

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019



Annual Conference – A regional, organizational unit of The United Methodist Church and the yearly business meeting of that unit, both presided over by a bishop. The business session is composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity. At least one layperson from each pastoral charge is a member. There are 56 annual conferences in the United States and 76 outside the U.S. in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The conference is a time to review ministry, adopt policy and resolutions, and strengthen spiritual life.

Apportionment – The proportional share each annual conference or local church contributes to support international, national and regional (annual conference) mission.

Ballot – A process of voting, in writing and typically in secret.

Bishop – An elder (ordained minister) who is elected to the office of bishop. A bishop serves as a general superintendent of the denomination. As such, individually and collectively bishops give general oversight to the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire denomination. It is a responsibility of the bishops to see that the rules, regulations, and responsibilities developed by the General Conference are understood and effectively carried out.

The Book of Discipline – A fundamental book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends The Book of Discipline, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. Often referred to as The Discipline.

The Book of Resolutions – The volume containing the text of all resolutions or pronouncements on issues approved by the General Conference and currently valid. The Book of Resolutions contains not only the resolutions and policy statements passed by the most recent General Conference, but also 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 that subject.

Central Conference – One of seven geographic areas outside the territorial United States, each composed of annual conferences as determined by the General Conference. Central Conferences have responsibilities similar to those of Jurisdictional Conferences. The seven central conferences are in Europe, Africa and the Philippines.

Commission on the Way Forward – The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.

Connectional Covenant – The pledge to financially support in full the general funds of The United Methodist Church, established by the General Conference to underwrite the minimum needs of denominational ministries, which are the first benevolent responsibility of the Church.

Council of Bishops – All active and retired bishops of The United Methodist Church. The council meets twice a year. According to The Book of Discipline 2000, "The Council of Bishops is...the collegial expression of episcopal leadership in the Church and through the Church into the world. The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world, and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships."

Doctrinal Standards – Key statements of historical and doctrinal importance for The United Methodist Church. The doctrinal standards include the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These are accompanied by the General Rules of Our United Societies. All three of these are printed in The Book of Discipline and are protected by the Restrictive Rules.

General Conference – The highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference convenes every quadrennium (four years) to determine the denomination's future direction. It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.

General Conference, Delegates – The voting members of the General Conference. The total number of delegates to a General Conference must consist of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates. Lay delegates are elected by ballot by the lay members of their respective Annual Conferences. Clergy delegates are elected by ballot by the clergy members. These elections are held during sessions of the Annual Conference in the year preceding the General Conference. The number of delegates an Annual Conference is entitled to send to a General Conference is based on two factors: the number of clergy members of the Annual Conference and the number of members of local churches in the Annual Conference. The Constitution of The United Methodist Church states that the membership of General Conference shall be no fewer than 600 and no more than 1,000. Since 1968 the practice has been to have the total number of delegates at or near the upper limit.

Inclusiveness – The term in United Methodism that means that every level of the denomination is to be open to all people in all settings on a fully equal basis. There is to be no distinction made because of racial or ethnic background, national origin, gender, age, handicapping condition, or any other criteria. It is the policy of The United

Methodist Church to be fully inclusive of all persons in their participation in the life and work of the church.

Judicial Council – Nine persons elected by General Conference who rule on questions of constitutionality in church law and practice.

Ordained Member – A person, in the traditional language of United Methodism, "within the ministry of the baptized who is called of God and set aside by the Church for the specialized ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Order." To qualify for ordination an individual must meet the requirements for membership set forth by The United Methodist Church and the Annual Conference and must have completed the necessary educational training. The individual must also receive the recommendation of the Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the affirmative vote of the ministerial members of the conference to receive ordination as a deacon or an elder. Following ordination one has the authority to exercise the responsibilities and duties of an ordained minister.

The Peace – The ancient and traditional practice of Christians greeting one another with a sign or word of love or blessing. This is done with an embrace, a handshake, a handclasp, or the exchange of a word of blessing. This practice has been revived in recent years in United Methodist and other Christian churches.

The Social Principles – A document setting forth the basic position of The United Methodist Church on important social issues. The Social Principles represent the effort of the General Conference to speak to human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation. The affirmation "that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift" is included in The Social Principles. The Social Principles document is reviewed by each General Conference and is printed in full in The Book of Discipline.

Special Session of the General Conference – a special meeting of The United Methodist Church's General Conference, the top lawmaking assembly. General Conference 2019 will be limited to acting on a report by Council of Bishops, based on the proposals from the Commission on the Way Forward. Since The United Methodist Church formed in 1968, it has only held one other General Conference outside of the normal four-year schedule, which was in 1970 and for the purpose to organize the merger of Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren denominations.