

A serene landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, reflecting the surrounding environment. The background consists of misty, rolling mountains and a dense forest of evergreen trees. The overall color palette is soft and muted, with shades of light blue, green, and white, creating a peaceful and ethereal atmosphere.

# Methodism 2019

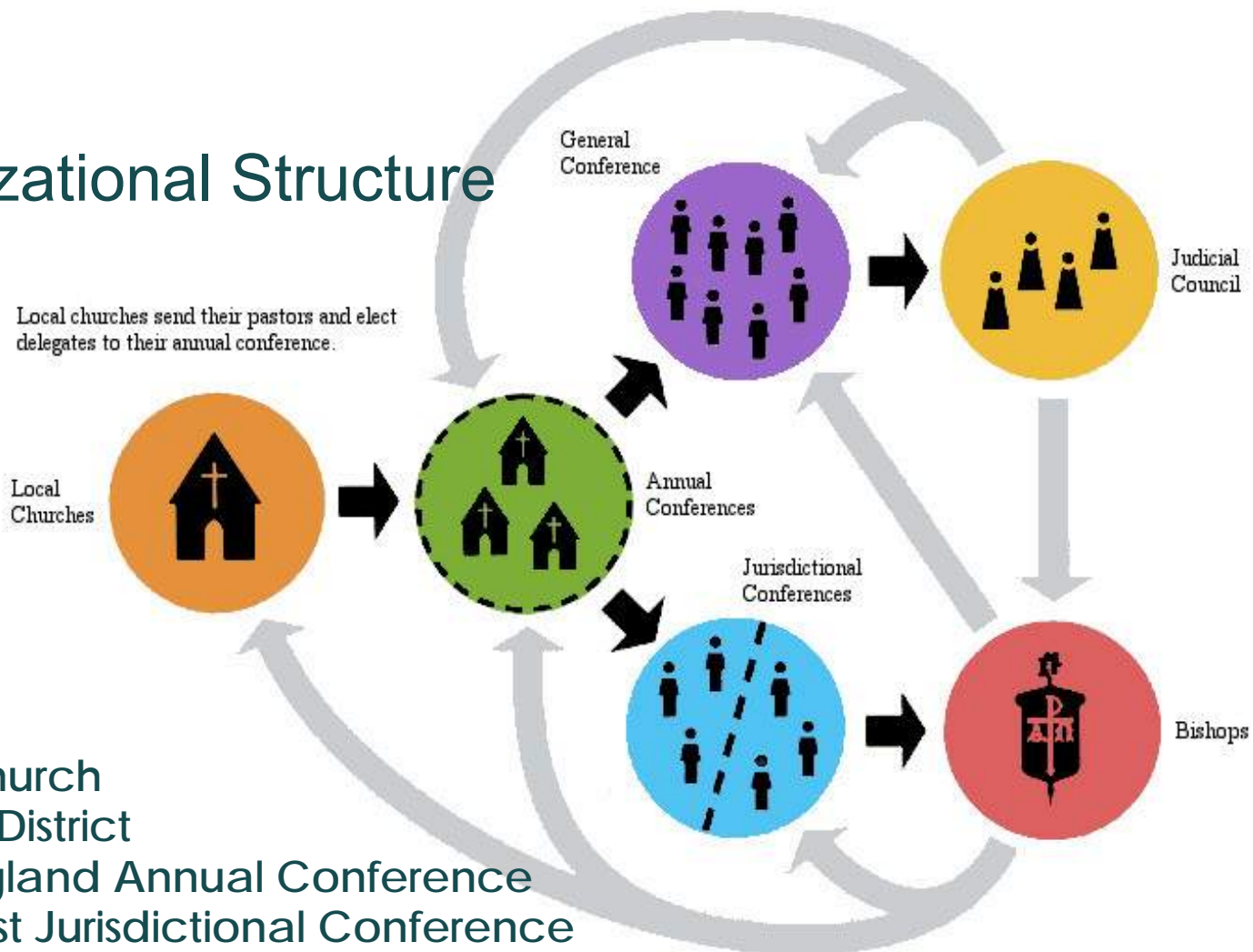
# Structure and Organization



Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA

No, not this kind of structure ...

# Organizational Structure



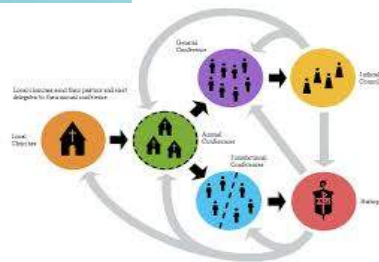
- Local Church
- Tri-State District
- New England Annual Conference
- Northeast Jurisdictional Conference
- Judicial Council
- Council of Bishops
- United Methodist Church
- World Methodist Council

## Local Church



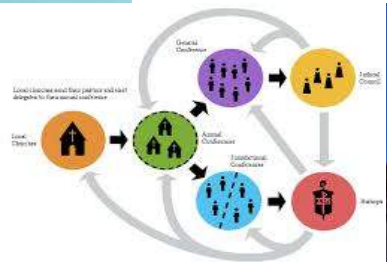
### Weston United Methodist Church

Local churches have a “charge conference” or a “church conference” every year. The various officers and committees present reports of activity during the prior year, vote on a budget for the next year and elect new committee members. We send to delegates, 1 lay member and 1 clergy member to annual conference



## New England Annual Conference in the Northeastern Jurisdiction

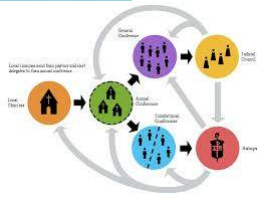




## New England Annual Conference in the Northeastern Jurisdiction

A conference can mean a gathering or meeting OR it can mean an organization, such as this one, the government of the United Methodist Church in New England.

**Annual Conference sessions or meetings:**  
 Each year an equal number of clergy members and lay members elected by their churches attend their conference's annual conference session for worship, fellowship, and to conduct the business of the conference, which may last 3-5 days. These sessions include reports of past and ongoing work; adoption of future goals, programs and budgets; ordination of clergy members as deacons and elders; and election of delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conferences (every 4 years). The bishop presides over these meetings. Bishops cannot vote at Annual Conference.



# New England Conference Center



411 Merrimack St., Methuen, MA



## New England Conference Center

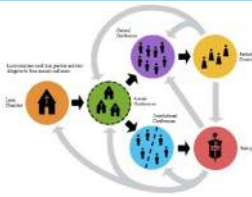
In the U.S., the annual conference has a central office and professional staff that coordinate and conduct ministry and the business of the conference. It has a director of connectional ministries, a treasurer and financial officers, director of Congregational Development, Communications Director, and other staff as deemed appropriate for the annual conference and as required by the Book of Discipline.

Clergy and laypersons may serve on conference boards, commissions and committees, which sometimes meet at the conference office.

The New England Annual Conference recently moved into new space located in Methuen, MA. The space houses the bishop's office along with the conference offices. The first floor is used by other businesses (rented or sold?) and NEAC offices and the Bishop's office are located on the second floor. The building is fully accessible. It is 22,500 square feet on 1.06 acres of property that includes parking. The purchase price was \$1.2 million.







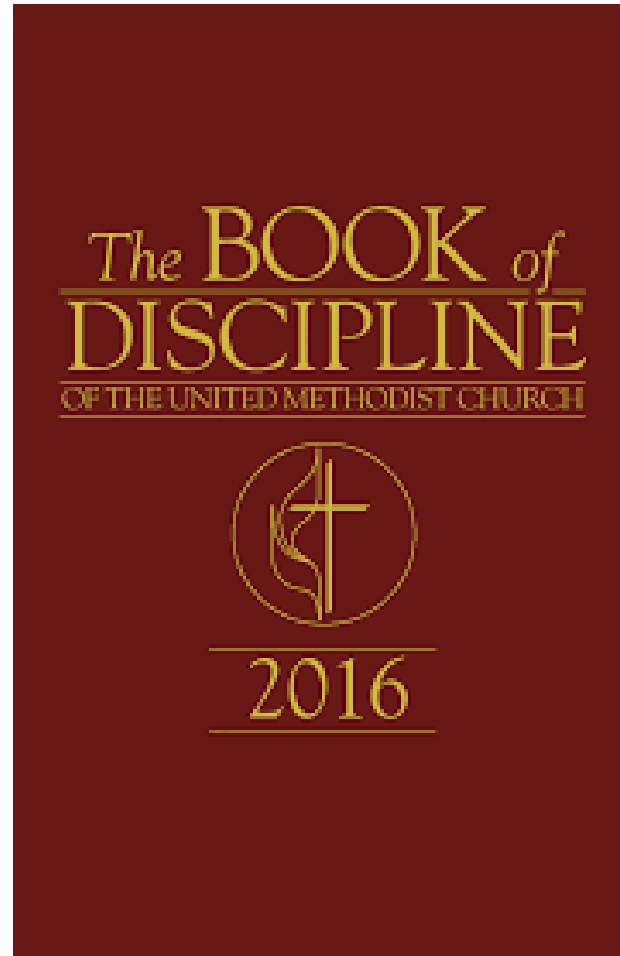
In the United States of America, The United Methodist Church is divided into five areas known as jurisdictions: Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western. These provide some program and leadership training events to support the annual conferences. Every four years the jurisdictional conferences meet to elect new bishops and select members of general boards and agencies.

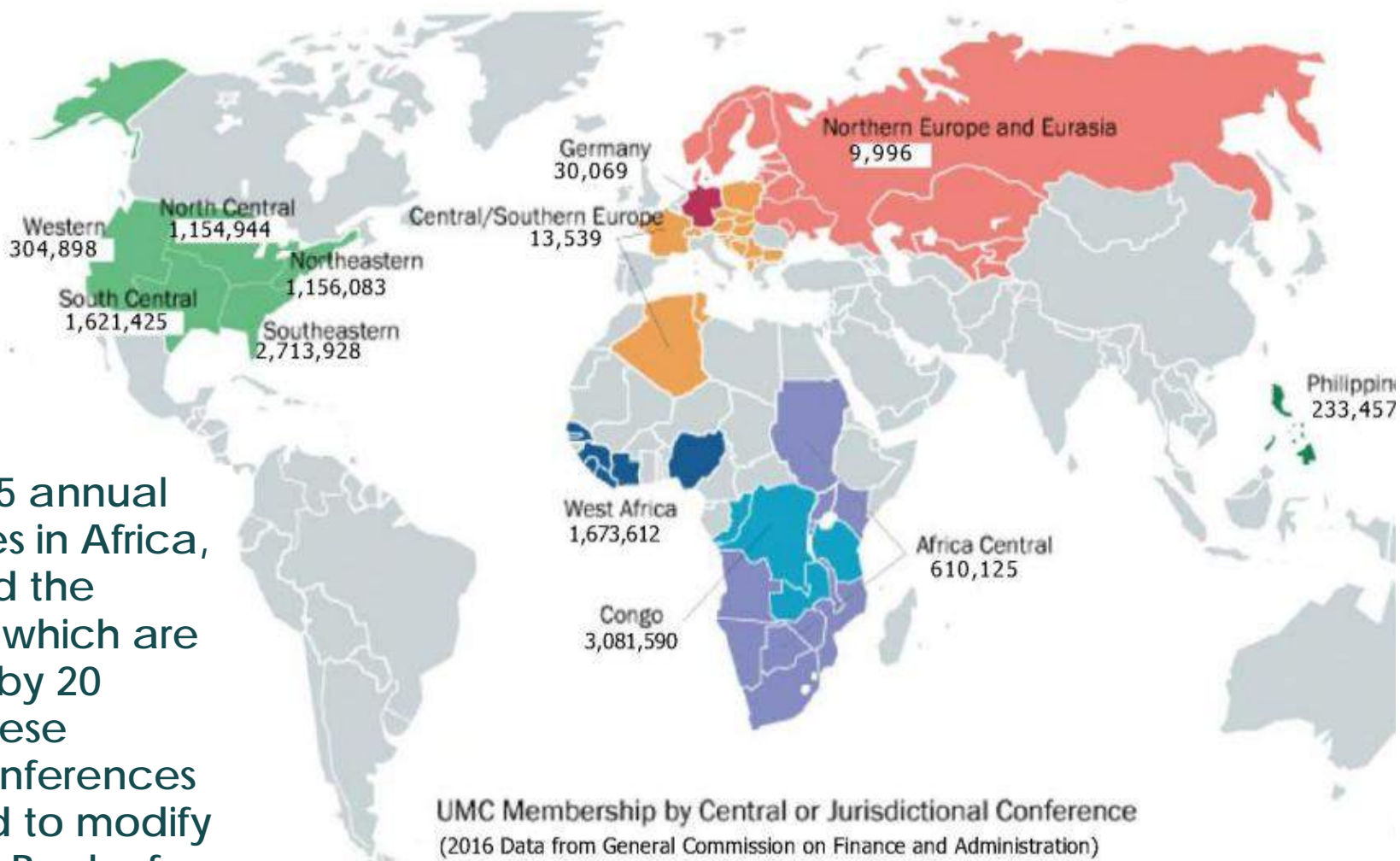
Northeastern – Southeastern - North Central - South Central – Western

There are also three missionary conferences in the United States, including The Red Bird Mission in Kentucky, the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, and the Alaska Missionary Conference, all of which rely upon the denomination as a whole for funding.

The United States has 54 annual conferences, supervised by bishops in 46 episcopal areas (a geographical region presided over by a resident bishop). There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops.

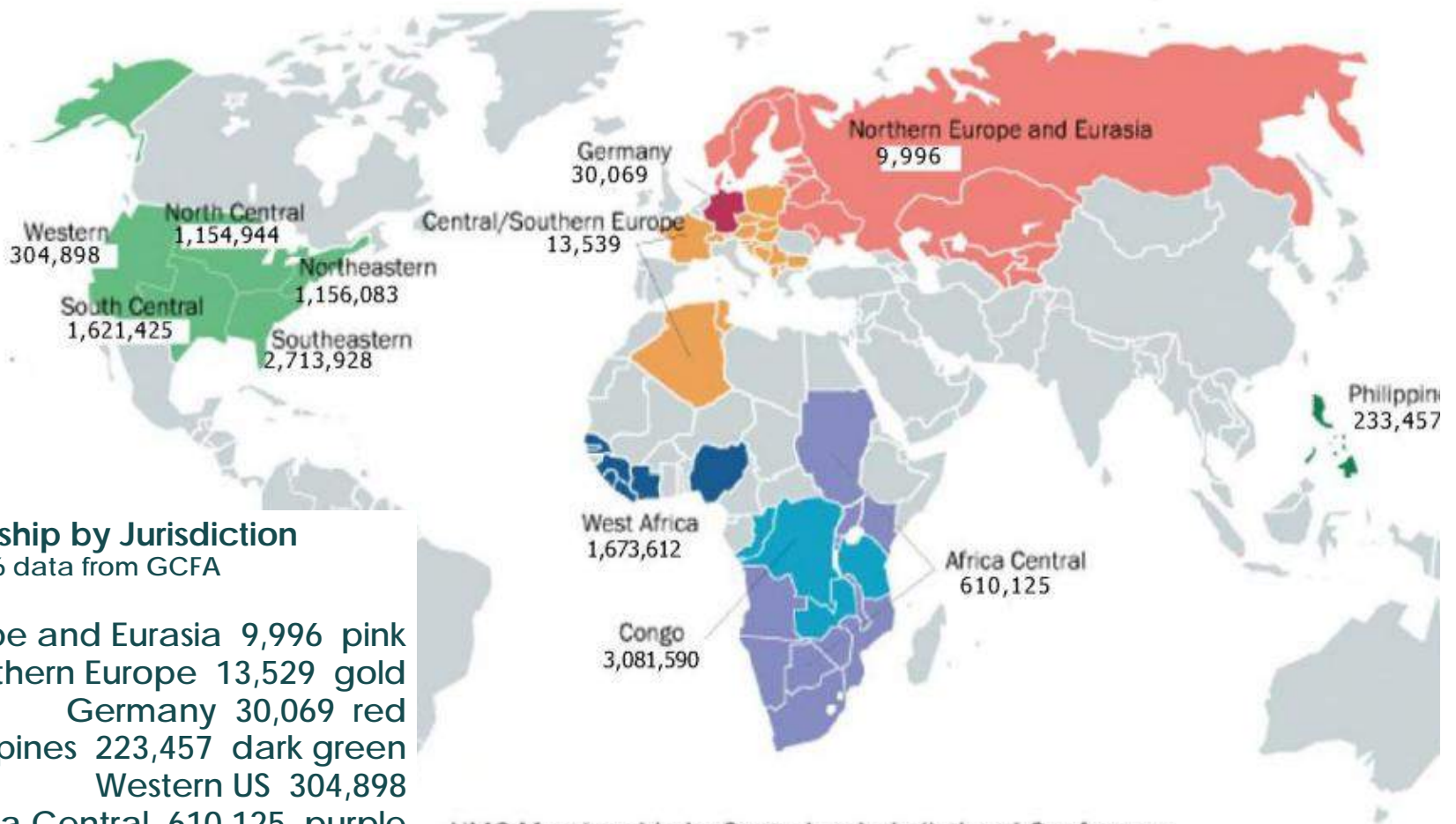
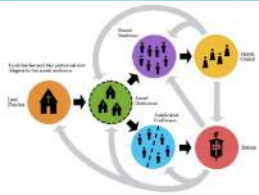
The Book of Discipline is the book of laws that govern the UMC in the U.S.





There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops. These non-U.S. conferences are allowed to modify parts of the Book of Discipline to take into account cultural differences.

"United Methodism at the End of White Christian America"  
- presentation by Darryl W. Stephens at Post-Way-Forward  
Gathering of UM Scholars Aug 7, 2019  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc\\_EkwIpmCk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc_EkwIpmCk)

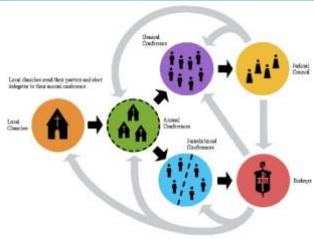


**Membership by Jurisdiction**  
2016 data from GCFA

- Northern Europe and Eurasia 9,996 pink
- Central/Southern Europe 13,529 gold
- Germany 30,069 red
- Philippines 223,457 dark green
- Western US 304,898
- Africa Central 610,125 purple
- North Central US 1,154,944
- Northeastern US 1,156,983
- South Central US 1,621,425
- West Africa 1,673,612 dark blue
- Southeastern US 2,713,928
- Congo 3,081,590 ocean blue

**UMC Membership by Central or Jurisdictional Conference**  
(2016 Data from General Commission on Finance and Administration)

# Europe Central Conferences



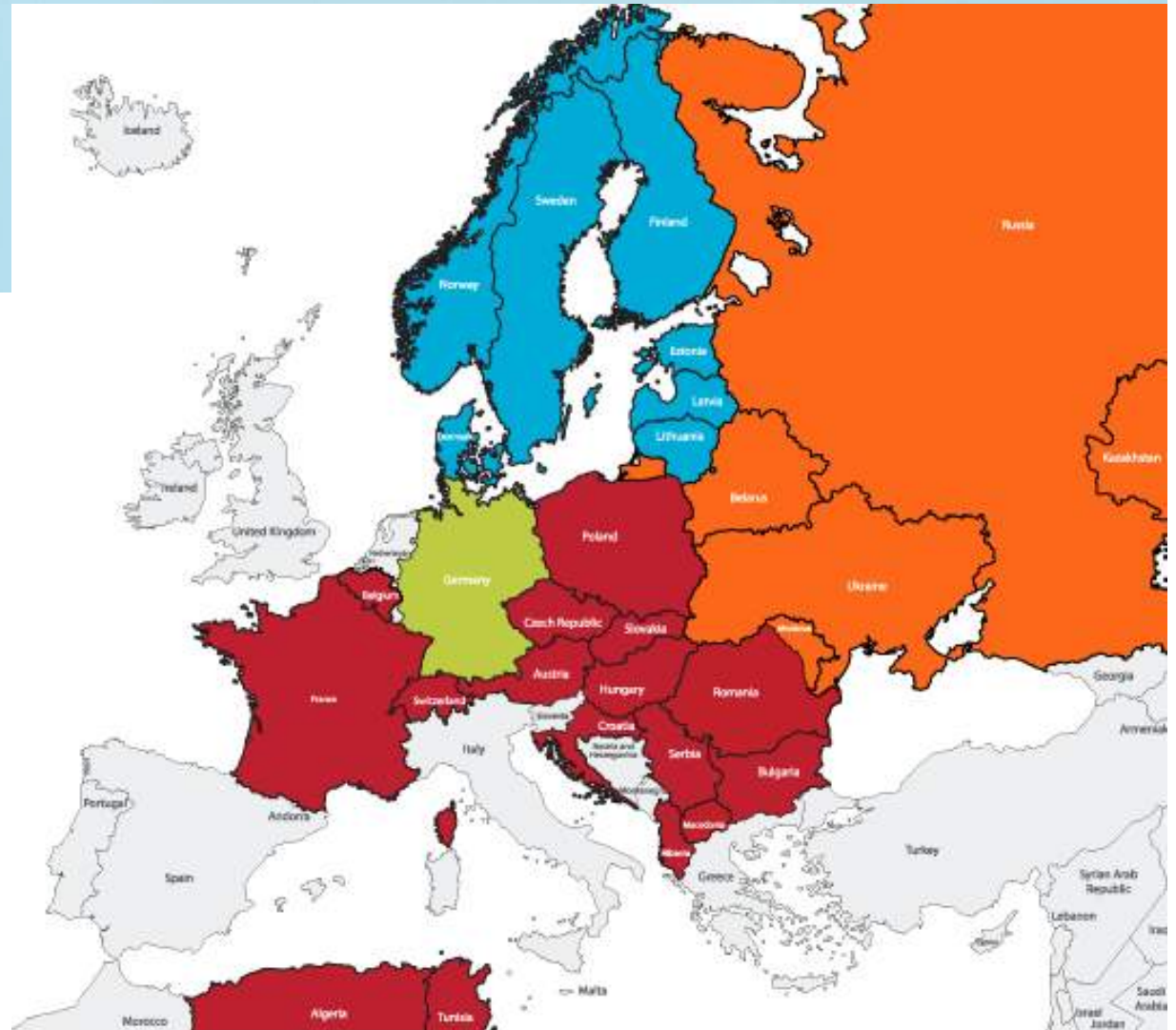
[orange] Northern Europe and Eurasia: Contains 2 episcopal areas, 10 annual conferences, and ministry in 14 countries

[lime] Germany: Contains one episcopal area, 3 annual conferences, and ministry in one country;

[blue] Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area: 5 annual conferences [not called a central conference; looks like it covers 7 countries]

[red] Central and Southern Europe: Contains one episcopal area, 7 annual conferences, and ministry in 15 countries; including Algeria and Tunisia

[www.umc.org/who-we-are/central-conferences](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/central-conferences)



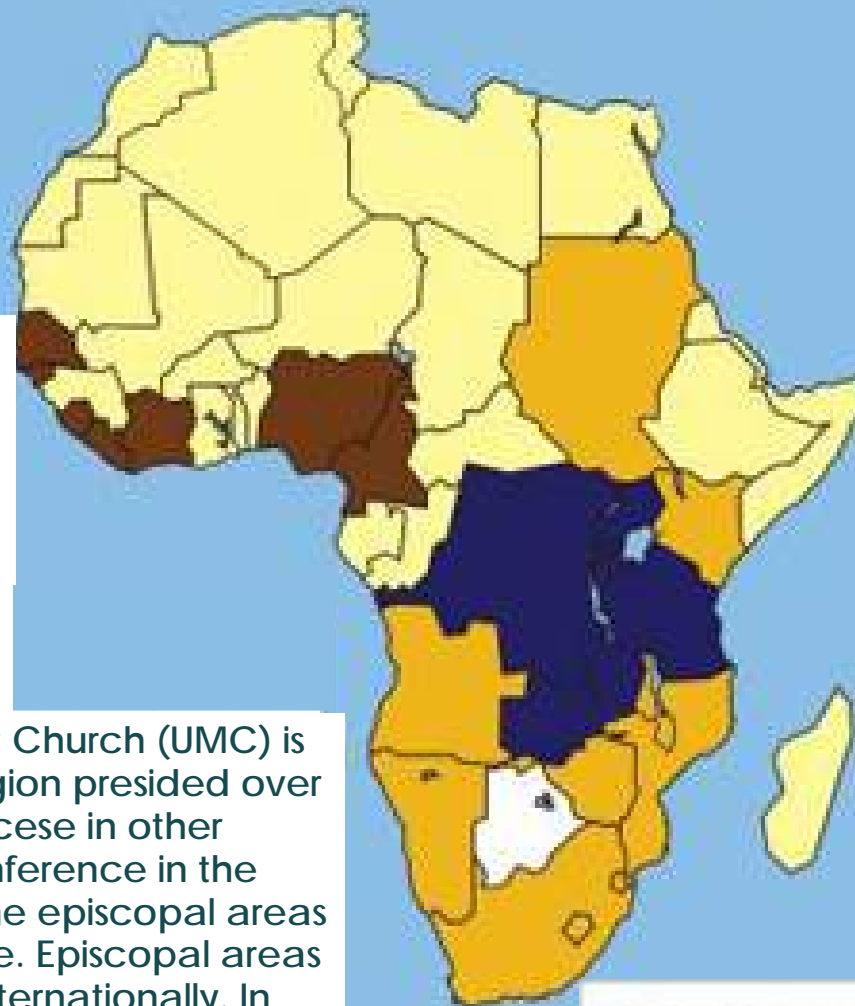
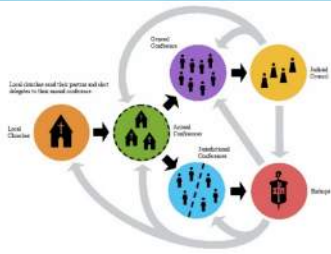
## Central And Southern Europe Central Conference

- Bishop Patrick Streiff – Central and Southern Europe Episcopal Area
- Austria Provisional Annual Conference
- Bulgaria-Romania Provisional Annual Conference

## Northern Europe And Eurasia Central Conference

- Bishop Eduard Khegay - Eurasia Episcopal Area
- Central Russia Annual Conference
- Eastern Russia and Central Asia Provisional Annual Conference

# Africa Central Conferences



**Africa:** 5 episcopal areas, 10 annual conferences and ministry in 11 countries;

**Congo:** 4 episcopal areas, 14 annual conferences, and ministry in 9 countries;

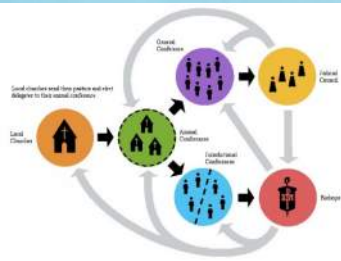
**West Africa:** 4 episcopal areas, 6 annual conferences, and ministry in 6 countries.

An episcopal area in the United Methodist Church (UMC) is a basic unit of this denomination. It is a region presided over by a resident bishop that is similar to a diocese in other Christian denominations. Each annual conference in the UMC is within a single episcopal area; some episcopal areas include more than one annual conference. Episcopal areas are found in the United States as well as internationally. In some cases, such as the Western Jurisdiction of the US as well as some places internationally, an episcopal area covers a very large territory (several US states or countries, respectively). --Wikipedia

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/central-conferences>

- Africa Central Conference
- Congo Central Conference
- West Africa Central Conference

# Philippines Central Conference



3 episcopal areas  
 [orange] Baguio Episcopal Area: 8 annual conferences

[blue] Davao Episcopal Area: 5 annual conferences

[lime] Manila Episcopal Area: 13 annual conferences

The Central Conferences have privileges not available to U.S. Conferences, including the ability to amend the Book of Discipline.

## Central Conferences Philippines

Philippines includes three Episcopal Areas: Baguio, Davao, and Manila

### Philippines Central Conference

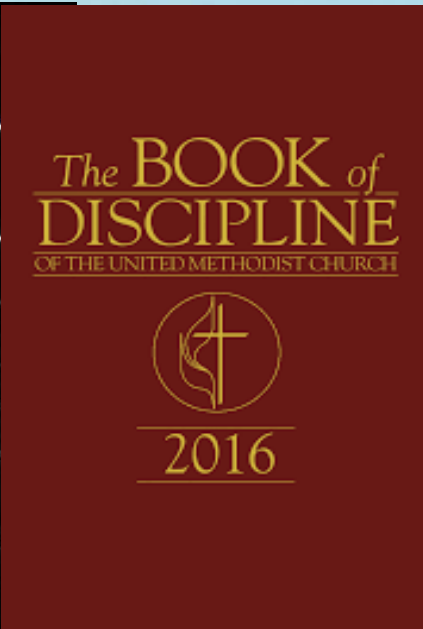
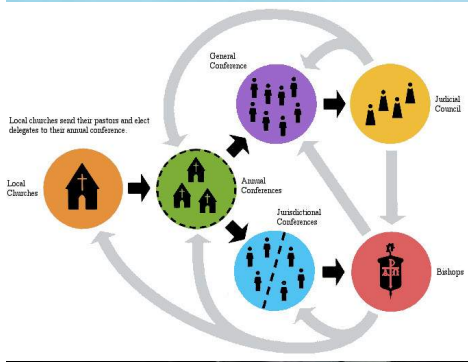
Bishops serve a term of four years, and can be elected as many times as the people so vote until that bishop reaches mandatory retirement age.

- Bishop Peter Torio - Baguio Episcopal Area
  - Central Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - North Central Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northern Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pangasinan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Tarlac Philippines Annual Conference
- Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco - Davao Episcopal Area
  - Bicol Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - East Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Visayas Philippines Annual Conference

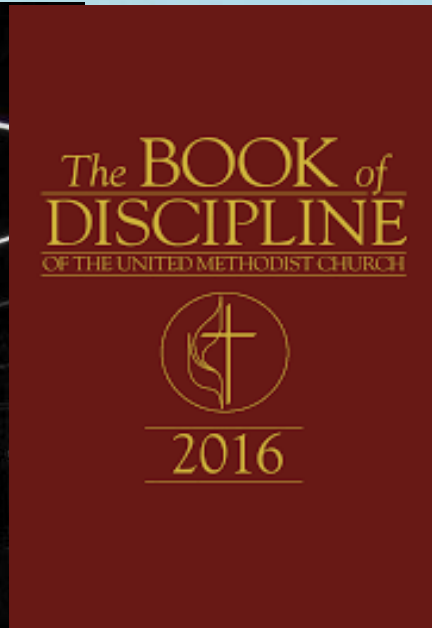
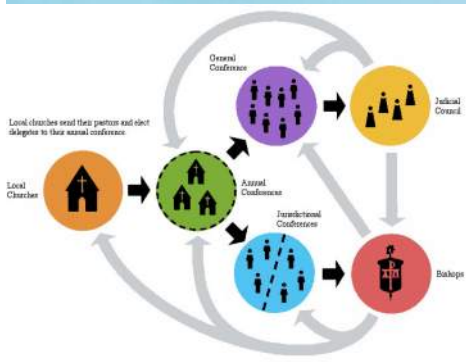
- Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso Juan - Manila Episcopal Area
  - Bulacan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Middle Philippines Annual Conference
  - Palawan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pampango Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference Cavite
  - Palawan Philippines Provisional Annual Conference
  - Quezon City Philippines Annual Conference
  - Rizal Philippines Annual Conference
  - South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southern Tagalog Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - West Middle Philippines Annual Conference







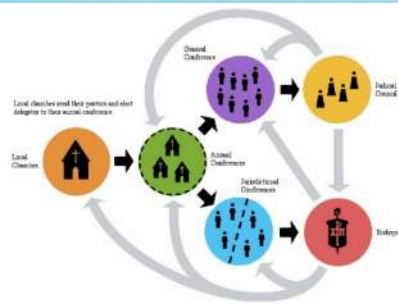
GC2016  
Portland,  
Oregon



All the Methodists we have talked about so far are governed by this book which is published every four years after General Conference (legislative body for the entire UMC).

The General Conference is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates that generally meets every four years. The delegates are elected by annual conferences (at annual conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy. Bishops preside at General Conference but do not vote. (Read about the 2019 Special Session and General Conference 2020.)

GC2016  
Portland,  
Oregon



## Judicial Council



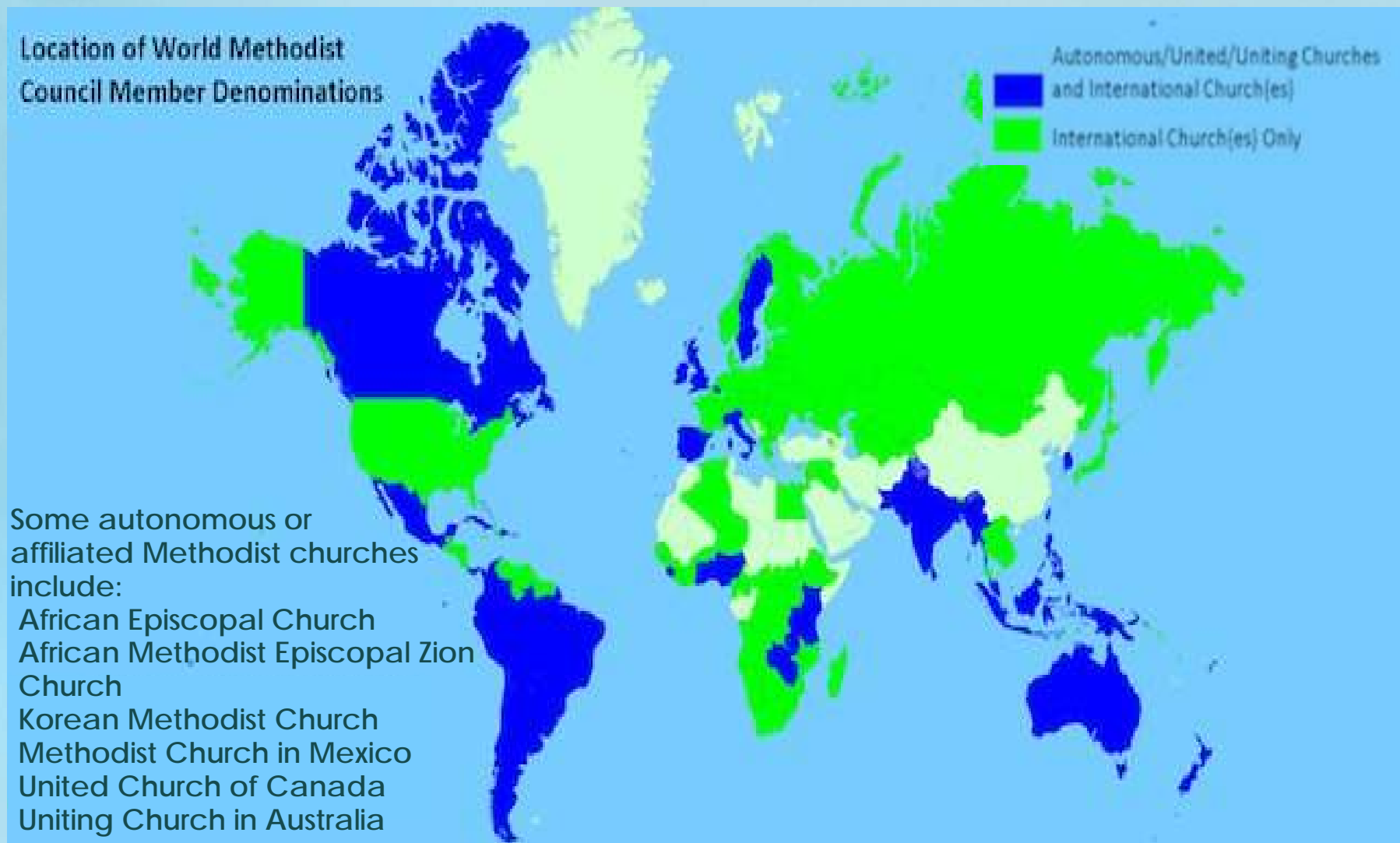
Judicial Council has 9 members, clergy and laity. (See ¶ 2602 of Book of Discipline.)

The Judicial Council considers:

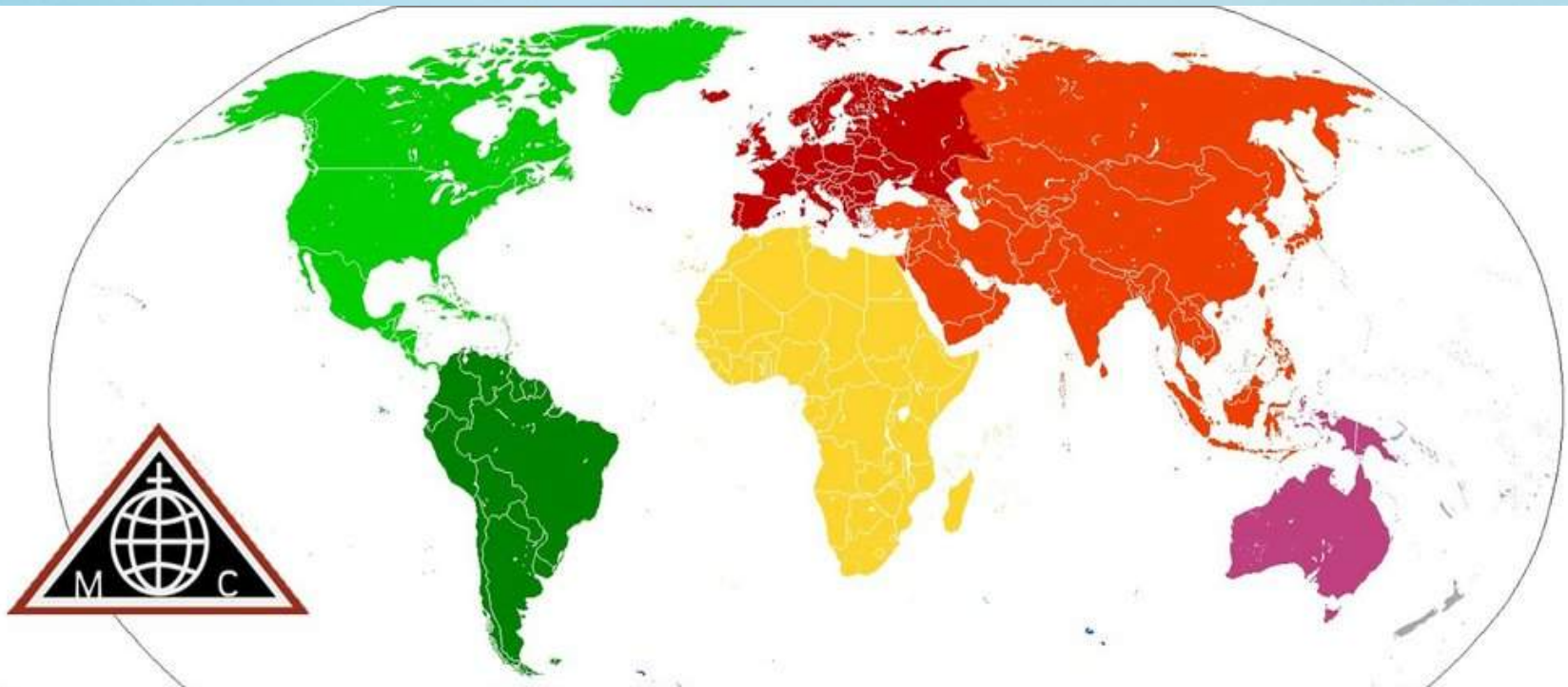
- Petitions from the Council of Bishops
- Petitions from the General Conference and central, jurisdictional and annual conferences
- All decisions of law made by bishops

Appeals of decisions of lower church courts (such as clergy trial courts)

## Location of World Methodist Council Member Denominations



There are Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches, Affiliated United Churches, Covenanting Churches, Concordat Churches



North America & the Caribbean	South America	Africa	Europe	Asia	Oceania
14 denominations 15,490,000 members	16 denominations 660,000 members	20 denominations 17,083,000 members	12 denominations 453,000 members	24 denominations 12,306,000 members	11 denominations 956,000 members

**World Methodist Council**  
Statistics by Region

# Connectional Table

The mission of the Connectional Table is the mission of The United Methodist Church, which is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Connectional Table continues to follow the vision and direction of the Council of Bishops. We believe our mission and vision calls us to remain steadfast in our denominational focus on increasing the number of vital congregations worldwide and strengthening ministries in the Four Areas of Focus.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Connectional Table is to discern and articulate the vision for the church and the stewardship of the mission, ministries, and resources of The United Methodist Church as determined by General Conference and in consultation with the Council of Bishops.

# Connectional Table

The Connectional Table (CT) is mandated by The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church to make allocations to five apportioned funds: World Service, Africa University, Black College Fund, Ministerial Education Fund, and the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund, (cf. BOD ¶806.1B, 806.2 In conversation with the CT, The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) determines, the amount available for allocations, (cf. BOD¶806.1b.1). Once a recommendation is reached the CT and GCFA are to agree on the budget proposal that is sent to the General Conference (cf. BOD¶806.1b.2).

GCFA has made the determination that \$358,579,025 is available for allocation to the five funds for the 2021-2024 quadrennium. After receiving affirmation from the boards of both the Connectional Table (CT) and the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), the CT's recommended funding allocation for the 2021-2024 quadrennium will go to General Conference 2020.

A serene landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground that perfectly reflects the surrounding environment. In the middle ground, a dense forest of evergreen trees lines the shore. The background is dominated by large, rugged mountains partially shrouded in a soft, white mist or fog. The overall color palette is cool and muted, consisting of various shades of blue, teal, and light green, creating a peaceful and atmospheric scene.

# **Homosexuality and the United Methodist Church**

## **A Brief History**



## Changes Regarding Human Sexuality

1972 – “We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider it incompatible with Christian teaching” & “We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex.”

1976 – added 3 statements banning the use of church funds to promote homosexuality

1980 – 1972 and 1976 positions were left intact.

*1972 was when the first hurtful statements were added to the Book of Discipline.*

## Changes Regarding Human Sexuality 2

1984 – Adopted as the standard for ordained clergy, commitment to “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” and “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

1988 – Added “... we affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

1992 – Delegates voted to retain the church’s stand.

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*1988 looked like a step forward, but ...*



## Changes Regarding Human Sexuality 3

1996 – Added a definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual,” and a declaration that ceremonies to celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist clergy or in United Methodist churches.

2000 – added “We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends.”

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*Here’s what came next.*

...

*Imagine having to add this plea in 2000.*

## Changes Regarding Human Sexuality 4

2004 – Delegates agreed to a statement of unity: “As United Methodists, we remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement, and affirm our commitment to work together for the common mission of making disciples throughout the world.” Delegates reaffirmed the denominational position.

2008 – adopted more conservative language, stating that “sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.”

## Changes Regarding Human Sexuality 5

2012 – Two items stating Christians have different opinions about homosexuality were not approved, leaving the current language intact.

2016 - The General Conference deferred all votes on human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special Commission, named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality.

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*In 2012 we couldn't even agree to disagree.*

*Which brings us to 2016 when the last regular General Conference met.*

*. . . So what did the General Conference do? One cynical observer said, "They did what they always do: They didn't decide anything. They formed a committee to study the matter."*



## The Commission on a Way Forward

- The Commission was formed, met, worked and produced a report providing three alternative plans for the Special General Conference which met February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.
- The three plans were: One Church Plan, Traditional Plan, Connectional-Conference plan
- In addition, The UM Queer Clergy Caucus (an unofficial advocacy group) submitted the eight petitions that form its Simple Plan.



The Simple Plan



**February 23-26, 2019**

**The Traditional Plan** received 438 yes votes (53%) and 384 no votes (47%). Those results indicate the diversity of thought United Methodists have on these issues.





**February 23-26, 2019**

**A disaffiliation plan**, sometimes called an “exit plan,” was also passed. This provides guidelines for congregations who wish to leave The United Methodist Church “for reasons of conscience” regarding issues of human sexuality.

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*This exit plan expires on December 31, 2023.*



**February 23-26, 2019**

**The Traditional Plan** received 438 yes votes (53%) and 384 no votes (47%).

The Traditional Plan, the most conservative plan, won by 54 votes.

LGBTQIA people have not been banned by The United Methodist Church. Paragraph 4 of the Book of Discipline has not been changed. It still reads, "The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection."

We acknowledge, however, that many LGBTQIA people, their loved ones and allies were hurt by the speeches, rhetoric and decisions of the General Conference. We pray for healing and forgiveness. LGBTQIA = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual or allied.

**Queer is everybody.**

## What are the problematic provisions of the Traditional Plan?

- Expands the definition of "self-avowed practicing homosexual" to include those "living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual" ¶ 304.3
- Prohibits bishops from consecrating, commissioning or ordaining self-avowed homosexuals. Prohibits conference boards of ordained ministry from approving candidates not meeting ordination standards regarding sexuality. ¶ 415.6
- Mandates penalties for clergy convicted of performing same-sex wedding ceremonies. Those penalties are a one-year suspension without pay for the first offense and termination of conference membership and church credentials for a second offense. ¶ 2711.3



## What are the problematic provisions of the Traditional Plan? 2

- Allows complaint dismissal only if it has no basis in law or fact and mandates information shared with the complainant during the complaint process. ¶ 362.1.e.
- Requires the complainant to be a party in the just resolution process and expands just resolution requirements to include a statement of harms involved and how the resolution addresses them. ¶ 2701.5
- Allows the church to appeal errors of law from trial court findings to the Judicial Council. ¶ 2715.10

# Consequences

**Resistance** -- Several Annual Conferences have announced their intention to not comply and have elected liberal delegates to next year's General Conference



Looking at this chart, it's important to remember this is only the U.S

## New ¶2553 in Book of Discipline: Disaffiliation Requirements

- 2/3 majority of the professing members of the local church present and voting at the church/charge conference, vote to occur after an 8-month discernment process
- Agreement of the Annual Conference board of trustees establishes the terms and conditions, including the effective date, of the agreement between the annual conference and the exiting local church.
  - includes payment of apportionments and fair share of pension liabilities
- The disaffiliation agreement must be ratified by a simple majority of the members of the annual conference present and voting.
- Exiting the denomination to be completed by the end of 2023

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*These changes take effect in the U.S. Jan. 1, 2020. In Central Conferences of Africa, Europe and the Philippines, the legislation will take effect in May 2021, 12 months after the next General Conference in May 2020.*

## Consequences of Disaffiliation

- Freedom from the Book of Discipline
- Possibly join a network of like-minded churches
- Responsibility for finding a pastor
- Obtain IRS Section 501(c)(3) non-profit status
- Provide health care and pension plan
- Create governing documents such as by-laws or constitution
- Maybe own our buildings
- More ...

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*Anticipating that some churches might want to leave the UMC, the Traditional Plan also added rules for disaffiliation.*

*This legislation became effective at the close of the 2019 General Conference, that is on February 26, 2019.*



## After the vote:



- New England Conference Laity Statement: A Response to General Conference 2019 was drafted, circulated and signed by over 1600 lay persons.
- Our Movement Forward Summit in Minneapolis May 17-18
- Conference UMC Next in Leawood, KS, May 20-22
- Linda Brewster, pastor of Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland, ME, hosted a meeting on April 27 of local people interested in making a way forward.

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**NE Laity Statement:** <https://forms.gle/673gR3d3YkHQZoop8>

**Proclamation from Our Movement Forward Summit:**

<https://um-forward.org/proclamation>

**UMC Next, May 20-22, Kansas:**

<https://umcnext.com/>



# 2019 New England Annual Conference

June 12-15, 2019, Manchester, NH

Elected delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences

Adopted Resolution 19-211 which added another step to the General Conference's ¶2553 requirements for the local church disaffiliation process:'

- Before a church may vote to leave the NEAC, there shall be an eight-month discernment period.
- During that period, the local church shall hold four listening sessions, seek input regarding the impact of disaffiliation from various entities in the Conference and develop a statement articulating their theological and missional foundations in seeking disaffiliation.

# More Plans

- Two Bishops (Bard and Jones) Offer Plan for Denomination's Future, July 8
- Connectional Table to send Regional Conference Plan to GC 2020, July 23
- Indianapolis Plan announced August 13



## What Can We Do Now?

Answer: Become an informed member of the Methodist community.

It's pretty clear that the UMC as we knew it no longer exists. At some point local congregations will have to choose which "New Methodism" they want to join.

If we might want to "disaffiliate," we need to act now. The next General Conference in May, could make the rules more difficult for leaving. The folks in Linda's group suggest that local congregations start the discernment process in September to fulfill the 8-month requirement before next May just in case we decide to "disaffiliate." It won't do any harm to go through the discernment process: at the least we'll be informed voters. At most, we will learn more about the church and ourselves.



## Disaffiliation: Pros and Cons

From California-Nevada Annual Conference – July 1, 2019  
Statement opposing disaffiliation and non-payment of  
apportionments

In a response from [um-insight.net](http://um-insight.net) pm July 8<sup>th</sup>, the writer suggests that the matters need to be studied, not dismissed without consideration.

An historical perspective comes from Rev. William B. Lawrence who spoke at a “Scholar’s Conference” at Lovers Lane UMC in Texas on August 7<sup>th</sup>



## About Discernment

To help us with that discernment we engaged "A Guide to Spiritual Discernment" by the late Bishop Rueben Job. A reflection from that resource noted,

*"We have been given responsibility for decision making. It is a large responsibility, and the issues are complex and seldom clearly one way or the other. Even when we have gathered all the facts and looked at and listened to all the evidence, the answer may still be unclear. We bring our best thoughts and all of our previous experiences to the decision-making process, and still we find that prejudice, half-truths, insufficient evidence, and lack of wisdom leave us uncertain about God's way in the matter."*

## About Discernment

## 2

*At times like this we long for the assurance of God's presence with us. We yearn to ask Jesus, who always reflected God's will, what our decision should be, what really is God's will in this matter. We would seek to know how we can discern that our decisions are not our own, not where the popular opinion is, not what is easy or cheap, not even what will please the most persons or defeat someone we don't like.*

*Rather, one might ask, "What is God's will? What does God desire around this concern I have? What decision would I make if I were to block out all other interests and seek to please only God?" Reuben P. Job, A Guide to Spiritual Discernment, pg. 58*

## About Discernment

## 3

We pray that our whole connection will be able to live into the intent of this reflection, because we are all faced with decisions that will impact the life and ministry of our church. As we face these decisions, let us yearn to be like Jesus in all humility and sacrifice and love.

“Let each of [us] look not to [our] own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself.” Philippians 2: 4-7a

Let us ask God to help us to empty ourselves of everything that distracts us from seeing clearly what God would have us to do to further the great mission of our church.

Holy God, let it be.

# Next month – history of the United Methodist Church

## Historical Timeline of the United Methodist Church

