

Methodism 101

UMC and Connectionalism

What is Connectionalism?

- Connecting is how the United Methodists live out the gospel
- We are a connected community that confers, decides and holds each responsible for another
- As a congregation we submit ourselves to “what is best for all” instead of “what is best for us”
- When a person joins a local UMC congregation, they join the entire denomination
- In the UMC there are inter-related conferences that tie us together

General
Conference



Jurisdictional
Conference



Annual
Conference



District
Conference



Charge
Conference

Local Church

- Most individuals have their initial contact with the denomination in the local church.
- Some local church members don't realize that they are part of a bigger whole or connection: an annual conference, a jurisdiction, the General Conference, and churches and annual conferences around the world.
- The Book of Discipline outlines rules and organization that local churches must follow.
- It provides the opportunity for a local church to adapt its distinctive ministries and mission to the needs, circumstances, and culture of its congregation and the local community.

District Conference

- Groups of churches in a geographic area are organized to form a district, somewhat similar to the way cities and towns are organized into counties.
- Churches in a district work together to provide training, mission opportunities, support one another and approve and support candidates for ministry.
- Each district is led by a district superintendent (DS), an elder appointed by the bishop, usually for a six-year term. Our Tennessee Valley DS is Rev. Brenda Carroll.
- The DS oversees the ministry of the district's clergy and churches, provides spiritual and pastoral leadership, works with the bishop and others in the appointment of ordained ministers to serve the district's churches, presides at meetings of the charge conference, and oversees programs within the district.



Holston Conference
The United Methodist Church

Total churches in
Tennessee Valley
District: 86

Total charges: 72

Total Part-time
Clergy: 28

Total Full-time
Clergy: 61

Annual Conference

- The annual conference is the “basic unit” of the church.
- The United States has 56 annual conferences, supervised by bishops. There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops.
- In the U.S., the annual conference has a central office and professional staff that coordinate and conduct ministry and the business of the conference.
- Our conference is Holston conference and its office is in Alcoa. Our Bishop is Mary Virginia Taylor. There are 874 churches within the Holston Conference.
- Each year an equal number of clergy members and lay members attend their conference's annual conference session for worship, fellowship, and to conduct the business of the conference and to ordain clergy. The bishop presides over these meetings. Our conference meets at Lake Junaluska, NC.

Jurisdictional Conference

- In the United States The United Methodist Church is divided into five areas known as jurisdictions.
- Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western. They provide program and leadership training events to support the annual conferences. Every four years the jurisdictional conferences meet to elect new bishops and select members of general boards and agencies.
- Annual conferences located outside the United States are organized into central conferences, much like jurisdictions. There are seven central conferences: Africa, Central and Southern Europe, Congo, Germany, Northern Europe, Philippines, and West Africa.

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



 Jurisdiction Boundaries	 North Central Jurisdiction	 Some churches are outside the boundary of the Rio Texas Annual Conference.	 Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference is comprised of Native American congregations of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.
 Conference Boundaries	 Northeastern Jurisdiction		
 State Boundaries	 South Central Jurisdiction		
	 Southeastern Jurisdiction		
	 Western Jurisdiction		

General Conference

- The only body that can set official policy and speak for the denomination
- The General Conference is an international body of no less than 600 and no more than 1,000 delegates that meets every four years. The delegates are elected and represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity and half are clergy.
- During General Conference, delegates discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, annual conferences, and other groups within the denomination. These actions result in a revision of the Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions and policies of the denomination on current social issues. They also decide financial apportionments and set missional goals.
- It is the General Conference where delegates wrestle with today's issues in light of scriptural teachings and the church's understanding of that teaching. Here is where the church's official stands and policies are made.

	United States	Europe, Asia and Africa
Lay Members	6,951,278	5,663,340
Clergy Members	44,080	10,394
Baptized Members	571,507	N/A
Local/Organized Churches	31,867	12,255
Districts	419	451
Annual Conferences	54	79
Bishops/Episcopal Areas	46	20
Jurisdictions	5	N/A
Central Conferences	N/A	7



Social Issues

- *Do all the good you can; By all the means you can; In all the ways you can; In all the places you can; To all the people you can; As long as ever you can. - John Wesley*
- Wesley was clear on the unity of faith and action, “The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.”
- Wesley’s first interest was always evangelism not reform.
- During a time of striking contrast between the wealthy and poor Wesley raised the consciousness of a nation to a host of concerns, and to these concerns he brought relief and often basic reform.

John Walked the Talk

- Early Methodists took strong stands on issues such as slavery, smuggling and humane treatment in prisons
- Second only to his stand against the slave trade was Wesley's crusade against the sale and use of liquor
- His societies were involved in setting up literacy classes and a school for the poor
 - Created a medical clinic and drug dispensary for those in poverty
 - Room and board were provided for destitute widows, orphans and the blind
 - Self-help was encouraged through cottage industries and a credit union

The Social Principles

1. Would The United Methodist Church endorse a church-run bingo night?
2. What does The United Methodist Church say about bullying?
3. Do you have a right to communication technology?

Social Principles

The Social Principles are:

Divided into six parts: The Natural World; The Nurturing Community; The Social Community; The Economic Community; The Political Community; The World Community

- A thoughtful effort on the part of many General Conferences to speak to the pressing human issues in our world today
- They are intended to be instructive, on select subject and urge the UMC to higher righteousness
- They call us to a prayerful, studied examination of our life together and our personal lives in light of the gospel.

Ordination of Women

- The United Brethren Church ordained women by 1889.
- In 1956 Maud Jensen was the first Methodist woman to be granted full clergy rights in what is now the Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

John Wesley



I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.