps and consultations; and promote the spiritual growth of participants in young people’s ministry events and activities. Other responsibilities include promoting evangelistic outreach with and through young people by providing educational opportunities and resources that increase awareness, exposure and engagement in mission, social justice, discipleship, leadership development and spiritual formation; providing training and supportive experiences for conference young people’s ministries personnel; and enabling communication between general and conference levels of young people’s ministries.



## OLDER ADULT CONCERNS

The U.S. population age 65 and over grew nearly five times faster than the total population over the 100 years from 1920 to 2020, according to the 2020 U.S. census. The older population reached 55.8 million, or 16.8% of the U.S. population, in 2020. In 2020, about one in six people in the United States were age 65 and over. In 1920, this proportion was less than one in 20.

Two resolutions from Discipleship Ministries focus on older adult concerns.

Faith communities are “graying” rapidly. The resolution notes, “Being old today is not easy, in either the church or society. If the situation of older persons is to be improved, the church must act. ... The response of the church begins with a theological understanding of aging concerned with the whole life process rather than with only its final stages. The meaning of life, rather than death, is the central point from which to theologize about aging.

“Concern for older persons in the church is theologically grounded in the doctrine of Creation, in the meaning of God’s work in Christ, in the response to grace that leads us into service, in the continuing value of older persons in the larger mission, and in the nature of the church as an agent of redemption and defender of justice for all.

“The aging process is part of God’s plan for life, with the good news of Christ’s redemption giving hope and purpose. United Methodists are called to live this message through words and deeds in the church and in society.”

The resolution titled “Abuse of Older Adults” notes the increasing numbers of older adults abused in the U.S. and around the world. “Elder abuse and neglect,” it says, “take many forms.” The resolution calls on The United Methodist Church “to break the silence and to address this social ill through education and awareness, information, counseling and referral services, support systems, and reports to the proper authorities when abuse is suspected,” and it calls on the Committee on Older Adult Ministries and appropriate general agencies to provide resources and materials to address the issue.

## WESPATH - NEW CLERGY RETIREMENT PLAN

In 2018, Wespeth Benefits and Investments announced that in response to the denomination’s ongoing decline in U.S. membership, the agency was taking steps to make sure conferences could meet their pension obligations without disruption.

Among its responsibilities, the agency manages investments for pensions and other retirement-plan assets on behalf of conferences, which are plan sponsors and legally responsible for paying benefits. In addition, the agency manages assets for more than 150 United Methodist-related institutions.

Wespeth has submitted a petition to the General Conference that would create a new clergy retirement plan called “Compass.” Under the new plan, active clergy would move from a retirement plan with both defined-benefit (DB) and defined-contribution (DC) components to an account-based, entirely DC plan.

A DB plan provides a monthly pension payment for life, with the employer (in this case, annual conferences) assuming the investment risk and long-term financial obligation. Pension payments end when the clergyperson (and their surviving spouse) dies.

A DC plan — like the 401(k) plans most U.S. corporate employees now have — provides an account balance to use during retirement, with the clergyperson assuming the risk of sustaining the money through the end of their lifetime. The DC account balance remaining after the clergyperson’s death can go to a designated beneficiary(ies).

Compass would offer optional features that mimic the monthly payments of a DB plan to help assure the individual’s account balance lasts throughout their life in retirement. It would also contain elements that benefit lower-paid clergy that include providing a higher value (relative to pay) for lower-paid clergy than for higher-paid clergy and matching contributions for student loan payments.



# History of the Church

The union of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist churches formed The United Methodist Church in 1968.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church, established in 1946, represented the union of two U.S.-born denominations: the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Both originated among German-speaking people in the colonies during the great spiritual awakening of the late 18th century.

The two fellowships and the Methodist Church were similar, particularly in terms of church polity and evangelistic zeal.

Jacob Albright, a lay preacher in eastern Pennsylvania, gathered followers in the early 1800s. These “Albright people” formed the Evangelical Association, later to become the Evangelical Church. The Rev. Philip Otterbein, ordained by the German Reformed Church, started the United Brethren movement in the late 1700s.

Meanwhile, the Methodist movement, which had begun in England in the early 1700s under Anglican clergyman John Wesley and his followers, had spread to Ireland and the colonies. Wesley did not officially organize a new church, but sparked a renewal movement within the Church of England.

Methodist classes and societies met in the American colonies of Great Britain beginning in the 1760s. Around Christmas 1784, some 60 ministers gathered in Baltimore and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church. The word “episcopal” refers to the church’s administration by bishops. The denomination, which grew rapidly, was known for its circuit-rider pastors on the frontier.

In the early 19th century, racism in the church caused some groups of African American Methodists to leave and form their own denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion. In 1870, leaders of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South worked with Black Methodists in their midst to launch a separate denomination for Black Methodists, originally called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, later renamed to Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Two other Black Methodist denominations also arose in the 19th century. The African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church and Connection, or Africa

Union Methodist Protestant Church, was chartered in 1813 in Wilmington, Delaware. The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church separated from the AUMP Church in 1864. As of 2012, all five of these denominations, referred to as the Pan-Methodist Churches, are in full communion with The United Methodist Church.

Race was not the only driver of division among Methodists in the early 19th century. In 1828, a group of Methodist Episcopal Churches, insisting on lay representation in church government, separated and became the Methodist Protestant Church.

Then, in 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery. The offspring denomination was the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The north and south churches reunited in 1939, along with the Methodist Protestant Church, compromising on the race issue by creating a segregation system. Alongside the five geographic jurisdictions, an overlapping Central Jurisdiction was formed for African Americans. The 1968 merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches dissolved the Central Jurisdiction, ending three decades of official segregation in The Methodist Church.

## CENTRAL CONFERENCES

Outside the U.S., annual conferences are organized into seven central conferences. Central conferences were first established in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Asia (India in 1885 and China in 1897), then in Europe (1908), and in Africa and Latin America in the 1920s.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, for a variety of reasons, many annual conferences outside the U.S. became autonomous (independent and self-governing), particularly in most regions of Asia and in all of Latin America. Most of these autonomous churches are affiliated autonomous or affiliated united churches with The United Methodist Church and send non-voting delegates to General Conference.

Since the early 1970s, membership in the central conferences has increased tremendously, and the number of members now far exceeds those of the 1920s and 1960s.



# Statistics of The United Methodist Church

## 2020 DELEGATE COUNT

### North Central Jurisdiction – 88 Delegates

Dakotas .....	2
Detroit .....	6
East Ohio .....	12
Illinois Great Rivers .....	10
Indiana .....	16
Iowa .....	12
Minnesota .....	2
Northern Illinois .....	6
West Michigan .....	2
West Ohio .....	14
Wisconsin .....	6

### Northeastern Jurisdiction – 84 Delegates

Baltimore-Washington .....	12
Eastern Pennsylvania .....	8
Greater New Jersey .....	8
New England .....	6
New York .....	6
Peninsula-Delaware .....	4
Susquehanna .....	12
Upper New York .....	10
West Virginia .....	6
Western Pennsylvania .....	12

### South Central Jurisdiction – 102 Delegates

Arkansas.....	8
Central Texas .....	8
Great Plains .....	14
Louisiana .....	6
Missouri.....	12
New Mexico .....	2
North Texas .....	8
Northwest Texas .....	2
Oklahoma .....	14
Oklahoma Indian Missionary .....	2
Rio Texas .....	8
Texas .....	18

### Southeastern Jurisdiction – 182 Delegates

Alabama-West Florida .....	8
Florida .....	16
Holston .....	12
Kentucky .....	10
Memphis .....	4
Mississippi .....	10
North Alabama .....	8

North Carolina .....	16
North Georgia.....	22
Red Bird Missionary .....	2
South Carolina.....	16
South Georgia .....	8
Tennessee .....	8
Virginia .....	22
Western North Carolina .....	20

### Western Jurisdiction – 26 Delegates

Alaska (Missionary).....	2
California-Nevada .....	6
California-Pacific .....	6
Desert Southwest.....	2
Oregon-Idaho.....	2
Pacific Northwest .....	2
Rocky Mountain .....	4
Yellowstone .....	2

### Africa Central Conference – 40 Delegates

Burundi.....	6
East Zimbabwe .....	4
Eastern Angola .....	2
Kenya-Ethiopia .....	2
Malawi Provisional.....	2
Mozambique North .....	2
Mozambique South .....	4
Rwanda Provisional .....	2
South Africa Provisional .....	2
Uganda-South Sudan .....	2
West Zimbabwe .....	4
Western Angola .....	8

### Central and Southern Europe Central Conference – 14 Delegates

Austria Provisional .....	2
Bulgaria-Romania Provisional .....	2
Czech and Slovak Republics .....	2
Hungary Provisional .....	2
Poland .....	2
Serbia-Macedonia Provisional .....	2
Switzerland-France-North Africa .....	2

### Congo Conference – 152 Delegates

Central Congo .....	6
East Congo .....	16
Kasai .....	2
Kivu Provisional .....	2
Lukoshi .....	14
North Katanga .....	50

North-West Katanga .....	10
Oriental and Equator .....	4
South Congo .....	14
South-West Katanga .....	10
Tanganyika .....	10
Tanzania .....	6
West Congo .....	2
Zambia .....	6

### Germany Conference – 6 Delegates

Germany East .....	2
Germany North .....	2
Germany South .....	2

### Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference – 20 Delegates

Central Russia .....	2
Denmark .....	2
Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional .....	2
Estonia .....	2
Finland-Finnish Provisional .....	2
Finland-Swedish Provisional .....	2
Northwest Russia Provisional .....	2
Norway .....	2
South Russia Provisional .....	2
Ukraine and Moldova .....	2

### Philippines Central Conference – 52 Delegates

Bicol Philippines Provisional .....	2
Bulacan Philippines .....	2
Central Luzon Philippines .....	2
East Mindanao Philippines .....	2
Hundred Islands Philippines .....	2
Middle Philippines .....	2
Mindanao Philippines .....	2
North Central Philippines .....	2
Northeast Luzon Philippines .....	2
Northeast Philippines .....	2
Northern Philippines .....	2
Northwest Mindanao Philippines .....	2
Northwest Philippines .....	2
Palawan Philippines .....	2

Pampango Philippines .....	2
Pangasinan Philippines .....	2
Philippines .....	2
Philippines Cavite .....	2
Quezon City .....	2
Rizal Philippines East .....	2
South Nueva Ecija Philippines .....	2
Southern Tagalog Philippines Provisional .....	2
Southwest Philippines .....	2
Tarlac Philippines .....	2
Visayas Philippines .....	2
West Middle Philippines .....	2

### West Africa Central Conference – 86 Delegates

Central Nigeria .....	6
Côte d’Ivoire .....	32
Liberia .....	18
North East Nigeria .....	6
Northern Nigeria .....	2
Sierra Leone .....	14
Southern Nigeria .....	8

### Concordat – 10 Delegates

Caribbean and the Americas .....	2
Great Britain .....	4
Mexico .....	2
Puerto Rico .....	2

### SUMMARY

North Central .....	88
Northeastern .....	84
South Central .....	102
Southeastern .....	182
Western .....	26
Africa Central .....	40
Congo .....	152
West Africa .....	86
Central and Southern Europe .....	14
Germany .....	6
Northern Europe and Eurasia .....	20
Philippines .....	52
Concordat .....	10

**TOTAL..... 862**



Bishops retiring from active service gather to be recognized by the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon. From left are Bishops Larry M. Goodpaster, Jane Allen Middleton, Michael J. Coyner, Ntambo Nkulu Ntanda, Lindsey Davis and Jonathan D. Keaton.

Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.





# Structure of the Denomination

## THE CHURCH AS CONNECTION

United Methodist leaders often speak of the denomination as “the connection.” This concept has been central to Methodism from its beginning. The United Methodist structure and organization began as a means of accomplishing the mission of spreading scriptural holiness. Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability and developed what he called the “connexion,” a network of classes, societies and annual conferences.

Today, our denomination continues its organization in a “connectional” system. Every local church links to an interconnected network of organizations that join in mission and ministry, allowing us to accomplish far more than any one local church or person could alone.

Within the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church, conferences provide the primary groupings of people and churches for discernment and decision-making. Wesley described Christian conferencing as a spiritual discipline through which God’s grace may be revealed. At every level of the connection, church leaders and members come together in conversation, or conferencing, to discuss important issues and discover God’s will for the church. The word “conference” thus refers to both the assembly and organization of people as well as the process of discerning God’s call together.

The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. Duties are divided among bodies that include the General Conference, the Council of Bishops and the Judicial Council. Our Constitution, a foundational document, requires each of these entities to be part of our structure and to play a significant role in the life of the church.

## LOCAL CHURCHES AND DISTRICTS

As the visible presence of the body of Christ, the local church is where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world. Each local church is part of a district, an administrative grouping of churches in a geographic area. A charge conference governs each local church

with a church council as the year-round supervisor. The church council plans and implements the programs and ministry of the local church, as well as oversees the administration of the church.

## ANNUAL CONFERENCES

Every local church is created by and participates in an annual conference, a body that meets yearly and deploys its staff and volunteers to advance the work of the denomination within that region. Annual conferences approve ministry and mission, programs and budgets; elect delegates to General, central and jurisdictional conferences, and examine and recommend candidates for ordained ministry. The denomination has 54 annual conferences in the United States and 79 in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

## JURISDICTIONAL AND CENTRAL CONFERENCES

Five geographic jurisdictions (regions) in the United States include seven to 15 annual conferences each. Jurisdictional conferences meet simultaneously every four years to elect and assign bishops, to elect some members of general church agencies and, in some cases, to develop jurisdictional programs. Members of the jurisdictional conferences are General Conference delegates from that region plus additional delegates, also equally balanced between lay and clergy, elected by the annual conferences. United Methodists in Africa, Europe and the Philippines call the comparable geographical division a central conference. The United Methodist Church has seven central conferences. Each is composed of annual conferences and divided into several episcopal areas.

## BISHOPS AND EPISCOPAL AREAS

Elected by jurisdictional and central conferences every four years, bishops are superintendents of their respective areas. Currently, 39 active bishops and one retired bishop serve 46 episcopal areas in the United States. Twenty active bishops serve 20 episcopal areas in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. Episcopal areas include one or more annual conferences. Each bishop provides oversight of the ministry and mission of annual conferences in his or her area and appoints all clergy to their places of service.

The Council of Bishops gives general oversight of the ministry and mission of the church and spiritual leadership to the entire church connection. Composed of all active and retired bishops, the council meets as a group at least once a year. Through its Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships, the council builds and maintains ties with other Christian denominations as well as other faith groups.

## GENERAL (CHURCHWIDE) AGENCIES

General agencies are primarily accountable to the General Conference rather than to the Council of Bishops. Boards of directors — lay and clergy elected jointly by General Conference and regional organizations — govern the agency staffs.

## JUDICIAL COUNCIL

As the denomination's highest judicial body or "court," the Judicial Council interprets church law and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. General Conference elects its nine members, made up of laity and clergy. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they normally met twice a year to consider whether actions of the various church bodies adhere to the Constitution and follow the rules outlined in the Book of Discipline. During the worst of

the pandemic, the Judicial Council met online multiple times for briefer meetings. It has now largely returned to its pre-pandemic schedule of in-person meetings.

The Council of Bishops, district conferences (in limited cases), the annual conferences, the jurisdictional conferences, the central conferences, and the General Conference, or bodies created by them, have standing to bring cases directly to the Judicial Council. According to the Constitution, decisions of the Judicial Council are final.

## ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

The United Methodist Church is a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, the World Council of Churches and the World Methodist Council; one of 11 denominations participating in Churches Uniting in Christ; and a provisional member of Christian Churches Together. It is also part of the Pan-Methodist Commission that includes representatives of The United Methodist Church and five historically African American Methodist churches: African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, African Union Methodist Protestant Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and Union American Methodist Episcopal Church. The commission fosters cooperation among its member denominations in evangelism, missions, publications, social concerns and higher education.



# Ethnic Caucuses and Initiatives

## CAUCUSES

*Note: The five ethnic caucuses form the Interethnic Strategy Development Group. Through the postponed 2020 General Conference, the Rev. Lyssette Perez serves as IESDG president..*

### **BLACK METHODISTS FOR CHURCH RENEWAL INC. (BMCR INC.), GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,** Atlanta, Georgia, 470-428-2251

The Rev. Antoine C. Love, Chair  
[info@bmcrumc.org](mailto:info@bmcrumc.org)  
[bmcrumc.org](http://bmcrumc.org)

### **METODISTAS ASOCIADOS REPRESENTANDO LA CAUSA DE LOS HISPANO-AMERICANOS (MARCHA)**

The Rev. Lyssette Perez  
Greater New Jersey Conference, President  
Bishop Elias Galvan, Executive Director  
[marchaumc.org](http://marchaumc.org)

### **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ASIAN AMERICAN UNITED METHODISTS (NFAAUM)**

NFAAUM includes 12 sub-ethnic caucuses: Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Formosan, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, South Asian, Vietnamese, Middle Eastern and Pakistani.

The Rev. Scott Christy, President  
[nfaaum.org](http://nfaaum.org)

### **NATIVE AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CAUCUS (NAIC)**

Ragghi Rain Calentine, Chair  
[naicumc.com](http://naicumc.com)

### **PACIFIC ISLANDER NATIONAL CAUCUS OF UNITED METHODISTS (PINCUM)**

The Rev. Michael Seui, Chair  
[mseui@comcast.net](mailto:mseui@comcast.net)

## INITIATIVES

### **ASIAN-AMERICAN LANGUAGE MINISTRY PLAN GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES** Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Dana Lyles, Director of Multiethnic Ministries  
[dlyles@umcmmission.org](mailto:dlyles@umcmmission.org)  
<https://umcmmission.org/pacific-islander-national-plan/>

### **NATIONAL PLAN FOR HISPANIC/LATINO MINISTRY, GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES** Atlanta, Georgia

The Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz, Executive Director  
[lmunoz@umcmmission.org](mailto:lmunoz@umcmmission.org)  
[nphlm.org](http://nphlm.org)

### **NATIVE AMERICAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES** Nashville, Tennessee

The Rev. Glen "Chebon" Kernell Jr., Executive Director  
[gkernell@umcdiscipleship.org](mailto:gkernell@umcdiscipleship.org)  
[nacp-umc.org](http://nacp-umc.org)

### **PACIFIC ISLANDER MINISTRY PLAN GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES** Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Dana Lyles, Director of Multiethnic Ministries  
[dlyles@umcmmission.org](mailto:dlyles@umcmmission.org)  
<https://umcmmission.org/pacific-islander-national-plan/>

### **STRENGTHENING THE BLACK CHURCH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY, DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES** Nashville, Tennessee

Dr. Michael L. Bowie Jr., National Executive Director  
<https://sbc21.org/>

### **KOREAN MINISTRY PLAN GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES** Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. Paul Hak-Soon Chang, Executive Director,  
Korean Ministry Plan [pchang@umcmmission.org](mailto:pchang@umcmmission.org)  
[UMCmission.org/serve-with-us/partnerships/korean-ministry-plan](http://UMCmission.org/serve-with-us/partnerships/korean-ministry-plan)



# Reference Materials

The Daily Christian Advocate (DCA) is the most important reference tool for General Conference. Edited by United Methodist Publishing House staff member Brian Sigmon, it is comparable to the U.S. Congressional Record. An Advance DCA is available before the conference. During the conference, the DCA will be published each day and made available to delegates, other official participants and subscribers.

The Advance Edition includes all legislative proposals from individuals, local churches, caucuses and general agencies. It also contains reports from the study committees and all general agencies, as well as a listing of delegates, legislative committee assignments, seating assignments, the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order for the conference and other important information for delegates.

The Daily Christian Advocate, published each day during General Conference, contains daily transcripts of the conference proceedings, news stories and features, reports from administrative committees, nominations lists and reports of legislative committee actions.

In the past, the Advance DCA has been printed and shipped to delegates and those who order the materials, while the DCA has been printed and distributed to delegates and subscribers each day during the conference. For the upcoming General Conference, these materials will be available on a website, [www.dailychristianadvocate.org](http://www.dailychristianadvocate.org), accessible by computers, tablets and smartphones.

**(Note: This URL must be entered exactly, including www, to avoid landing on a dangerous website).** Reports, news and nominations lists will be searchable, and users may browse them by date or by topic. The legislation section will show original petitions and the most recent legislative committee and plenary session action on each item. The website will be available in English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili.

Delegates will receive complimentary access to the website, while others may subscribe to the site.

Printed materials will still be available for delegates. The full Advance DCA will be printed and shipped to delegates prior to General Conference. During General Conference, legislation and any other items to be voted on will also be printed and distributed to delegates, but news and the transcripts of conference proceedings will be available on the website only.

Those who are interested may subscribe to the DCA website at [www.dailychristianadvocate.org](http://www.dailychristianadvocate.org).

The website for General Conference, <http://gc2020.umc.org>, provides links to general agency petitions, proposals, reports and a list of delegates, along with the legislative committees and paragraphs of the Book of Discipline with which they will be dealing. This same information will appear on the DCA website and in the printed Advance DCA.

# Crossing the Language Barriers



Ruth Pierre gets a hug from her sister shortly after being consecrated a deaconess during a worship service at the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon.

Photo by Paul Jeffrey, UM News.

The United Methodist Church is a diverse denomination with congregations speaking a variety of languages. Simultaneous voice or signed interpretation for delegates will be available in English, French, German, Kiswahili, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Tagalog. American Sign Language will also be used at General Conference. The Advance Daily Christian Advocate will be available in the four official General Conference languages: English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese.





# Charlotte Area Map

## UPTOWN CHARLOTTE HOTEL MAP

- |   |   |                                       |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 AC Hotel Charlotte City Center          | 11 Hilton Garden Inn Uptown Charlotte         | 21 Residence Inn Charlotte Uptown     |
| 2 Aloft Charlotte Uptown                  | 12 Holiday Inn Charlotte-Center City          | 22 SpringHill Suites Charlotte Uptown |
| 3 Charlotte Marriott City Center          | 13 Home2 Suites                               | 23 The Dunhill Hotel                  |
| 4 Courtyard Charlotte City Center         | 14 Hyatt House Charlotte/Center City          | 24 The Ivey's Hotel                   |
| 5 DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Charlotte    | 15 Hyatt Place Charlotte Downtown             | 25 The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte        |
| 6 Embassy Suites Charlotte Uptown         | 16 JW Marriott Charlotte                      | 26 The Westin Charlotte               |
| 7 Fairfield Inn & Suites Charlotte Uptown | 17 Kimpton Tryon Park Hotel                   |                                       |
| 8 Grand Bohemian Hotel Charlotte          | 18 Le Méridien Charlotte / Sheraton Charlotte |                                       |
| 9 Hampton Inn Charlotte-Uptown            | 19 Omni Charlotte Hotel                       |                                       |
| 10 Hilton Charlotte Uptown                | 20 Residence Inn Charlotte City Center        |                                       |

### KEY

- A Charlotte Convention Center
- B NASCAR Hall of Fame
- C Spectrum Center
- i Visitor Info Center
- Greenways and Parks
- LYNX Blue Line Light Rail





Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.  
The people of The United Methodist Church®



PSALM 46

...and

**KNOW**  
that  
I am **GOD**

The United Methodist Church General Conference  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA