



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,

Bruce R. Ough

Bishop Bruce R. Ough
President, Council of Bishops

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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:

- **Developing principled Christian leaders:** Build an understanding that everyone has a role in God's work to transform the world and move people to take action.
 - » *Goal for this quadrennium is to engage 3 million-plus people in world-transforming activities.*
- **Creating new places for new people and revitalizing existing congregations:** Seek to invite people to follow Jesus Christ and grow together as disciples on a lifelong journey.
 - » *Goal is to form 1 million new disciples of Jesus Christ.*
- **Engaging in ministry with the poor:** Encourage churches to be in ministry with their communities in ways that are transformative.
 - » *Goal is to transform 400 communities for vital, abundant living.*
- **Improving health globally:** Engage churches in improving health and wholeness for all people, both in the church and in communities around the world.
 - » *Goal is to reach 1 million children with lifesaving interventions.*

We are the body of Christ together. We are more together. **The Four Areas of Focus** align and unite us in the common mission of The United Methodist Church: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. United, we are more.

Developing Principled Christian Leaders

Every disciple means just that. Every United Methodist Christian has gifts and potential to share with the church and the world. The church needs leaders — laity and clergy — to fulfill God's mission for the church and the world. Christian leadership is demonstrated throughout the church, but more can and must be done. We must strengthen **a culture of call** so that every disciple's leadership potential will be realized.

Fostering a culture of call throughout the denomination is a top priority of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for 2016–20. The agency's board and staff consider it their responsibility first to foster a culture of discernment, followed by connecting people with opportunities that allow them to fulfill their individual call.

It begins in the local church, where faith is formed and nurtured in people of all ages — especially the young. This means equipping congregations to speak the language of call and move toward discovering and nurturing vocations. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, in collaboration with general agency partners, has launched "Called: One Word, Many Ways," a collection of resources for communication, education and worship that invites United Methodists to listen for God's voice, discern what has been heard and respond faithfully. As a denomination, we continue to reach out to attract and empower young adults, especially for leadership. A young adult team has been working together through the collaboration among the general agencies.

"This means reaching our young people, wherever they live," says the Rev. Kim Cape, GBHEM top executive. In 2015, 475 young adults ages 18–26 heard, discerned and responded to God's call to ordained ministry as a United Methodist deacon or elder. In 2016, 578 people participated

in NEXT16, a three-day event for young adults to discern their call of lay or clergy leadership and learn ways to connect their God-given call through the work of the church.

Ordained ministry is a lifelong journey. Clergy and their families need ongoing support and encouragement if they are going to be able to sustain energy, joy and skills. Many conferences have developed strategies and structures to help this happen. An example is the Center for Clergy Excellence in the Texas Conference, which offers retreats and resources throughout the year. Two of the Center's programs are "Renew," a retreat opportunity for married clergy couples, and "Refresh," an experience to honor clergypersons every fifth year of ministry and to provide special opportunities for nurture and growth.

*"Stop fixing churches."
— the Rev. Junius B. Dotson*

We are also doing work globally to develop leaders in the central conferences. The 2016 General Conference doubled the budget for Central Conference Theological Education. In 2014, 57 grants totaling more than \$1 million were awarded for theological education in 11 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. In 2015, 73 grants totaling \$1 million were awarded in 22 countries. The projects funded included local pastor training, faculty development, provision of e-readers, curriculum development, development of libraries and more. Fifty percent of the central conferences use online materials produced by GBHEM for continuing education.

We are building future leaders and nurturing existing ones throughout the world. Do Sung did not know about The United Methodist Church before applying to Wesley Theological College in Vietnam. She graduated from the college's bachelor of arts program and subsequently enrolled in the master of divinity program. "The important thing to me was that The United Methodist Church was open to women. It was not a coincidence that I came to Wesley. It was God who chose it for me," she said.

Wesley College was founded in 2002 to provide theological training for United Methodist church planters in Vietnam. Its present mission is to provide Christian leaders with theological education relevant to the Vietnamese context (from "Vietnam: Building Future Leaders, General Board of Global Ministries, 2014).

Creating New Places for New People and Revitalizing Existing Congregations

We are committed to creating and sustaining new places for new people in new faith communities. A **faith community** is a group gathered under the lordship of Jesus Christ to worship, engage and send. Here we receive new disciples through professions of faith and increase professions of faith. Our strategies focus on efforts to create these new communities around the world.

We will reach out with genuine hospitality and make all people feel welcome as we launch new communities and seek to renew existing ones. One example is a new church called Urban Village in Chicago. The Rev. Brittany Isaac, Urban Village's pastor, says, "We live in a city of 3 million people. And it can be really lonely and isolating. And I think the church is successful and powerful when it shows up in people's lives."

Urban Village helps redefine the understanding of church as community. It is not tied to a building. This multigenerational congregation, which has a significant number of millennials, meets in a theater, retirement home and a seminary.



Vitality and Initiative Abound in African Congregations

The Stephen Trowen Nagbe United Methodist Church in Liberia celebrated 50 years of faithful service in March 2017. The Rev. Dr. Matthew A. Jaiah, senior pastor, marked the occasion by urging the congregation to go from the church into any community and undertake a project as a sign of sharing God's blessings.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

“Fifty years are too much for us not to be able to share some of the blessings with others ... the hospitals, the jails, and the ghettos need your intervention to transform the lives of those hooked on drugs and to bring relief to those on sickbeds,” Jaiah declared.

The church also designated the anniversary month to raise \$50,000 to help build a multipurpose building. The pastor encouraged the members to work for God and leave the rest for God to decide, noting that they were celebrating 50 years because of the courage of their forefathers and mothers who upheld it during the challenges of their own time (*The Circuit Rider*, March 20, 2017).

In Zimbabwe, Innercity Harare United Methodist Church is another good example of African congregational vitality. With a membership of 1,500, it continues to grow. In January 2017, the church divided to create a new preaching point with 100 members. In less than three months, the mother church replaced those who left with new members.

Congregations in the United States and Africa are forming partnerships to help the church grow worldwide. Examples include the Virginia Annual Conference, which funds Bopolu Mission Station in northwest Liberia. In March 2016, the church in Liberia dedicated and inaugurated the use of the mission station, which has 3.6 acres of land, school buildings, a clinic and a congregation with more than 180 members. When General Conference 2016 announced the goal of making 1 million new disciples in the next four years, a big part of the responsibility for helping meet this challenge fell to Discipleship Ministries. This agency is responsible for supporting local churches and annual conferences in disciple-making.

The Rev. Junius B. Dotson, top executive of Discipleship Ministries, made a bold statement in introducing the agency's plans to help us reach people for Jesus. “Let's stop fixing churches and start seeing the people Christ called us to reach,” he told the board. “The intent is not to save or to preserve an institution but for the sake of living out one of our scriptural values — it's called the Great Commission,” he said. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is Jesus' commission to his followers to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (NRSV).

Dotson challenges the church and leadership to reframe the conversation from preserving an institution to reaching people for Jesus. This focus leads to three strategic priorities:

- Improve discipleship-making systems in local churches.
- Increase engagement with people outside the church who claim no religious preference and consider church irrelevant.
- Resource new ministry development in central conferences.

Discipleship board member and Zimbabwe Area Bishop Eben K. Nhwatiwa refuses to bow to doubts and pessimism about the future of the denomination. He prays, “Oh God, may you make us see the way of hope is here — making disciples of Jesus Christ through The United Methodist Church.”

Engaging in Ministry with the Poor

As faithful people, we are called to love our neighbors — walking, worshipping and witnessing so all may enjoy God’s vision of abundant life. We are committed to challenge and transform broken systems and structures that create and perpetuate poverty. Working with others within and beyond The United Methodist Church, we can transform communities and open doors for a more promising future, especially for children.

In 2002, the Rev. Owen Ross was appointed to plant a congregation in the rapidly growing Spanish-speaking immigrant community north of Love Field and nearby Bachman Lake in Dallas. The local community was transforming, but not in a positive way. Blighted properties, strip clubs and crime were a daily reality for the new residents, including hundreds of young children. The North Texas Conference church plant was part of a new Urban Strategy to create Christian community in the inner city.

The idea was to follow John Wesley’s model of using an old armaments foundry in London as a base for serving the people of the city. Thus, the congregation’s first name was Bachman Foundry, later changed to Christ’s Foundry, or *La Fundación de Cristo*. The young Rev. Ross faced a big challenge. He was fluent in Spanish, but he knew no one. He had to build relationships in the community and gain trust. Ross held the first Bible studies and worship in his living room. Then, the congregation moved to a storage room above an apartment building laundry. In 2012 many partner churches helped Christ’s Foundry members realize the dream of their own building, debt-free. Ross realized early on that transformational ministry would mean addressing the tough issues members faced individually and as a community. The need for meaningful work with dignity led to the formation of The Foundry Workers Association, a group of independent entrepreneurs who have organized to serve the community through adopting a nearby school library and providing well-paying jobs for area residents.

Over the years The Foundry Workers Association has collected more than 20,000 books to support literacy in a school with the highest number of limited English-proficient students in the Dallas area. Ross has also been a prominent leader and advocate for immigrant rights, speaking out in the community and organizing to carry these concerns to state and national capitals.

In addition to vibrant worship services, both bilingual and in Spanish, Christ’s Foundry ministries include after-school and summer programs for children and youth, feeding programs, adult education classes, Bible studies and counseling services. Ross sums up the larger picture: “In the model of Christ’s holistic ministry and of Wesley’s Foundry in London, Christ’s Foundry in Dallas keeps united the church’s mercy, justice and discipleship ministries for holistic transformations reflective of God’s vision of abundant life.”

Shades of Grace

Another transforming congregation is Shades of Grace in Kingsport, Tennessee. More than half the people who find a church home there have no homes of their own. The pastor, the Rev. Will Shewey, says, “The United Methodist Church says, ‘Open hearts, open minds and open doors,’ and we literally try to honor that in every sense of the word.”

One member says, “They don’t discriminate. They look at you as someone that’s sick, that needs help, not someone that’s a burden to society.” Other Kingsport churches help transport members to resources like the Health Department to replace vital documents, such as birth certificates. Every day of the week volunteers are available to help address whatever issues arise.

The Rev. Owen Ross, back row, left, helps lead a group bringing the message of immigrant rights to Texas’ State Capitol.



Extravagant Hospitality

In an environment where some meet refugees with hostility, or even violence, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, former bishop of the Germany Episcopal Area, describes United Methodist congregations offering “extravagant hospitality.” “Several congregations tell stories of migrants and refugees who attend worship services,” the bishop said. “The small congregation near Heidelberg, where my husband and I live, recently baptized an Iranian couple who came as asylum seekers.”

Improving Health Globally

Every life is a gift from God, filled with promise and potential — yet, every five seconds a child dies from preventable causes. The United Methodist Church has a sacred calling to ensure abundant health for all. We have joined with an international movement called The Global Fund to meet a goal to significantly improve health for all people by 2035, with a specific target of saving the lives of 15 million children by 2020.

As United Methodists, it is our goal to reach 1 million children through education, direct health services to those in need and increased access to medical care. As the denomination pursues this focus on abundant health, congregations around the world are creating new ways to fulfill this promise. “We know that the church is in a unique position. They’re in touch with members of the community on a number of levels. They are in a position to be a change agent,” says Sabrina Rodgers, U.S. health program manager for the Global Health Unit at the General Board of Global Ministries.

Abundant Health: Our Promise to Children will engage people in promoting health in their church and community. Global Ministries’ goal is to unite 10,000 churches in committing to healthy living. This will include implementing local health programs and supporting other efforts around the world that promote wellness, safe births, breastfeeding, good nutrition and prevention of childhood illnesses.

Global Ministries is encouraging creative ideas on the local church level, such as changes in potluck meals, addition of fitness components to children’s activities and offering nutritional education. Fairview United Methodist Church in Danville, Virginia, was one of the first to accept the 10,000 Church Challenge. Nurse Kristen Aron, director of Fairview’s Caring and Health Ministry, says her career motivates her to encourage others. “I see sick patients every day. Some disease processes they have could simply be taken care of by healthy eating, exercise and getting regular checkups,” she said.

Fairview is now offering monthly blood pressure screenings, an annual health fair and emphasis on physical activity during vacation Bible school. The health fair is a community event in conjunction with the annual fall festival and is an outreach beyond the local church.

Imagine No Malaria

We know we can achieve these goals. The denomination is proving this with the highly successful Imagine No Malaria campaign, an achievement celebrated at the 2016 General Conference as the seven-year effort neared the \$70 million mark. The overall goal of Imagine No Malaria is ongoing: to end preventable deaths from malaria in Africa, especially the deaths of children and mothers. “We’ve imagined no malaria; now let us imagine abundant health,” declared Thomas Kemper, general secretary, General Board of Global Ministries.

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 www.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.

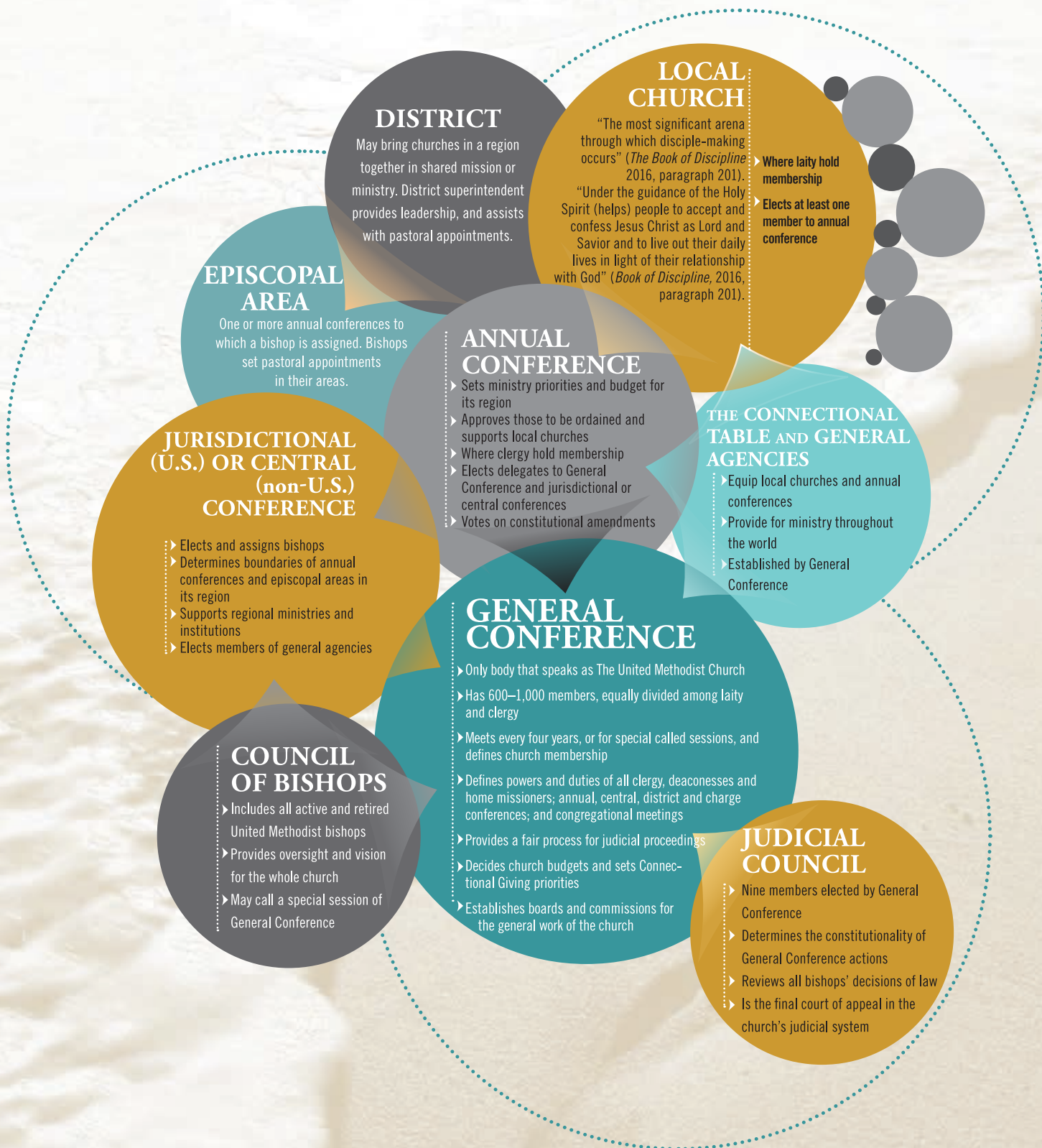
We use “annual conference” to reference both the body and the gathering of the body.

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*



LOCAL CHURCH

“The most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs” (*The Book of Discipline* 2016, paragraph 201).
 “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (helps) people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live out their daily lives in light of their relationship with God” (*Book of Discipline*, 2016, paragraph 201).

- ▶ Where laity hold membership
- ▶ Elects at least one member to annual conference

DISTRICT

May bring churches in a region together in shared mission or ministry. District superintendent provides leadership, and assists with pastoral appointments.

EPISCOPAL AREA

One or more annual conferences to which a bishop is assigned. Bishops set pastoral appointments in their areas.

JURISDICTIONAL (U.S.) OR CENTRAL (non-U.S.) CONFERENCE

- ▶ Elects and assigns bishops
- ▶ Determines boundaries of annual conferences and episcopal areas in its region
- ▶ Supports regional ministries and institutions
- ▶ Elects members of general agencies

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- ▶ Sets ministry priorities and budget for its region
- ▶ Approves those to be ordained and supports local churches
- ▶ Where clergy hold membership
- ▶ Elects delegates to General Conference and jurisdictional or central conferences
- ▶ Votes on constitutional amendments

THE CONNECTIONAL TABLE AND GENERAL AGENCIES

- ▶ Equip local churches and annual conferences
- ▶ Provide for ministry throughout the world
- ▶ Established by General Conference

GENERAL CONFERENCE

- ▶ Only body that speaks as The United Methodist Church
- ▶ Has 600–1,000 members, equally divided among laity and clergy
- ▶ Meets every four years, or for special called sessions, and defines church membership
- ▶ Defines powers and duties of all clergy, deaconesses and home missionaries; annual, central, district and charge conferences; and congregational meetings
- ▶ Provides a fair process for judicial proceedings
- ▶ Decides church budgets and sets Connectional Giving priorities
- ▶ Establishes boards and commissions for the general work of the church

COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

- ▶ Includes all active and retired United Methodist bishops
- ▶ Provides oversight and vision for the whole church
- ▶ May call a special session of General Conference

JUDICIAL COUNCIL

- ▶ Nine members elected by General Conference
- ▶ Determines the constitutionality of General Conference actions
- ▶ Reviews all bishops' decisions of law
- ▶ Is the final court of appeal in the church's judicial system

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

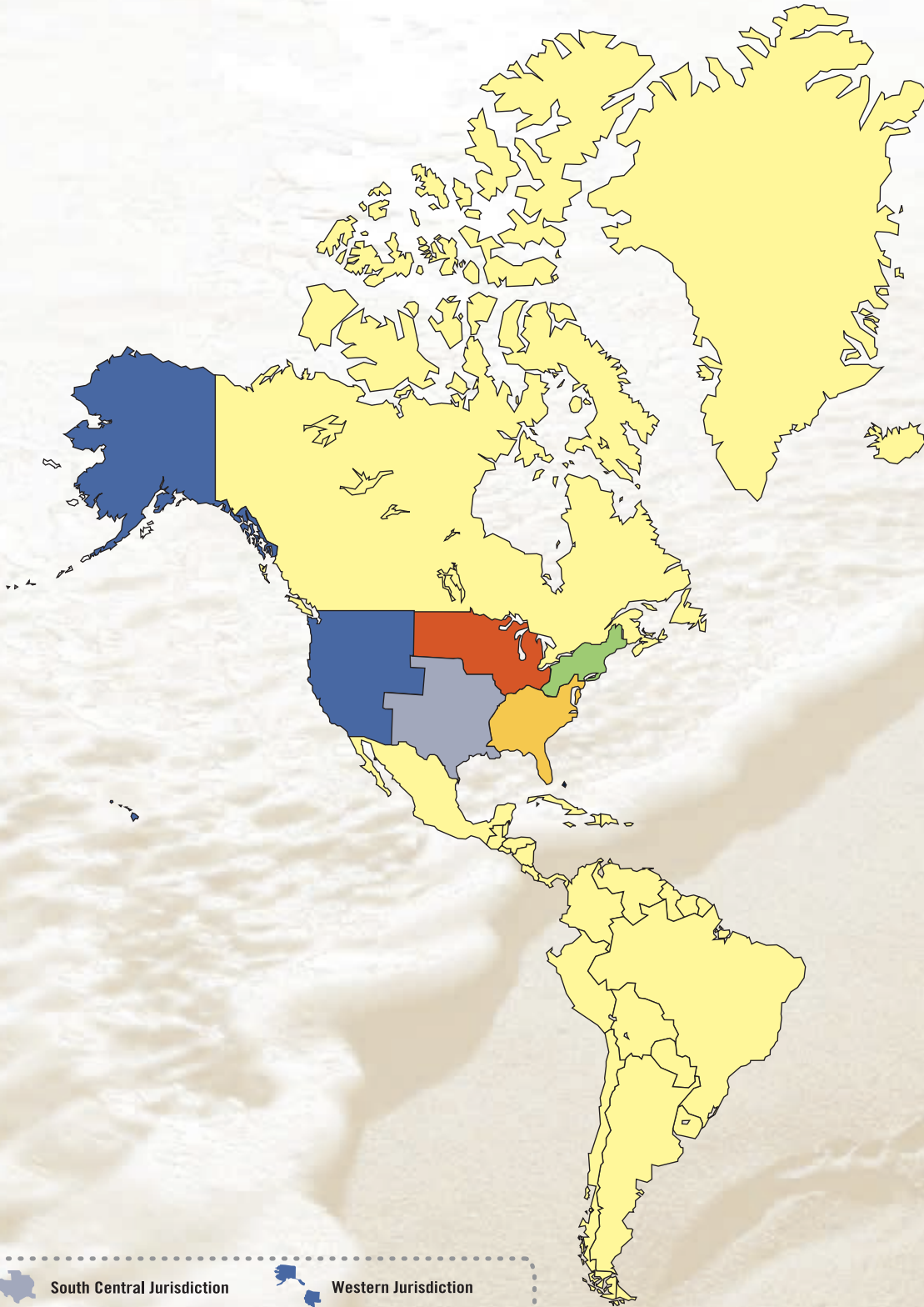
Europe has three central conferences: Central and Southern Europe (one area), Germany (one area), and Northern Europe (two areas). In Central and Southern Europe, bishops are elected for four years as “term bishops.” After four years, the central conference can reelect the bishop for life or elect a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



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

**Annual conferences and episcopal areas as of 2016*

Where the U.S. Local Church Expense Dollars Go

The cost of our Christ-centered global ministry is significant, but it is only a tiny portion of our local church budget. Of every \$1 given in the offering:

85 cents
stays in the local church

6 cents
Benevolent Giving
(Second Mile Giving)

2 cents
goes to general
apportionments

7 cents
goes to jurisdictions,
annual conferences
and districts

Your church's expense figures will vary, depending on your support of annual conference benevolences. Source: General Council on Finance and Administration data, 2015 (most current data available).

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

United Methodist Seminaries

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

DESIGNATED GIFTS

The Advance

For more than 69 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
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to achieve common goals.*

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 <http://training.umcom.org>;
- Cokesbury.com, the retail arm of The United Methodist Publishing House, offers books and curriculum; and
- umcsgiving.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 www.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 www.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, www.gbhem.org.

Do you have more questions?

Ask InfoServ, the information service for the church, at infoserv@umcom.org and www.infoserv.umc.org.



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 www.umc.org/councilofbishops.

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 www.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 we give and find tools to explain the apportionment and other giving — connectional gifts, all of us together through the apportionment; Special Sundays and The Advance, enabling vital, world-changing ministry; and more giving options to give to vital ministries you care about. Resources abound at www.umcsgiving.org.
- Help pastors and other leaders find videos, articles, photos and other materials, including a booklet on A Theology of UM Giving — Apportionments at www.umcsgiving.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 www.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 www.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 www.gcfa.org/happening-now.

Know Why and Know How

- United Methodist Communications offers numerous services and products to support local church ministry. Go to www.umcom.org/services-products to learn more.
- The United Methodist Program Calendar will help you plan your year of ministry. The calendar is available in several different formats and as a mobile app. Visit shop.umc.org/calendars to order your calendar.
- InfoServ, a ministry of United Methodist Communications, is the official information service of The United Methodist Church. We're your connection to the worldwide United Methodist Church. Connect with InfoServ at www.infoserv.umc.org or email infoserv@umcom.org.



Connectional Giving Resources

Visit www.umciving.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 www.umciving.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 www.umciving.org/missionmoments.

Together, We Do More 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 umciving.org/togetherwedomore for ideas and information pastors and other church leaders can use to encourage generous living among their congregations.

These resources were created to provide a comprehensive/holistic approach that pastors can use to encourage generosity. Pastors can use the generosity resources during their worship services or in small group settings.

The social media section features inspirational quotes to help engage congregants in generous living. Downloadable bulletin inserts, mini-posters, podcasts and videos are for use in worship, with small groups and in other settings.

Worship resources include offering talk illustrations and slides and sermon illustrations. These resources will help you share the good news of generosity. There also are ideas and illustrations for children’s sermons.

Download the kit at
www.umciving.org/togetherwedomore.



Connectional Giving Online Course

The Connectional Giving Online Course: “Missional Storytelling: Creating a Culture of Generosity” gives church leaders a holistic and biblical view of generosity. The course empowers participants to become missional storytellers who can inspire others to give generously.



The course comprises three sections:

1. Why We Give: Explore the biblical and theological basis for giving.
2. The United Methodist Connection: Understand more about how The United Methodist Church is a connectional church.
3. Creating a Culture of Generosity: Learn how missional storytelling impacts giving and how to ask others to contribute gifts as well as prayers, time, talents and witness.

Find complete details about the free online course, which can be accessed at any time, at www.umctraining.org. You will have access to the online course for three months starting from the day you register. A course moderator will assist you with questions within the course.

Apportioned Funds Resource Booklet

(God loves. God gives. We love. We give.) #420515



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 booklet at <http://shop.umc.org>, email csc@umcom.org or call 1-888-346-3862.**

The United Methodist Handbook

(Therefore Go!) #429317



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 booklet at <http://shop.umc.org>, email csc@umcom.org or call 1-888-346-3862.



Information in this book was provided in collaboration with the following boards and agencies and utilizing the information on the www.umc.org website.

Discipleship Ministries

www.umcdiscipleship.org

General Board of Church and Society

www.umcjustice.org

General Board of Global Ministries

www.umcmmission.org

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

www.gbhem.org

General Commission on Archives and History

www.gcah.org

General Commission on Religion and Race

www.gcorr.org

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

www.gcsr.org

General Commission on United Methodist Men

www.gcumm.org

General Council on Finance and Administration

www.gcfa.org

The Connectional Table

www.umc.org/connectionaltable

The United Methodist Publishing House

www.umph.org

United Methodist Communications

www.umcom.org

United Methodist Women

www.unitedmethodistwomen.org

Wespath Benefits and Investments

www.wespath.org

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The United Methodist Church
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Contact Information:

To order additional resources, visit shop.umc.org, email csc@umcom.org or call 1-888-346-3862.

For more information, visit www.umcsgiving.org, www.infoserv.umc.org or email infoserv@umcom.org.



Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

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