



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HANDBOOK

Therefore,

go

**Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ for
the Transformation
of the World.**

Together, we do more.



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

Dear friends in Christ,



Grace to you and abundant peace from God, our Creator, and the Lord Jesus Christ. The people of The United Methodist Church are part of a worldwide community with a rich Wesleyan heritage, a shared covenant and a common mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many (1 Corinthians 12:20). Our connection binds us together in faith and service beyond our individual congregations. We reach out locally and globally through more than 43,000 United Methodist congregations all over the world to help others and to share the good news of Christ's saving grace.

God in Christ loves us, and all of humanity, beyond measure. God's grace is available to all. We have a shared calling to make that truth an everyday reality for all those who have yet to be invited to experience the healing balm and abundant life of God's banquet table.

We celebrate all that God is doing through The United Methodist Church. This handbook is filled with information about who we are, how we are structured and how we are living out our mission. I hope that as you read this book, it will be a helpful resource and you will see the strength that worldwide connectivity brings to the work of the church.

Our prayer is that The United Methodist Church be a community where you find peace, meaning and a future with hope.

In Christ's extravagant grace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bruce R. Ough".

Bishop Bruce R. Ough

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What It Means to Be a United Methodist

A United Methodist is a Christian who has professed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, put his or her whole trust in Christ's grace and promised to serve him as Lord as a member of The United Methodist Church, a worldwide church that welcomes persons of all ages, nations and races.

United Methodists Believe

United Methodists affirm the historic Christian faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

We Believe in the Triune God, the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

- God the Father/Creator, who brings creation into existence, upholds and reveals the ways of life that make for peace and wholeness, and ever works to heal and transform life through the power of love.
- God the Son, Jesus Christ, the firstborn of a new creation who through his life, death and resurrection saves us and all creation from the power of sin and death.
- God the Holy Spirit, who comforts, sustains, guides and empowers us to participate in God's life and mission in the world.

We Believe every person is a beloved child of God;

- Whom God created in God's divine image, with inherent worth and dignity.
- Who confronts and suffers the distorting and destructive effects of sin in this life.
- Whom God has reconciled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, defeating the powers of sin and death.
- Whom God seeks to make holy and whole, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, transforming us into Christlikeness.

We Believe in the church as the community called to be instruments of God's presence and coming reign in Jesus Christ;

- Where people worship God joyfully, proclaim God's Word faithfully and share the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.
- Where all people are welcomed and nurtured as God's sons and daughters.
- Where people are initiated into Christ's body and nurtured toward Christian maturity through worship, prayer, study, fellowship and service.
- Where the light of God's love, justice and peace exposes and overrules evil, injustice and sin.
- Where we participate in God's mission of inviting, preparing and enlisting disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world and to follow the risen Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the hurting places of the world and among the outcasts and the forgotten.

We Believe the Bible reveals the Word of God;

- Where there is authority in matters of faith and practice.
- Where we find the story of God's mighty acts of salvation in creation, in faithful engagement with people through the ages and supremely in Jesus Christ.
- Where we have the primary source for understanding the nature and purposes of God.
- Where interpretation occurs in the power of the Holy Spirit present in the community of faith.

We Believe in the final triumph of God's reign of compassion, justice, generosity and peace;

- Anticipating the first fruits made possible today through the power of the Spirit and the reign of Christ.
- Discovering a renewed creation where sin, suffering and death are overcome and God's victory is complete.
- Celebrating with all the faithful who are raised to live eternally in God's loving presence.
- Extending God's love to the whole creation, with God's mercy redeeming all of God's works, all that God loves.

— Bishop Kenneth L. Carder

Rooted in God's Grace

“Living in the covenant of grace under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we participate in the first fruits of God’s coming reign and pray in hope for its full realization on earth as in heaven” (from *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 102, “Our Doctrinal Heritage”). Our heritage is rooted in a deep and profound understanding of God’s grace, which flows from God’s love for us. Grace can be defined as God’s gift of freely given love and mercy. We can do nothing to deserve or earn it.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NRSV). John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement in 18th-century England, described God’s grace as threefold: prevenient, justifying and sanctifying. *The Book of Discipline* explains that these were beliefs shared by many other Christians, but that Wesley combined them in a powerful way to create distinctive emphases for living the Christian life.

PREVENIENT GRACE

United Methodists acknowledge prevenient grace as the divine love that surrounds all persons prior to our consciousness or awareness of its presence. It does not depend on human action or response. It is a gift that is always available, but that can be refused. Prevenient grace stirs within us a desire to know the God who actively seeks us. We do not have to beg and plead for God’s love and grace. God actively seeks us! God’s grace enables us to discern differences between good and evil. It allows us to choose good, moving us to turn toward God, which is called repentance, and accept God’s gift in faith.

JUSTIFYING GRACE

We believe God reaches out to the repentant believer in justifying grace with accepting and pardoning love (*The United Methodist Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 102). John Wesley taught that the prompting of grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit allow a decisive change in the human heart. In justification, we are, through faith, forgiven for our sin and restored to God’s favor. We are justified, set right, with God, not through our own actions, but through the gift of God’s grace.

In accepting justifying grace through faith, the image of God is renewed in us. We acknowledge our human condition and make a conscious decision to turn toward God and a life of service as a disciple of Christ. The process of salvation involves a change we call “conversion.” It represents changes of belief, spiritual outlook and manner of life. The conversion experience may be sudden and dramatic, or gradual and cumulative. In any case, it marks a new beginning. In this conversion, we can expect to be assured of salvation through the Holy Spirit “bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16b, NRSV).

SANCTIFYING GRACE

We believe that God’s acceptance and pardon that come through justifying grace do not end God’s saving work, which continues to nurture us in grace. The Holy Spirit enables us to grow in knowledge and love of God and neighbor. Wesley called this dimension of God’s grace “sanctification” or “holiness.” Wesley used another term, “Christian perfection,” and believed that sanctifying grace draws us toward this gift, which he described as a heart “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor” and as “having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked” (*The Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 102). Wesley never meant perfection to imply that we would not make mistakes or have weaknesses. He understood it to be a continual process of being made perfect in our love of God and each other and of removing our desire to sin. The *Discipline* says that faith is the only response essential for salvation, but that God’s grace and human activity work together in the relationship of faith and good works. In his General Rules, Wesley reminds us that our salvation is made evident through good works.

Vital Congregations — Our UMC Mission

“Whenever United Methodism has had a clear sense of mission, God has used our Church to save persons, heal relationships, transform social structures, and spread scriptural holiness, thereby changing the world” (*The Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 121).

The 2016 General Conference set an ambitious vision that directs us into the future. The 2020 Vision for The United Methodist Church calls for us to double the number of highly vital congregations worldwide to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This clear sense of mission was discerned by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table and sets out a series of strategic directions to achieve this goal.

So, what defines a vital congregation? They thrive wherever United Methodist disciples engage in mission and ministry to live out God’s vision for a world where poverty is reduced and poor people and communities flourish; a world where children live to their full potential; a world where Christian leaders heed God’s call to discipleship; and a world where new faith communities offer God’s love and grace worldwide.

To achieve measurable results, the UMC evaluates a congregation’s vitality based on five markers of vitality — disciples in worship, new disciples (professions of faith), disciples in small groups, disciples in mission, and giving to mission — all of which manifest in vibrant congregations.

The real measure of our missional impact will not be in membership increases or improved giving but in the lives that will be touched and drawn to Christ as disciples because these vital congregations were able to reach people with the Gospel of Christ who might otherwise not be reached (from *The Financial Commitment of The United Methodist Church 2017–2020*).

Fulfilling Jesus’ Great Commission

Jesus called his followers to action when he gave the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19a). This is the mission of The United Methodist Church — to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” We achieve this through vital congregations that equip and empower people to be disciples in their home congregations and in communities around the world.

Vital congregations are essential to our mission and our very being as followers of Jesus Christ. This is why growing vital congregations is a component of the ongoing United Methodist Call to Action. It requires commitment and dedication in local congregations and agencies, and leaders who provide training, support and resources.

“It is time,” said the Rev. Amy Valdez-Barker, executive secretary of the Connectional Table, “to work together across generations and differences to engage in vital witness and mission in our communities.”





The Four Areas of Focus:

As United Methodists, we focus on growing as disciples, on making disciples and on transforming the world through caring for the poor and being good stewards of the health of all. Since 2008, we have focused on these emphases as expressions of faithful discipleship. While they are not new – and many churches and conferences have been engaged in them for years – together they reflect the totality of our mission: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As we continue to engage in them in our congregation and with other congregations, we build relationships with United Methodists throughout the connection and around the world and increase the vitality of our congregations.

God calls each of us to a life of faithful discipleship. The United Methodist Church has defined the scope of its mission in the world, so every member can find their calling and bring Jesus Christ's ministry to the world.

We are Disciples

Four Areas of Focus

We are disciples – disciples who are making, leading, overcoming and seeking.



Making New Disciples in New Places

Making disciples in faith communities includes developing and nurturing relationships with Christ and with other disciples. By nurturing spiritual practices, offering small groups and involving people in mission, we help members grow as disciples. By starting new churches and faith communities, we reach more people for Christ.

Through the See All The People movement led by Discipleship Ministries, United Methodists are learning that the most essential step for making disciples of Jesus Christ is to immerse ourselves in the lives of the people who are right outside our doors. See All The People means having a discipleship system that begins with being in relationship with those around our churches.

In Germany, the United Methodist movement is welcoming new people. In Munich, United Methodist Church of the Redeemer ministers to many through an expanded children's ministry and after school programs. In cities like Hamburg, Bremen and Frankfurt, United Methodists are welcoming refugees and immigrants from Africa and the Middle East with shelter, German language classes and assistance with government paperwork and finding employment.

At the same time, Path 1 New Church Starts is the denominational church-planting movement in the United States. Also led by Discipleship Ministries, Path 1 provides collaborative leadership to create new places to reach more people, more young people and more diverse people for Christ. Path 1 includes both venturing into communities where no vital church exists and healthy churches to branching out and assisting in planting new ones.

Columbus Avenue United Methodist in Sandusky, Ohio believes that discipleship begins with making space for anyone. The church has created space for the city's homeless to have a meal and Bible study on site, begun holding small groups in a local coffee shop and found ways to make developmentally disabled adults and their families feel welcomed and included in the church.

The General Board of Global Ministries engages in new or renewed mission initiatives in places in Africa, Asia, Eurasia and Latin America with little or no United Methodist presence. New United Methodist communities have formed disciples and grown into mature churches that are locally led and financially self-supporting. Through the mission initiatives, 963 new faith communities were planted from 2009–2016. In places such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Honduras, Cameroon and Senegal, these movements are taking increasing responsibility for their leadership and governance.

In the rural area of Gouabo, Côte d'Ivoire, worshippers recently celebrated the opening of a new church building. It began with informal meetings of about 50 people but now the community has grown to 300. United Methodism in West Africa has grown in the last decade from 1.46 million to 1.8 million.

To learn more:

- seeallthepeople.org
- umcdiscipleship.org/new-church-starts
- umcmmission.org/serve-with-us/partnerships/imt-partnerships/mission-initiatives



Leading Where God Calls

The United Methodist Church supports, mentors and educates people to:

- Help them find their call to make a difference in God's world and
- Equip them to lead intentionally and in a way that attracts followers

United Methodists teach that through baptism all Christians are called to ministry, to servant leadership. Creating and fostering a culture of call in local churches and throughout the denomination provide opportunities to discern, explore and respond to God's call to ordained ministry or to ministry as a layperson in the church and the world.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry developed “Called: One Word, Many Ways,” a collection of resources to use in worship, Sunday school and vacation Bible school, small groups and on retreat. “Called” explores how to listen for God's voice and respond.

Ordained Ministry

The Young Clergy Initiative is a \$7 million fund created by General Conference in 2012 and 2016 to increase the number of young clergy within jurisdictional conferences of The United Methodist Church. Grants from the fund support projects to help young adults hear and respond to God's call. “Exploration” is a biennial, three-day event of worship, fellowship, reflection and workshops that creates sacred space for young adults to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church.

Ministry of the Laity

The ministry of the laity is the mission or ministry to which all Christians are called – proclaiming the good news and reaching out to others in love. Discipleship Ministries provides resources to equip laity for their roles in ministry as disciples of Jesus Christ and as leaders in their congregations. The “Introduction to Lay Ministry: The BASIC Course” is the foundational course for lay servant ministries and can be part of a discipleship plan to acquaint other laity in the church with their gifts, calling, and responsibilities as followers of Christ.

Developing New Leaders

Leadership is an extension of discipleship, which calls for Christians who are committed to increasing their leadership skills and deepening their spiritual practices. In 2018, GBHEM launched the LEaD Hub for Mozambique and South Africa to serve Portuguese and English speakers on the African Continent. LEaD serves and prepares new leaders in 11 different global regions in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas/Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. Both new hubs in Africa will promote primary and secondary education among the Portuguese and English-speaking populations.

The Next Generation Leadership Ministry Intern program in the West Ohio Conference is for undergraduate students exploring a call to ordained ministry. Mentors and host churches play a critical role in the experience of the interns as they help them cultivate leadership skills for effective ministry in a local church. GBHEM collaborates with the Methodist School of Theology in Sao Paulo to offer a vocational orientation for Brazilian ministry candidates between the ages of 17 and 25. Candidates visit the school to meet faculty and staff and learn about the various programs available to students.

To learn more:

- gbhem.org
- umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/ministry-of-the-laity
- explorecalling.org/called
- explorecalling.org/exploration
- explorecalling.org/yci

Seeking Health and Wholeness for All

United Methodists are committed to creating abundant health for all – to striving for mental, physical and spiritual well-being. Lifesaving health ministries are enriching the lives of people from South America to Africa, from India to the Philippines and the United States. Continuing Jesus' ministry of healing is an important part of what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. We have opportunities to use our resources to extend hope to all people, offering them a path to wholeness, joy and abundant life in Christ.

Mind:

Vibrant mental health is vital to a person's holistic well-being. As the church helps people identify, treat, cope with and overcome their mental health challenges, congregations encourage them and offer hope that provides strength on their journey of healing.

The Iowa Annual Conference established a task force on mental health that includes clergy and laity who have dealt with mental health concerns in clinics, schools, prisons and other settings. One task force member provides Mental Health First Aid training to send people back to their churches and local communities with skills and a commitment to improving overall mental health.

Body:

Bountiful physical health comes through a balanced diet, ample physical activity and access to health care. We share God's grace by taking responsibility for the health of the most marginalized in our communities and around the world. At the same time, we care for our own bodies so we can fulfill the mission to which God calls us.

In Kamina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Shungu maternity clinic provides vital care. Before it was rehabilitated, the nearest facility able to perform emergency caesarian sections was eight hours away. Shungu is one of 46 health facilities rebuilt or rehabilitated with funds from the Health Systems Strengthening program, an initiative started by Global Ministries in 2017.

The Mary Johnston Hospital in Manila combats the spread of HIV in the Philippines thanks to a grant from the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund. The hospital provides diagnosis and treatment and reassures those who test positive that HIV does not have to be a death sentence.

Spirit:

Resilient spiritual health gives purpose to our daily lives. We find strength to face our own brokenness and the fractured world around us, to live as disciples speaking words of hope and planting seeds of peace.

To learn more:

- umcabundanthealth.org

“We have opportunities to use our resources to extend hope to all people, offering them a path to wholeness, joy and abundant life in Christ.”

Overcoming Poverty Together

“One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is that...one part of the world does not know what the other suffers.” — John Wesley

By walking, worshiping and witnessing with neighbors who are economically poor or marginalized, United Methodists make visible to the world God’s promise of abundant life. We better understand the root causes of poverty, challenge systems that create and perpetuate injustice and provide immediate relief to those who suffer while recognizing and acknowledging they also have gifts and assets to share.

Seeking to overcome poverty together, we respond to God’s call both to serve those who suffer and to demonstrate the radical love of the gospel and its power to liberate and heal.

“God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what the Lord requires of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?”
(Micah 6:8, NRSV)

Led by the General Board of Church and Society, Overcoming Poverty Together encourages United Methodists to rethink how we do ministry: shifting away from ministries “to” people and communities and toward ministries “with” people and communities that are built around relationships. These relationships inspire, inform and give rise to shared vision, shared commitment and shared leadership.

Supporting Connections of Lebanon County (SCLC) in Pennsylvania works with local low-income families to help them reach self-sustainability through a training course that meets one night a week for 14 weeks. Tailored toward the participants and their unique situations, the courses help them set and manage their own goals around finances, education, career and more.

GateWay Loft provides shelter and welcome to immigrants and refugees in San Diego, California. In 2016, the city became the destination for over 5,000 Haitian refugees. Christ United Methodist Ministry Center converted space already set aside for a future women’s shelter to provide temporary housing for the refugees. Following Jesus’ instruction to welcome strangers, the church hopes to encourage other congregations to provide shelter for refugees.

The Kaptiran-Kaunlaran Foundation Inc. in the Philippines works with impoverished individuals and communities to raise the standard of living through education, economic empowerment and social and spiritual support. The center offers early education, childcare, employment training and community organizing to help break the cycle of poverty.

To learn more:

- umcjustice.org/who-we-are/the-united-methodist-church/ministry-with-the-poor

Our Organization

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church is designed with checks and balances built into the structure.

CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

The structure of The United Methodist Church is defined by The Constitution found in Part I of *The Book of Discipline*. The Constitution assigns duties among bodies that include the General Conference, the Council of Bishops and the Judicial Council, each of which plays a vital role in church life.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

The General Conference is the primary legislative body of The United Methodist Church and is the only entity authorized to speak officially for the church. It comprises not less than 600 or more than 1,000 delegates, divided equally between clergy and laity. General Conference customarily meets every four years to determine legislation related to connectional matters, but can meet at other times for special called sessions.

Among the constitutional duties of the General Conference are defining and fixing:

- conditions, privileges and duties of church membership;
- duties of clergy;
- powers and duties of jurisdictional, central, annual, missionary (and missions), district, charge conferences and congregational meetings;
- the organization and promotion of church administrative work; and
- the powers and duties of bishops.

The General Conference also authorizes the official hymnal and book of worship, initiates and directs connectional enterprises, and enacts other operational legislation.





COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

“Whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task,” the apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:1 (NRSV). Indeed, bishops have a very special role in our church. What exactly does a bishop do?

Paul’s letter to Titus gives the first answer. Paul calls a bishop “God’s steward” (1:7). That stewardship, according to *The Book of Discipline*, gives our bishops the responsibility to oversee both “the spiritual and temporal interests” of the church. This means our bishops ensure that the denomination carries out the legislation of General Conference and meets its programs, rules and regulations. Most important, our bishops enable the gathered church to worship and evangelize and to live in faithful discipleship.

As the spiritual leaders of our church, bishops play an important role in helping to set the direction of the church. They are responsible for exercising “oversight and support of the church in its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” as well as upholding the church’s theological traditions and teaching how to make disciples and lead faithful and fruitful congregations.

Bishops also are responsible for making all clergy appointments in the annual conferences they serve and leading in new opportunities for ministry. They have the responsibility for upholding the rules and regulations developed by General Conference. As the presiding officers at annual conference sessions, they are responsible for ruling on points of law.

The Council of Bishops includes all active and retired bishops. The Council gives general oversight to the ministry and mission of the church and spiritual leadership to the entire connection. Bishops are elected by jurisdictional conferences (in the United States) or central conferences and assigned to a particular area made up of one or more annual conferences. Each bishop provides oversight to ministry and mission in his or her area and appoints clergy to their places of service. Bishops also build ties for Christian unity and interreligious relationships with other Christian denominations and faith groups.

Learn more at umc.org/councilofbishops.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL

The Judicial Council interprets church law and determines the constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. The General Conference determines the number and qualifications of members, terms of office, and the method of election and filling of vacancies.

At this time, the Judicial Council has nine members, clergy and lay, elected by the General Conference. Cases are generally referred by action of the Council of Bishops, annual conferences or the General Conference. According to the Constitution, decisions of the Judicial Council are final (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 57, Article III).

EPISCOPAL AREAS

Each bishop is assigned by his or her jurisdictional or central conference to an episcopal area, made up of one or more annual conferences. The bishops live within the bounds of their areas where they carry the primary responsibility for ordering the life of the church.

UNITED STATES JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES

The Constitution grants specific powers and duties to jurisdictional (regional) conferences in the United States. Membership is half clergy, half lay, comprising representatives from the annual conferences and including all General Conference delegates, plus additional jurisdictional delegates.

The five jurisdictional conferences meet at the same time every four years to elect and assign bishops. They have constitutional responsibility to promote the evangelistic, educational, missionary and benevolent interests of the church and to provide for jurisdictional ministries and institutions. Jurisdictional members elect members of the general church boards and agencies. The jurisdictional conference has the power to determine the boundaries of their annual conferences.

GENERAL CHURCHWIDE AGENCIES

General agencies are created by and accountable to the General Conference. *The Book of Discipline* states that agencies are a part of our connection, the web of interactive relationships throughout the denomination. These agencies have the vital role of equipping local churches for ministry by providing a connection with ministry throughout the world and providing essential services and ministries beyond the scope of individual congregations and annual conferences.

The General Conference created the Connectional Table to coordinate the mission, ministries, and resources of the denomination. It is described as a place where ministry and money are brought to the same table. It is charged as a steward of vision and resources. It reports to and is accountable to the General Conference.

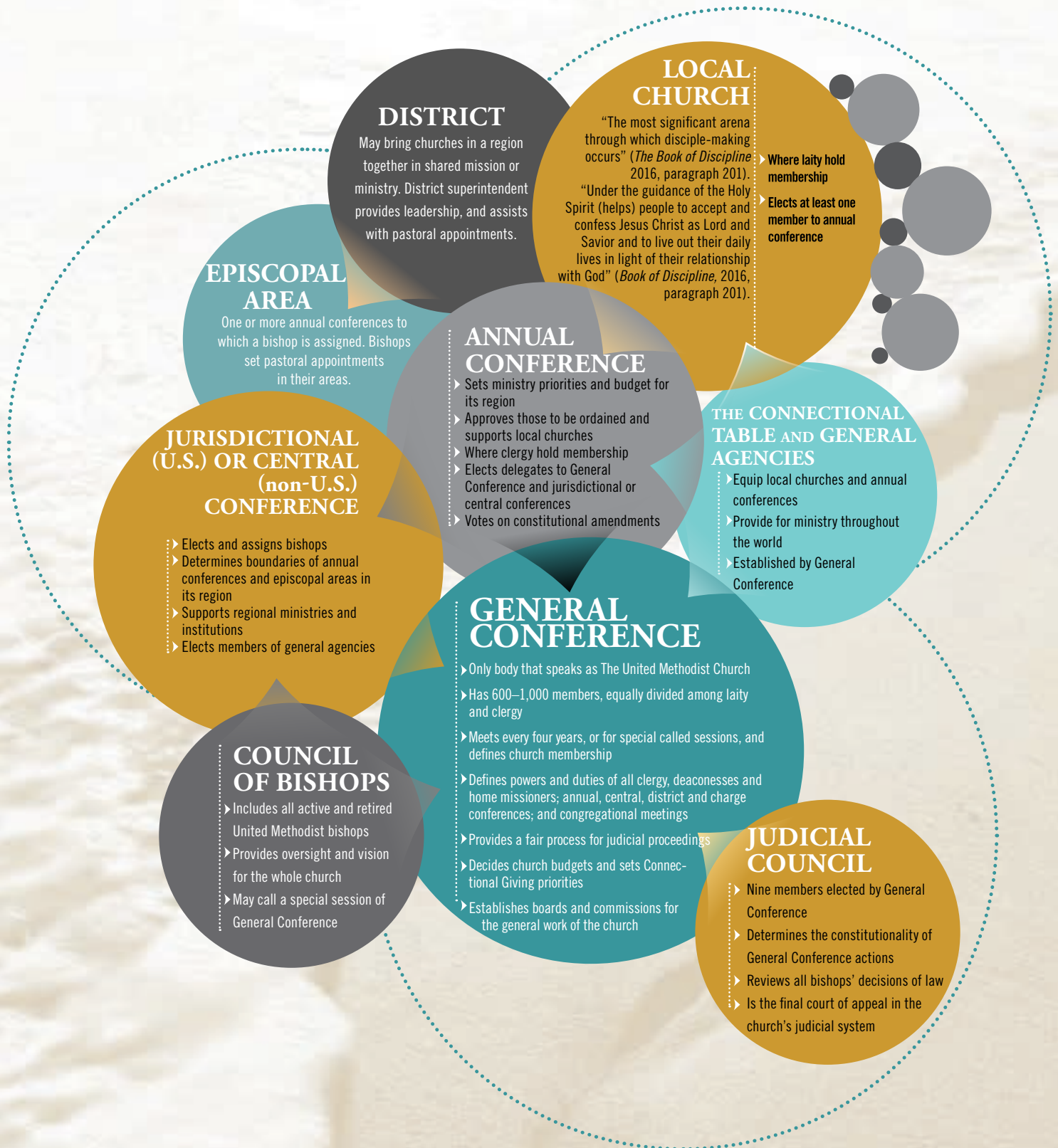
We use “annual conference” to reference both the body and the gathering of the body.

CHARGE AND CHURCH CONFERENCES

The Book of Discipline calls the local church the most significant area through which disciple-making occurs. Though churches are planted in local communities, they are part of the church of Jesus Christ that exists in and for the world. It is the base from which Christians move out into the structures of society. It is where persons are baptized, profess their faith in Jesus, and assume the vows of membership in The United Methodist Church.

A pastoral charge is one or more churches to which an ordained or licensed clergyperson is appointed. A charge conference is the governing body of the charge; and the church council, the executive agency of the charge conference, guides the church's ministry throughout the year.

United Methodists: *A Connected Church*



ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The annual conference is the basic body of the church (Constitution, paragraph 33). The term dates back to the early days of the Methodist movement when founder John Wesley established a conference to instruct and supervise Methodist preachers. We use “annual conference” to reference both the body and the gathering of the body. The annual conference approves candidates for ordination and handles all matters concerning clergy. The annual conference equips its local churches for ministry and provides a connection for ministry beyond the local church (paragraph 601).

The annual conference meets yearly and may be called to special session for specific purposes. The bishop presides over annual conference and sets the time of meeting. Membership includes clergy members as specified in *The Book of Discipline*, and an equal number of laypersons elected by a charge conference, designated as members by *The Discipline* due to their leadership roles (such as the presidents of the conference United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men).

Special provisions ensure membership for youth and young adults. The annual conference has many powers and duties, including the credentialing and admittance of clergy, ratifying constitutional amendments and electing clergy and lay members of General, jurisdictional or central conferences. It is responsible for guiding the mission and ministry of the church within its boundaries and structuring and funding ministries and agencies to accomplish its purpose.

CENTRAL/JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES

United Methodists in Africa, Europe and the Philippines have “central conferences” as their geographic divisions. Central conferences include Africa, Central and Southern Europe, Congo, Germany, Northern Europe and Eurasia, the Philippines and West Africa. There are five U.S. Jurisdictions and U.S. bishops are elected for life.

AFRICA CENTRAL CONFERENCES

Africa includes three central conferences: Africa Central, with five areas; Congo Central with four; and West Africa with four. In Africa Central and Congo Central, bishops are elected for four years as “term bishops” and with reelection, they are elected for life.

In West Africa, bishops are elected for life on their first election.

EUROPEAN CENTRAL CONFERENCES

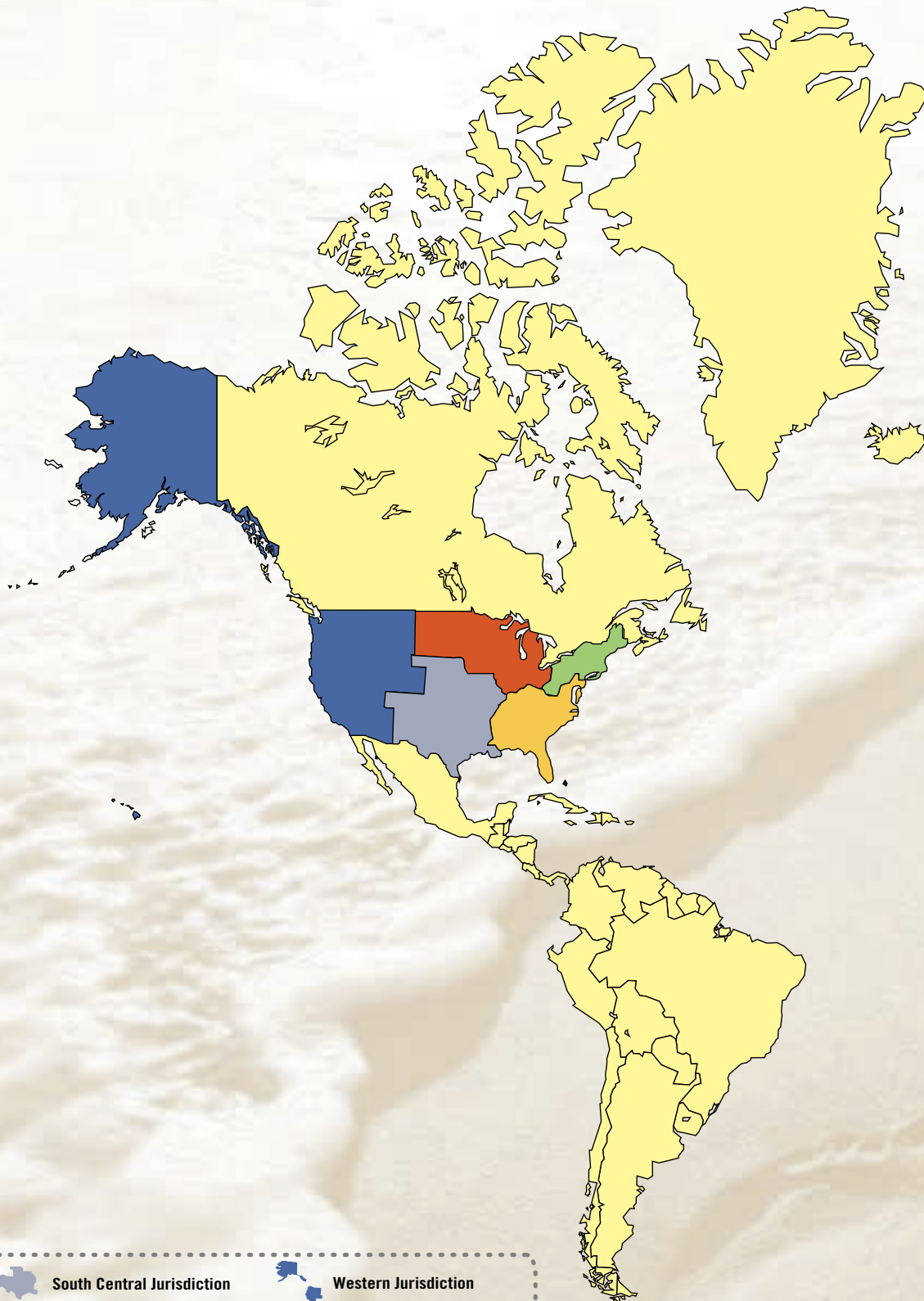
Europe has three central conferences: Central and Southern Europe (one area), Germany (one area), and Northern Europe (two areas). In Central and Southern Europe, bishops are elected for four years as “term bishops.” After four years, the central conference can reelect the bishop for life or elect a new bishop.

In Germany Central Conference, bishops are elected for a four-year term and can be reelected for an eight-year term for a maximum of 12 years. In Northern Europe, bishops are elected for eight years as “term bishops” and can be reelected for an additional four years, with a maximum of 12 years of service.

PHILIPPINES CENTRAL CONFERENCE

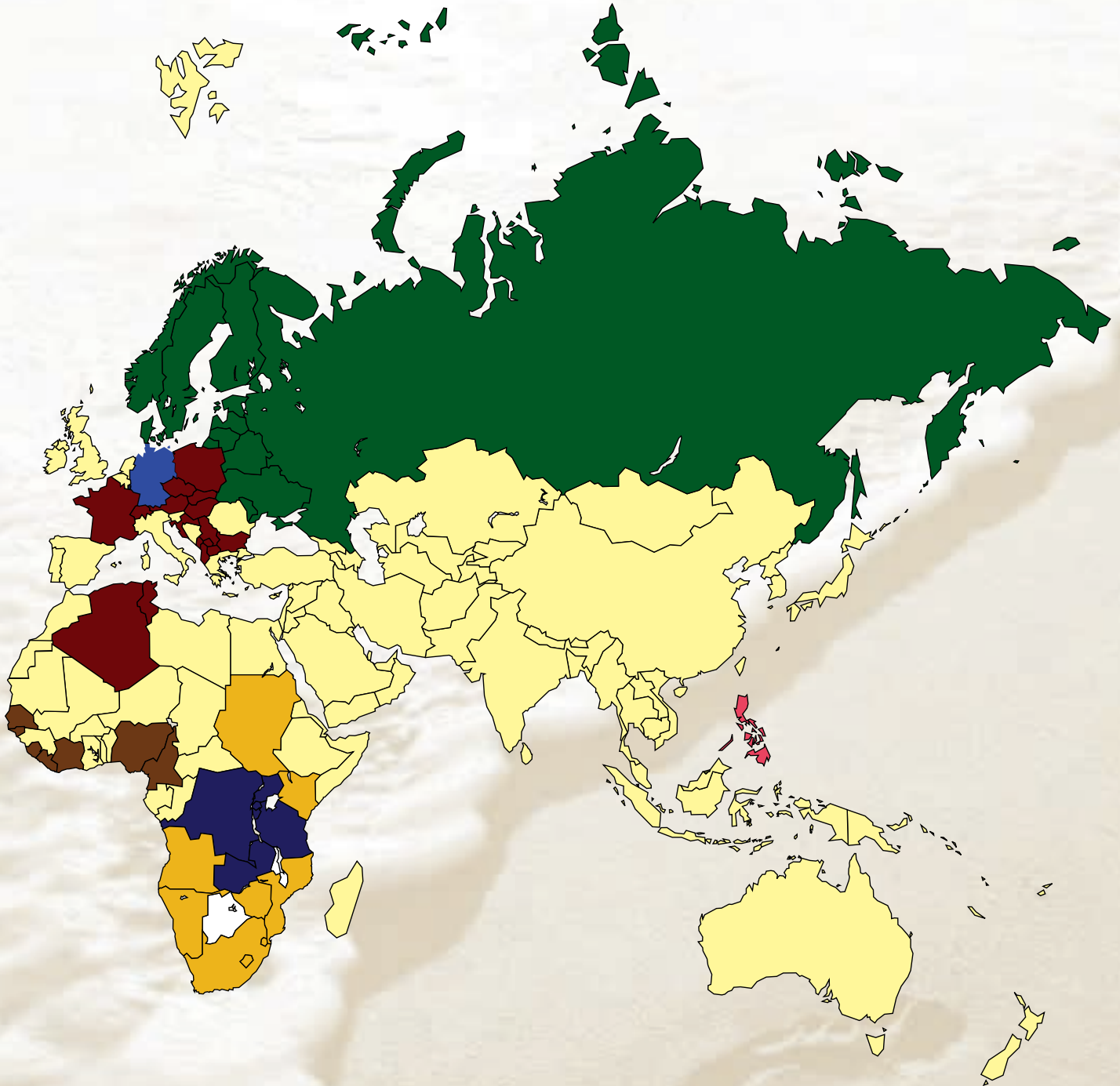
The Philippines has one central conference with three episcopal areas. Bishops are elected as “term bishops” for four years at a time.

United Methodists Around the World:



**Jurisdictional and Central Conferences as of 2016*

Central or Jurisdictional Conference*



	Africa Central Conference		West Africa Central Conference		Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference
	Congo Central Conference		Central and Southern Europe Central Conference		Philippines Central Conference
	Germany Central Conference				

Our History: Mission Highlights

The United Methodist Church as we know it today is a product of a worldwide mission, dating back some 300 years. It begins in England, arrives on the American continent with the colonists and quickly spreads around the globe. Here is a brief history of the people and events that have shaped the mission and Church we are today:

1725–50	1751–75	1776–99
Oxford Fellow John Wesley is ordained deacon (1725) and priest (1728) in the Church of England. He and brother Charles were sons of Anglican clergyman Samuel Wesley and Susanna Wesley, a woman of great strength, faith and character. 1729: Charles Wesley forms a small group at Oxford, which became known as the Holy Club. John becomes leader of the group, which he later regarded as the first rise of Methodism. Though a learned clergyman, John struggles with assurance of his salvation. 1736: John and Charles embark on an ill-fated missionary trip to Georgia. John leaves Georgia in disgrace, but he carries with him a deep admiration for Moravians he met on the voyage to America. On May 21, 1738, Charles has a transforming experience. Three days later, John has his Aldersgate experience, feeling his heart “strangely warmed” and finally feels assurance of his salvation. John visits the Moravians in Germany. Upon his return, revivalist and friend George Whitefield convinces him to preach in the fields. John organizes converts into societies, bands and classes and begins training lay preachers for the revival. 1744: John initiates the first annual conference.	The movement grows in England with pressures to separate from the Church of England. Wesley refuses. Philip William Otterbein, Francis Asbury, Philip and Margaret Embury and Paul and Barbara Heck come to America. New York’s Wesley Chapel (John Street Church) opens. The first American conference is held in Philadelphia. William Watters becomes the first native-born American itinerant preacher.	John Wesley is utterly opposed to the American Revolution. He begins to lose control over the American Methodists, who had few options to receive the sacraments following independence. He makes a bold move, appointing lay preachers Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey for ministry in America, and commissions Dr. Thomas Coke as superintendent of America’s Methodists. Coke is to commission Francis Asbury to serve with him as Wesley’s deputy. Asbury refuses to accept the assignment unless he is elected by the free vote of the American preachers. It happens in the Christmas Conference of 1784, and The Methodist Episcopal Church is born. The first <i>Discipline</i> is published in 1785. Missions reach the Channel Islands, France and Spain. The Free African Society and the African Methodist Episcopal Church begin in Philadelphia and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in New York.

1800–25

Francis Asbury, now calling himself bishop, is the undisputed leader of American Methodists. In 1808, the first constitution is drafted, the publishing house established, and revivalism and the camp meeting draw in many converts. Asbury's tenure stretches over three decades. (The 2016 General Conference observed the 200th anniversary of Asbury's death.) Asbury leads the growth of Methodism across the Appalachians into the frontier.

Otterbein and Martin Boehm found The United Brethren in Christ, and Daniel Coker organizes a Methodist Society for freed slaves headed to Liberia. Missionaries travel to Australia, the Dominican Republic, Gambia, Haiti, India, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tonga.

1826–50

Methodism is part of the Second Great Awakening. Circuit riders and lay preachers knit the converts into a connection. Local churches and classes spring up wherever a few women and men gather under the direction of a class leader and are visited regularly by a circuit rider. The Sunday school movement begins to flourish. Slavery becomes an increasingly divisive issue. Delegates from the Southern states organize The Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1845.

Divisions continue over social and theological issues. The Methodist Protestant Church and The Wesleyan Methodist Church are founded. Missions are established in Argentina, Brazil, China, Dehomey (Benin), Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Samoa, Sweden, Switzerland and Togo. Melville Cox embarks on the first American Methodist foreign mission to Liberia.

1851–75

The American Civil War takes a heavy toll, especially in the South, although both churches eventually rebound. The Freedmen's Aid Society and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church are organized. The Methodist Episcopal Society is organized in Denmark, and the Free Methodist Church of North America begins in New York.

The Methodist Protestant Church ordains a female deacon, Helenor M. Davisson. Methodism reaches Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Hawaii, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar (Burma), New Guinea, Norway, Portugal and Uruguay.

1876–1900

Mission work at home and overseas is high on agendas on both the Northern and Southern churches. Missionaries establish schools for former slaves and their children. Women begin forming missionary societies and raise funds for mission. Missionaries Isabella Thoburn, Susan Bauernfeind and Harriett Britten and administrators Belle Harris Bennett and Lucy Rider Meyer motivate churchwomen to support home and foreign mission. The push begins for increased lay and women's participation in decision-making.

Bishop William Taylor works in Angola, Bolivia, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Peru. Bishop James M. Thoburn pioneers ministries in Malaysia and the Philippines. Isabella Thoburn founds the first Christian women's college in Asia (India). Methodist missions spread to Costa Rica, Cuba, Hungary, Korea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Russia. In 1898, Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell stands atop Mount Chiremba in then-Rhodesia and dreams of hundreds of African youth running to school in the valley below.

1901–25

The Social Creed originated to express Methodism's outrage over the miserable lives of the millions of workers in factories, mines, mills, tenements and company towns. It was adopted by The Methodist Episcopal Church, the first denomination in Christendom to adopt an official Social Creed.

Influenced by the Social Gospel movement and the Progressive politics of early 20th-century America, the church wrote and adopted the creed in 1908. It has been altered through the years, and still appears in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, following the Social Principles section.

The churches begin to heal some of the early schisms. Two factions unite as The Evangelical Church in 1922. There is growing theological ferment between liberal Protestant theology, fundamentalists and a conservative group termed neoorthodox. Nevertheless, Methodists work together in mission.

Methodist missionaries reach Albania, Belgium, Borneo, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Java, Latvia, Lithuania, Manchuria, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Serbia and Sumatra. The Primitive Evangelical Methodist Church of Guatemala forms. Bishop Hartzell launches missions in Algeria and Tunisia.

1926–50

The push toward reunification continues as The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Protestant Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South begin working to forge a plan of union.

A proposal includes dividing a united church into six administrative units, called jurisdictions. Five are geographical. One, the Central Jurisdictional, is racial, including African-American churches and annual conferences wherever they were located in the United States. Though troubling to many, the proposal is accepted. The three churches are united in April 1939, becoming The Methodist Church (USA).

Missions extend into Burundi and Rwanda. The North Africa Provisional Conference is established.

1951–75

The Methodist Church continues interest in closer ties with other Methodist and Wesleyan churches. In 1951, it joined in the formation of the World Methodist Council. Other ties were established with the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. These ties allowed for greater cooperation in mission and other ministries.

Churches are increasingly concerned with the issue of racism in the church and nation. Proposals to eliminate the Central Jurisdiction are introduced at General Conferences. Plans to abolish the Central Jurisdiction are agreed upon as part of the proposed union with The Evangelical United Brethren in 1968. Clergy rights for women are also a hot issue. Full clergy rights for women are granted in 1956, but it takes more than a decade for the number of women in seminaries to increase. When Methodists and The Evangelical United Brethren unite in 1968, full clergy status for women is in the plan of union.

The proposal to create The United Methodist Church is approved by the General Conference of 1968. A period of merging and reorganizing structures follows.

Meanwhile, congregations are flourishing in Taiwan and Zambia. The European Methodist Council, the Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Burundi Conference are established.

1976–2000

An increasing number of women are admitted to ordained ministry. Marjorie Matthews becomes the first female bishop. Leontine T. C. Kelly becomes the first female African-American bishop. The first African bishop, Abel T. Muzorewa, becomes prime minister of Zimbabwe.

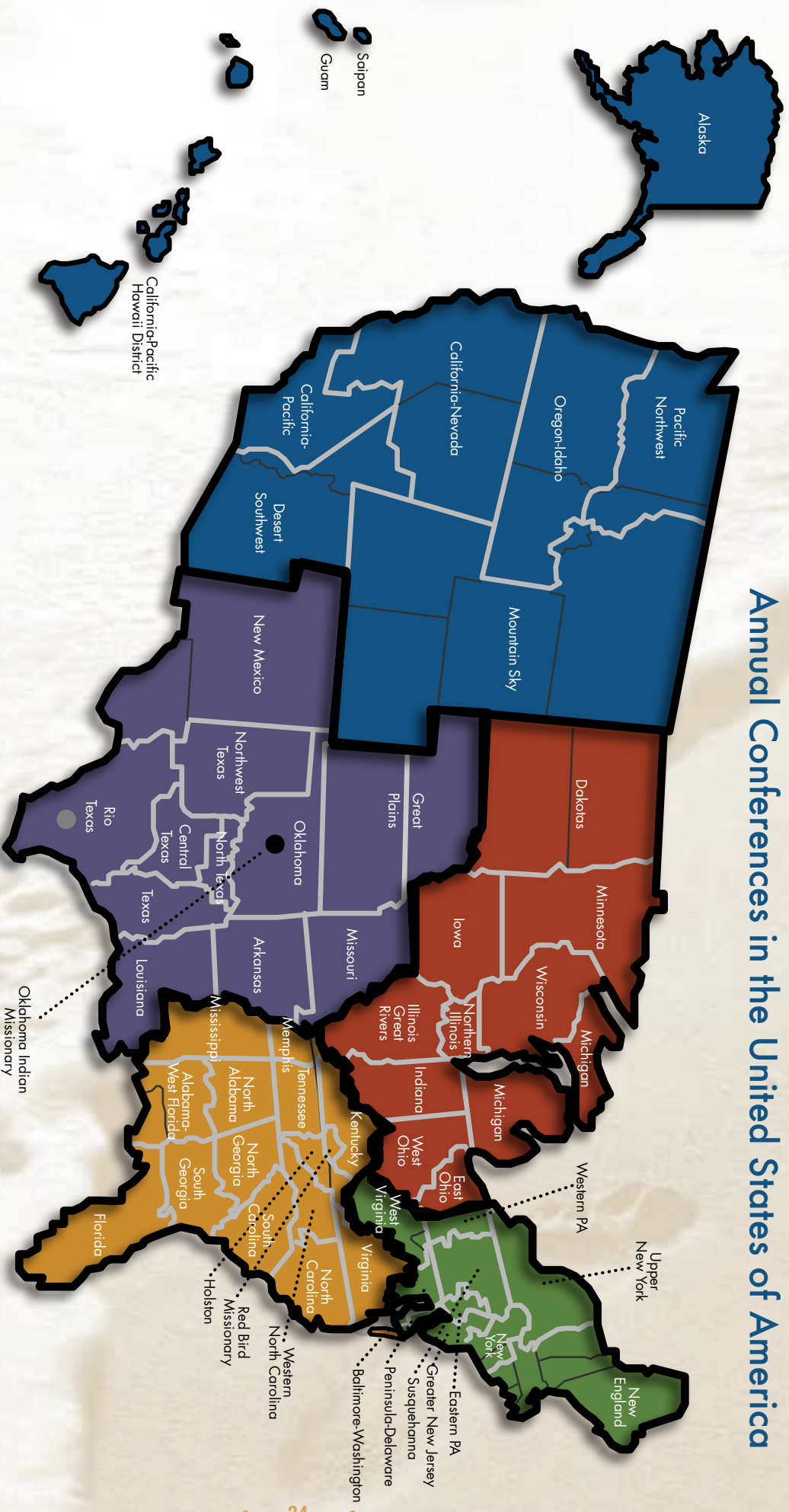
In 1988, Bishop Hartzell's dream becomes reality. General Conference approves establishing Africa University in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. The pan-African university opens in 1992, drawing a diverse body of students from countries throughout the continent.

Churches emerge in Colombia, El Salvador and Vietnam. Bishop Heinrich Bolleter and the United Methodist Committee on Relief aid Kosovo.

2001–Present

The church continues to experience change and has become increasingly aware of itself as a world church with members and conferences in Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States. While membership in Europe and the United States has showed decline, it has grown significantly in Asia and Africa. The church has endeavored to become a community in which all persons, regardless of racial or ethnic background, can participate in every level of its connective life and ministry (*Book of Discipline, 2016* "Historical Statement," p. 22). The Protestant Methodist Church of Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Africa, joins The United Methodist Church. The 2008 General Conference enters into full communion with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. United Methodists respond to earthquakes in Haiti and Japan and to other disasters. In 2012, the General Conference participates in "An Act of Repentance toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples." The church also enters into communion with several historically African-American pan-Methodist denominations, makes the United Methodist Women an autonomous organization and creates a national ministry plan for Pacific Islanders. In 2016, General Conference approved five new bishops for Africa in 2020, Provisional central conferences in Southeast Asia and Mongolia and a Provisional annual conference in Rwanda. For the first time, a member from outside the United States is elected president of the Judicial Council, N. Oswald Tweek Sr., a lay member from Liberia, will hold the office until 2020. Issues regarding human sexuality continue to be divisive in the worldwide Church. General Conference 2016 accepted a Council of Bishops proposal to defer debate on these issues until after a period of study and discussion by a special commission, with a special General Conference on the topic scheduled for 2019.

United Methodist Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences in the United States of America



Jurisdiction Boundaries
Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries

North Central Jurisdiction
Northeastern Jurisdiction
South Central Jurisdiction
Southeastern Jurisdiction
Western Jurisdiction

Some churches are outside the boundary of the Rio Texas Annual Conference.

Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference comprises Native American congregations of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.

Thankful for the blessings!



The United Methodist connection has made — and continues to make — an impact around the world. Members of The United Methodist Church faithfully support the global United Methodist connection when giving to the general church funds.

The donations of each individual church member, when combined with all members of The United Methodist Church, help us bring people to Christ. Thank you!

As United Methodists, we are charged to go make disciples. We do that every day when we encounter people in our personal faith journey. And we do that each time we support a missionary or one of our colleges, universities and seminaries, help eradicate diseases associated with being poor in our world, or support someone's call to ministry through the general church apportioned funds.

United Methodists are exhibiting that giving is part of what we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ. United Methodists are a faithful people of God who continue to walk in unity to be a blessing and to make a difference around the world. Thank you!

Michael McKee

Bishop Michael McKee

President

General Council on Finance and Administration

What Is Connectional Giving?

Connectional Giving is just what the name implies. As a connected church — the word *united* is in our very name — we work together to accomplish what could never be done on our own. People today want to know where their gifts go and how the money is managed. When United Methodists give to the church, we have a structure and process that demands the kind of strict accountability one would expect of gifts meant for God's work in the world. We have a careful process in which United Methodist general funds are apportioned to the conferences and churches. Other special funds come from those participating in Special Sundays, The Advance and other second-mile initiatives.

As a connected church, we work together to accomplish what could never be done on our own.

After the general church budget is approved by General Conference, the responsibility for raising these funds is divided among annual conferences based on a specific formula. Each annual and central conference, using its own formula, divides these requests, along with conference and administrative fund requests, among its local churches.

In the past, central conferences have supported the Episcopal Fund through their giving. In 2016, the General Conference approved central conference apportionments that will be paid toward the General Administration Fund, Episcopal Fund and World Service Fund. In addition, local churches, districts and annual and central conferences may make monetary gifts to the designated funds and support mission and ministry of special significance to them. Together, apportioned funds and designated funds represent our connectional giving. By combining several smaller gifts into a larger amount, we can truly effect transformation around the world. We can do more, much more, in the name of Jesus Christ.

APPORTIONED FUNDS

World Service Fund

The World Service Fund is the financial lifeline for core ministries of The United Methodist Church. The 2016 *Discipline* says that it represents the minimum needs of our general agencies, thus local churches and conferences should regard payment in full as the first benevolent responsibility of the church (Paragraph 812).

The following are just a few of the ministries supported by World Service contributions: building new churches, preparing clergy and lay leaders, increasing the number of young clergy, paying missionary salaries, expanding Bible studies, providing leadership for youth ministry, continuing our proud tradition of cooperation and dialogue with other faith traditions, expressing the church's commitment to God's reign through advocacy for peace and justice, encouraging church growth and discipleship, providing theological education for students in central conferences and helping God's children everywhere.

Africa University Fund

This vital fund supports the first fully accredited United Methodist-related educational institution on the African continent. It draws students from 28 African countries, providing higher education of excellent quality, enriched with Christian values. Africa University enrolls both women and men, developing visionary leaders for Africa and the world. The university is located in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. Programs include agriculture and natural resources, education, health sciences, humanities and social sciences, management and administration and theology. The Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance offers postgraduate diplomas and master's programs. Gifts to the fund support general operating expenses, including faculty and staff salaries and infrastructure. Other donations through World Service Special Gifts support scholarships and the endowment fund.

Black College Fund

This fund helps support 11 historically black colleges and universities in the United States. These institutions have played a unique role in U.S. higher education. Their graduates include teachers and doctors, ministers and bishops, judges, artists, athletes and entrepreneurs who are recognized community leaders. The United Methodist Church is proud to support the largest number of historically black colleges and universities of any church body in the United States.

The Rev. Kevin Kosh Jr., a United Methodist pastor and graduate of historically black Rust College in Mississippi, says that “because of Rust College, I was led to explore God’s call on my life toward ministry, and because of my continued work with the Lina H. McCord Program (a prestigious initiative funded through the Black College Fund), I was supported and encouraged through my seminary journey. To be a part of the continued legacy of education, equality and forward progression reminds me to not only remember where I came from, but to leave society better for those to come.”

The Black College Fund provides support for:

- Bennett College, Greensboro, N.C. (bennett.edu)
- Bethune-Cookman University, Daytona Beach, Fla. (bethune.cookman.edu)
- Claflin University, Orangeburg, S.C. (claflin.edu)
- Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta (cau.edu)
- Dillard University, New Orleans (dillard.edu)
- Huston-Tillotson University, Austin, Texas (htu.edu)
- Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn. (mmc.edu)
- Paine College, Augusta, Ga. (paine.edu)
- Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Ark. (philander.edu)
- Rust College, Holly Springs, Miss. (rustcollege.edu)
- Wiley College, Marshall, Texas (wileyc.edu)

The Episcopal Fund

Our bishops oversee and promote the church’s interests, spiritually and in the world. They are elected and consecrated to a very important role to give oversight to ministry. They speak to the church and from the church, though only General Conference can speak for the church.

We work together. The relationship between bishops and members of The United Methodist Church is a reciprocal one — our bishops serve the church and your contribution to the Episcopal Fund makes their ministry possible.

The General Administration Fund

This fund underwrites and finances general church administrative functions. One example is General Conference, the legislative body of the church. The General Administration Fund is what enables the church to function most effectively. Another example is our church’s highest court, the nine-member Judicial Council, which executes its directive to uphold church law. The history that formed us, and can still guide us today, is also being preserved through this fund.



One of the reasons the General Administration Fund is so important is because of The United Methodist Church's unflagging commitment to integrity. We echo Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the apostle Paul's message to the church in Corinth, "[We don't want anyone suspecting us of taking one penny of this money for ourselves.] We're being as careful in our reputation with the public as in our reputation with God" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21, The Message).

Interdenominational Cooperation Fund

This fund allows us to affirm our unity with other Christian communions all over the world as we witness to a common Christian faith, meet human suffering and advocate for peace and justice all over the world. This also gives us a voice in the activities of several national and worldwide ecumenical organizations, providing our denomination's share of basic budgets of these organizations.

Ministerial Education Fund

Anyone who has benefited from the ministry of a United Methodist pastor has had his or her life impacted by the Ministerial Education Fund. The Ministerial Education Fund is central to preparing people to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The 13 United Methodist seminaries help students discover their calling through a challenging study. In this manner, the fund is a way of helping women and men answer God's call.

In addition to seminaries, the fund supports course of study programs for local pastors and continuing education for active clergy. The Ministerial Education Fund supports our seminaries and helps meet the needs of people in ministry today. It helps enable our seminaries to lead efforts to proclaim God's word to a world in desperate need of the message.

Our 13 United Methodist seminaries in the United States have educated outstanding clergy and lay leaders who have led the church and changed the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Detailed information is available at gbhem.org/education/seminary.

United Methodist Seminaries

- Boston University School of Theology, Boston (bu.edu/sth)
- Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta (candler.emory.edu)
- Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, Calif. (cst.edu)
- Drew Theological School, Madison, N.J. (drew.edu/theological)
- Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C. (divinity.duke.edu)
- Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta (gammon-itc.org)
- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. (garrett.edu)
- Iliff School of Theology, Denver (iliff.edu)
- Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio (mtso.edu)
- Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas (smu.edu/perkins)
- Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Mo. (spst.edu)
- United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (united.edu)
- Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C. (wesleyseminary.edu)

DESIGNATED GIFTS

The Advance

For more than 70 years, **The Advance for Christ and His Church** has been a lifeline for tens of thousands of missions around the world. United Methodists are blessed with this opportunity to build relationships with missionaries and projects to achieve common goals. Program categories range from missionary support, disaster response and relief, global health, construction, water and sanitation and, of course, sharing the word of God!

As the accountable designated giving program of The United Methodist Church, The Advance serves as the leading conduit that allows churches, individuals and organizations to support missionaries and projects throughout the world in order to strengthen and sustain one another. The program ensures that 100 percent of each gift reaches its intended mission or ministry. The Advance works with church leaders around the world to ensure that approved projects are aligned with the goals of The United Methodist Church in local areas and to help develop partnerships that are mutually advantageous.

The General Board of Global Ministries receives and processes Advance gifts, which are disbursed once a month to the treasurer or area financial person in a region. Administrative costs are not deducted from Advance gifts and are covered by the World Service Fund.

World Service Special Gifts

This fund allows for contributions to approved projects of World Service agencies that do not receive funding through The Advance. General Conference of 1984 approved this channel of giving that continues today. Some examples of beneficiaries include the Africa University Endowment Fund, the Methodist Global Education Fund, the National Anti-Gambling Project and the Lay Missionary Planting Network.

All general boards and agencies, except those units authorized to receive gifts through The Advance, can recommend projects specifically related to the agency's Disciplinary functions. The Connectional Table is the authorizing body.

*United Methodists
are blessed with this
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CHURCHWIDE SPECIAL SUNDAYS WITH OFFERINGS

Human Relations Day

This Special Sunday with offering is held during the season of Epiphany on the Sunday before the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The General Conference authorized the day as a time to call upon United Methodists to further the development of improved race relations and to recognize the right of all God's children to realize their potential as human beings in relationship with one another.

The Rev. I Maliik Safir, whose church works with those gripped by addiction in Little Rock, Arkansas, sums up the work of Human Relations Day by recalling Jesus' story of the good Samaritan: "to meet the poor, the disadvantaged and the underserved at the places where others have robbed them and help them to recover from the wounds of social inequality."



UMCOR Sunday

UMCOR Sunday is the new name for the annual Special Sunday to fund the work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief. It was formerly known as “One Great Hour of Sharing.” The change was approved by the 2016 General Conference. UMCOR Sunday will continue to be held on the fourth Sunday in Lent, calling United Methodists to share the goodness of life with those who hurt.

Mary Whittington, a former lay servant leader and retired nurse from Covington, Texas, says, “UMCOR offers all churches, no matter how small, an opportunity to participate in the relief of human suffering.”

UMCOR’s work of alleviating human suffering around the world includes disaster relief and supplies, disaster risk reduction, sustainability and humanitarian development. It operates in the United States in collaboration with relief teams organized by annual conferences. On the international level, UMCOR works through partner organizations and, at times, its own country offices, depending on need. UMCOR currently has five country offices in Sudan, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti.

For 10 years, the Kafura community in Zimbabwe depended on a borehole at Kafura Secondary School as their main clean water source. When the borehole broke down, families and schoolchildren were forced to seek water from unprotected sources for months on end. To make matters worse, the loss of the water source was compounded by pervasive drought. Boreholes were providing less water, and in some cases, running dry.

They got longed-for relief when the United Methodist Committee on Relief partnered with a district government office to repair the borehole and help train local caretakers to maintain it. Students and teachers were overjoyed at the first drops of clean, safe water after four months of hardship endured as a result of the breakdown. (Adapted from a story by Admire Mukorera.)

Native American Ministries Sunday

“We provide a children’s vacation Bible school experience Monday through Thursday in the summer. Receiving Native American Ministries Sunday funding through the Dakotas Conference is very important to the program, which provides a food pantry and clothing closet, VBS, and a cultural event for volunteer-in-mission teams. The cultural event also provides summer jobs for 15 Native Americans. Funding for these ministries is extremely important.” — Mike Flowers, missionary, Spirit Lake Ministry Center, North Dakota

Native American Ministries Sunday is a special offering celebrated the third Sunday of Easter that nurtures mission with Native Americans and provides scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians. It allows our denomination to launch and strengthen Native American ministries, both urban and rural, and to recruit and prepare Native American pastors. Gifts to this fund reach throughout the United States. Many of the 20,000 Native Americans served are part of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, but the ministry itself is far-reaching, from the tip of Florida to the top of Alaska.

Peace with Justice Sunday

The Peace with Justice Sunday offering on the First Sunday after Pentecost benefits peace with justice ministries in the annual conference and through the General Board of Church and Society. Although you, and possibly your congregation, may lack the resources alone to effect change in a broken world, your giving is vital to help The United Methodist Church continue the global ministries of reconciliation.

When you give on Peace with Justice Sunday, your gift makes possible our kingdom work. Here are some examples:

- spearheading a peace ministry uniting Arizona border communities
- equipping United Methodists in Liberia to implement the Social Principles to address social justice issues
- empowering Pennsylvania students to educate their community about sex trafficking at home and abroad

In Jesus' first address to his home synagogue in Nazareth, he made his intentions clear. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NIV). Through the Peace with Justice offering, the good news is proclaimed to and experienced by those longing for God's shalom.

World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday is celebrated the first Sunday of October. It calls United Methodists to join Christians around the world to reach out to all people and model diversity among God's children. It is a day when the diverse body of Christ shares the sacrament while affirming that "there is...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:4-5, NRSV).

The observance focuses on the universal and inclusive nature of the church. Half the proceeds from the offering is used for World Communion Sunday Scholarships, administered by the General Board of Global Ministries. The other half is used for the Ethnic Scholarship Program and Ethnic In-Service Training Program administered by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

United Methodist Student Day

United Methodist Student Day is celebrated the last Sunday in November. This special offering supports scholarships for qualified United Methodist applicants. The purpose of United Methodist Student Day is to call upon the denomination to support United Methodist students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith.

Scholarships are awarded on an academic-year basis. General Board of Higher Education and Ministry scholarships assist students from diverse backgrounds working toward various higher education degrees. Eligible applicants may enroll at any accredited institution across the United States.

*When you give on Peace
with Justice Sunday,
your gift makes possible
our kingdom work.
Through the Peace with
Justice offering, the good
news is proclaimed to
and experienced by those
longing for God's shalom.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Where can I get more information on United Methodism?

A. There are many resources you will find helpful, this handbook being one. Some others include:

- the official denominational website, umc.org, offers information on doctrine and beliefs, history, structure, organization and administrative policies and practices;
- free online courses are offered at UMCtraining.org;
- Cokesbury.com, the retail arm of The United Methodist Publishing House, offers books and curriculum; and
- UMCgiving.org provides generosity resources about apportioned funds, and opportunities to give to The Advance and Special Sundays.

Q. How can I help with disaster relief?

A. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) provides emergency food, shelter and medicine, as well as humanitarian relief to refugees and displaced persons, and works to overcome world hunger and poverty. Contributions can be made in several ways, and 100 percent of your tax-deductible gifts go to the project you designate. Churches and individuals can help by assembling relief supply kits at home, or by volunteering at the material resource depots for processing and deploying UMCOR supply kits and bulk materials. Detailed instructions are available at umcor.org.

You can also support UMCOR Sunday with an offering. Your contribution on UMCOR Sunday ensures UMCOR's response in times of crisis. UMCOR's ability to respond and remain until the job is done is in direct proportion to the generosity of United Methodists at the time of the offering. The UMCOR Sunday offering restores and rebuilds lives in the United States and around the world. Learn more about UMCOR Sunday at umcsgiving.org/umcor.

Q. I am exploring a call to ordained ministry. Where do I go for guidance and resources?

A. Our *Discipline* suggests you go to your pastor, another clergy person or your district superintendent to start. You need to be a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other denominational ministry setting for at least one year to start the formal process, but that does not mean you cannot have informal conversations about your call.

For information on our process, go to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry website, gbhem.org.

Do you have more questions?

Ask The UMC, the information serviced for the church at asktheUMC@umc.org or UMC.org/asktheUMC.



Glossary

Apportionment: The allocated share each annual conference or central conference pays to support international, national and regional (annual and district conference) mission.

Associate member: Clergy who have reached age 40, completed at least four years of full-time service as a local pastor, the five-year course of study or received a master of divinity degree, completed a minimum of 60 semester hours toward the bachelor of arts or equivalent degree, and have been approved by the conference board of ordained ministry and clergy session. Associate members are not ordained, but they are available for full-time service and are assured an appointment within the annual conference. They have voice and vote in every matter except constitutional amendments, ordination and conference relations of clergy (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraphs 321–323).

Baptism: Entrance into the church through God's unmerited grace, open to persons of all ages. In the sacrament of baptism, water is administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is invoked with the laying on of hands. In baptism, the church claims God's presence and the seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 129).

Benevolences: The term used to describe money gifts to carry out United Methodist mission, ministry and program.

Bishop: Those elected from among the elders for the task of superintending to equip the church in its disciple-making ministry. Bishops carry primary responsibility for ordering the life of the church. It is their task to enable the gathered church to worship and to evangelize faithfully (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 401).
Learn more about bishops at unitedmethodistbishops.org.

Book of Discipline, The: *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (often called *The Discipline*) outlines denominational law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures.

Book of Resolutions, The: A collection of pronouncements on issues approved by the General Conference and currently valid. It contains not only the resolutions and policy statements passed by the most recent General Conference, but all such statements still considered to represent the position of The United Methodist Church. The text of any resolution is considered the official position of the denomination on the subject.

Book of Worship, The: A collection of the rituals, sacraments and orders of worship related to The United Methodist Church.

Charge: One or more churches to which an ordained or licensed minister is appointed by the bishop. It is organized under and subject to *The Discipline* and governed by a single charge conference.





Charge Conference: The basic unit of the pastoral charge (one or more churches to whom a pastor is appointed) is the charge conference. It is organized from the church or churches and meets annually, or at other times for specific purposes. Powers include reviewing ministries, endorsing candidates for ministry and setting clergy compensation.

Communion (Holy Communion): Holy Communion, also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, is, along with baptism, one of two sacraments recognized and celebrated by The United Methodist Church. Instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, it repeats the action in which Jesus gave his disciples bread and wine, representing his body and blood (Mark 14:22-24). The sacrament follows the ministry of the reading of Scripture and proclaiming of the word (sermon).

Gathered worshippers, led by an elder or an appointed licensed local pastor, join with others who love Jesus to offer God gifts of bread and wine "in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us." They share these gifts with one another, confident and rejoicing that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon them that they "may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood." The table is open to all who seek to respond to Christ's love and to lead a new life of peace and love. (Quotations are from "A Service of Word and Table I," copyright © 1972 The United Methodist Publishing House; copyright ©1980, 1989, 1992 UMPH. Used by permission.)

Confirmation: The act by which persons who were baptized as infants or young children (or, because of other special circumstances, could not make the baptismal vows themselves) make their first public statement of their declaration or profession of faith. Because confirmation is so closely related to baptism, the order for the service is contained within the Baptismal Covenant I in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Connection, connectional, connectionalism: The principle basic to The United Methodist Church that all leaders and congregations are connected in a network of loyalties and commitments.

Deacon: An ordained clergyperson in full connection with the annual conference who leads the church in relating to the gathered community, particularly in service to the poor, the sick and the oppressed, and equipping laity in ministries of compassion, justice and service. He or she has authority to teach and proclaim God's Word, to lead in worship, to assist elders in administration of the sacraments, to perform marriage ceremonies, where laws of the state permit, and to bury the dead.

District: Regional groupings of churches led by a district superintendent. Often churches in a district will work together to provide training and mission opportunities. The superintendent presides at meetings of the charge conferences, or grants permission for other elders to preside, and oversees programs within the district.

District superintendent: An elder appointed by the bishop, usually for a six-year term, who oversees the ministry of the district's clergy and churches, provides spiritual and pastoral leadership, and works with the bishop and other superintendents, often known as the bishop's cabinet, in the appointment of clergy.

Elder: A clergyperson ordained to a lifetime ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament and Order. He or she is authorized to preach and teach God's word, to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the church for mission and ministry.

General Funds: Funds approved by the General Conference to support various aspects of denominational work. Some are apportioned, while others, such as gifts for churchwide Special Sundays and The Advance, are not. The General Council on Finance and Administration serves as treasurer of general funds.

Itinerancy/itineracy: The system or practice by which bishops appoint pastors to charges. Elders in full connection and associate members are under obligation to serve where appointed. The current form of itinerancy grew from the practice of Methodist pastors traveling widely to churches organized into what became known as circuits. The Methodist circuit riders were well known for spreading the gospel in frontier America.

Laity: A term derived from the Greek word *laos*, meaning "people of God," often used to describe members of a congregation or parish. The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ's outreaching love. Lay members are, by history and calling, active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 127). Laypersons have equal representation with clergy at General Conference and jurisdictional and annual conferences.

The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ's outreaching love.

Local pastor: A licensed pastor, annually approved by the district committee on ordained ministry, and subsequently by the clergy session of the annual conference, who is authorized to perform duties of an ordained minister, including the sacraments, while appointed to a charge under the supervision of a district superintendent. A clergy mentor oversees the local pastor's work in the course of study for ordained ministry and advises on matters of pastoral responsibility.

Missionary conference: A conference that has particular missionary opportunities, limited membership and resources, unique leadership requirements, strategic regional or language considerations and ministerial needs. The General Board of Global Ministries provides administrative guidance and financial assistance (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Paragraph 585). The two missionary conferences in the United States are Oklahoma Indian and Red Bird.

Provisional conference: A conference that, because of its limited membership, does not qualify for annual conference status but has membership and contributions to give evidence of continued progress in both areas.

Sacrament: Something consecrated or holy, a Christian ordinance manifesting an inward, spiritual grace by an outward, visible sign or symbol. The New Testament shows Jesus participating in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, the two sacraments recognized by The United Methodist Church.

Social Principles: A document approved by General Conference and included in *The Discipline* that sets forth the basic position of The United Methodist Church on important social issues. These principles, while not church law, are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, Part V, Preface to the Social Principles).

Stewardship: Devout investment or use of money, time and ability. In biblical times, a steward supervised a household or estate. Today, as God's children, we deem God the source of all we have and seek to hold it in trust for God and desire to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10a, NRSV).

Wesley, Charles (1707–88): British Methodist leader, hymn writer and brother of John Wesley. He is said to have composed more than 5,000 hymns, many of which are found in the present *United Methodist Hymnal*.

Wesley, John (1703–91): British founder of the Methodist movement and brother of Charles Wesley. He was an Oxford-educated clergyman who struggled with assurance of his own salvation, even as he gathered like-minded colleagues in efforts to lead a disciplined Christian life.

He began what became known as the Methodist movement as a revival in the Church of England and remained an Anglican priest throughout his life. An important turning point came in 1738 when he described his heart as "strangely warmed" and finally felt the assurance for which he had longed.

As the revival grew, Wesley left the security of the sanctuary and began to preach outdoors, to reach out to the poor and those who did not feel at home in the established church.

His genius for organization led to the establishment of societies, classes and preaching stations and the use of lay pastors, which he assigned to circuits throughout England.

He invited people to experience God's grace and grow in their knowledge and love of God, placing primary emphasis on Christian living. The movement first became a church in the United States and later in England following Wesley's death.

** The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*

Note: A more comprehensive glossary is available online at umc.org/glossary.

Effective Communications

Effective communication helps you portray your church as an inviting and inspiring place to worship and engage your congregation in mission and outreach. A variety of United Methodist resources to support your congregation is listed below.

How You Can Use This Handbook

This handbook was developed as a resource to strengthen your ministry. Listed below are some of the ways to use the handbook and share the maps. This multipurpose resource can help you tell the story of our amazing connectional church.

- New Member Orientation Classes • Confirmation Classes • Stewardship Classes
 - Leadership Training • Welcome Packets • Church Bulletin Boards
- Sunday School Presentations • Finance Ministry Meetings • Charge Conference Packets
 - Budget Sessions • Mission Meetings

Explain and Inspire

- Understand how and why we give, using tools that explain the connection, apportionments and connectional giving of the United Methodist Church. We have resources and stories that explore from the Special Sundays to the missions and projects of The Advance giving available at umcgoing.org.
- Leaders and pastors will find resources such as sermon starters, children's moments, videos, photos and other materials to help you at umcgoing.org/pastors/resources.

Understand and Interpret

- Churches deal with increasing compliance accountability demands. The General Council on Finance and Administration provides helpful resources on the gcfa.org website.
- Find the *2017–2020 Financial Commitment* booklet, the online process to receive tax exemption, board members secure portal, clergy tax packet, local church charge conference forms, monthly denominational financial reports and other important information at gcfa.org.
- Read about the latest happenings affecting your church's financial life, such as the annual IRS mileage rate and clergy housing allowance rulings at gcfa.org/services/legal-services/gcfa-tax-packet.

Know Why and How

- United Methodist Communications offers numerous services and products to support local church ministry. Visit ResourceUMC.org to learn more.
- The *Official United Methodist Program Calendar* will help you plan your year of ministry. It is available for order at Cokesbury.com.
- Do you have questions about the church? Ask The UMC can help you answer those questions. *Ask The UMC*, the official information service of The United Methodist Church is provided by United Methodist Communications. Connect with Ask The UMC at asktheUMC@umc.org or umc.org/asktheUMC.



Connectional Giving Resources

Visit umcsgiving.org, the main connectional giving website, for information, stories, downloadable worship resources and other materials to promote each of the apportioned funds, The Advance, World Service Special Gifts and the six Special Sundays with offerings.

“Together, We Do More” is what actually happens when United Methodists pool their resources of prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness to do mission and ministry.

Giving Notes e-newsletter

Subscribe to the Giving Notes e-newsletter to receive tips and tools that support your giving and generosity efforts.

Subscribe at umcsgiving.org/givingnotes.

Mission Moments and More

Tasked with doing the offertory prayer? Subscribe to Mission, Moments and More and receive weekly inspiring mission stories and offertory prayers that follow the church calendar.

Subscribe at umcsgiving.org/missionmoments.

Generosity Pastor and Leader's Kit

“Together, We Do More” is what actually happens when United Methodists pool their gifts of money, time and talent to do mission and ministry. “Together, We Do More” also is an online collection of resources from the connectional giving team at United Methodist Communications. Check out umcsgiving.org/generosity-pastor-and-leaders-kit for ideas and information to help encourage generous living within the congregation.

These resources were created to provide a comprehensive/holistic approach that pastors can use to encourage generosity. Generosity resources are available for pastors and leaders to use in worship, small groups and outreach ministry. The downloadable resources have three theme options from which to choose in worship materials, resource guides, social media assets, videos and public relations copy.

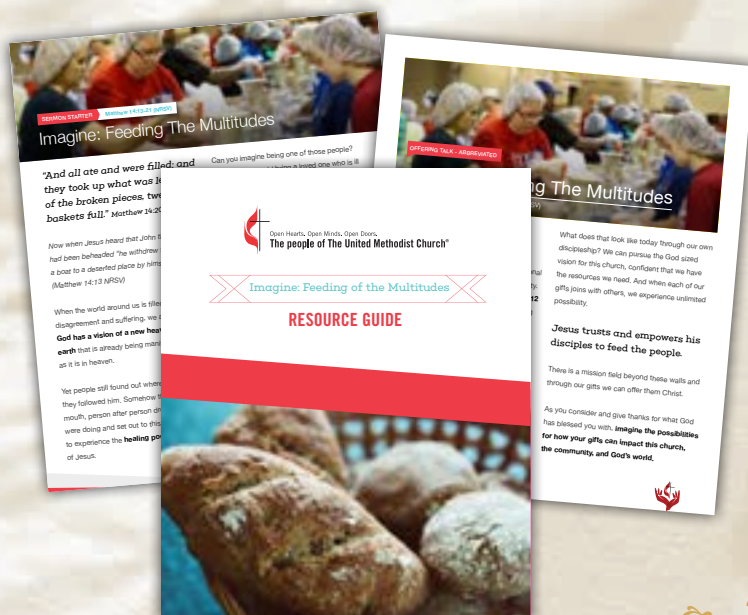
Videos and social media assets explain and offer inspirational messages and include overviews of what it means to give generously. Social posts are available in two sizes.

Worship resources include offering talks and slides, bulletin inserts, sermon starters and giving spotlights. Each highlights the impact and need of a specific fund.

Resource guide offers a how-to with step-by-step instructions about each component piece and how to use it. Includes tips and ideas for engagement.

Public relations copy includes prewritten articles to use in newsletters or online to announce the need for involvement.

Download the generosity kit at umcsgiving.org/resource-articles/generosity-pastor-and-leaders-kit





The United Methodist Member Digest: We Are United Methodist

Whether you are a seasoned member or new to the church, this digest was designed with you in mind. Written in easy-to-understand language, this resource explores what it means to be a member of a United Methodist congregation from a member's perspective. Learn about the beliefs and structure of the church, as well as our common mission to participate in God's work around the world or search through a glossary of United Methodist terms. We are thrilled you are interested in learning why we believe membership matters in a connection that allows us to do more together than apart.

Apportioned Funds Resource Booklet: God loves. God gives. We love. We give.

Apportionments make a big difference beyond our church walls. If you've ever wondered or wanted to share what the United Methodist term "apportionment" really means or have had someone ask you about it, this 16-page *God loves. God gives. We love. We give.* booklet is for you! Within its pages, you will find concepts and testimonials about giving and the ministries that apportioned funds support. This important concept shows how it is central to the church's primary purpose of caring for God's world and sharing God's love with others. Such giving connects church members with missions worldwide and makes it possible for congregations to do ministry in places where they can't physically go.

Order this resource from umcgiving.outreach.com/generosityresources.



The United Methodist Handbook: Therefore Go!

Anyone who wants a good overview of the organization and functions of The United Methodist Church needs a copy of this booklet! Included are an organizational chart of the church, descriptions of church leaders, a map of annual conferences and jurisdictions, descriptions of apportioned funds, church resources, a glossary of United Methodist terms and more! It's particularly helpful for lay leaders and people new to United Methodism.

Order this resource from umcgiving.outreach.com/generosityresources. Additional languages available in downloadable format at umcgiving.org/pastors/resources.





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Discipleship Ministries

umcdiscipleship.org

General Board of Church and Society

umcjustice.org

General Board of Global Ministries

umcmmission.org

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

gbhem.org

General Commission on Archives and History

gcah.org

General Commission on Religion and Race

gcorr.org

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

gcsrw.org

General Commission on United Methodist Men

gcumm.org

General Council on Finance and Administration

gcfa.org

The Connectional Table

umc.org/connectionaltable

The United Methodist Publishing House

umph.org

United Methodist Communications

umcom.org

United Methodist Women

unitedmethodistwomen.org

Wespath Benefits and Investments

wespath.org

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The United Methodist Church
This resource is made possible through the generous support of the people of
The United Methodist Church through gifts to the World Service Fund.

Contact Information:
To order additional resources, visit umcgiving.outreach.com/generosityresources,
email umcgiving@umcom.org, or call 1-888-346-3862.

For more information, visit umcgiving.org, umc.org/asktheUMC
or email asktheUMC@umc.org.

