

The United Methodist Church
HANDBOOK
2025–2028

LOVE

SERVE

LEAD



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church®



Introduction

The United Methodist Church is a worldwide family of faith, united by one mission: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We live out this mission through a covenant of connection that binds us together – across communities, cultures, continents. This connection gives us strength, resources, and the ability to accomplish more together than any single congregation could do alone.

This guide is designed to introduce you to who we are as United Methodists, how we are organized, and how we live out our mission. Inside, you will find explanations of our structure, beliefs, ministries, and how our global connection shapes our work. This handbook introduces who we are as United Methodists – our beliefs, our structure, and how we live out our mission. Whether you are new to the church, need a refresher, or are simply curious, it offers a helpful overview of the work and witness of The United Methodist Church.

As we face the challenges of our time, the church is called to a renewed future – one that embraces love, service, and courageous leadership. We strive to:

- **LOVE BOLDLY** – welcoming all people with compassion and grace.
- **SERVE JOYFULLY** – offering care, hope, and partnership to those in need.
- **LEAD COURAGEOUSLY** – working for peace, justice, and reconciliation in the world.

This handbook is your guide to understanding how these commitments take shape in the life of the church. May it inspire you to see the difference our connection makes and encourage you to join in this shared mission.



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The Mission

The United Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and extension ministries of the Church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs.

Our Vision

The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

LOVE BOLDLY

We passionately love God and, like Jesus, embrace and include people of every age, nation, race, gender, and walk of life.

[Matthew 22:37-39 | John 13:34-35]

SERVE JOYFULLY

With the heart of Christ, we journey alongside the most vulnerable among us, offering care and compassion with joy.

[Psalm 100:1 | Nehemiah 8:10 | John 13:14-15 | 1 Peter 4:10]

LEAD COURAGEOUSLY

Following Jesus' example, we seek to resist and dismantle all systems of evil, injustice, and oppression, striving for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

[Joshua 1:9 | Ephesians 6:10]

The Call to Action

This vision is more than words — it is an invitation to embrace joy and hope as we live God's mission. It provides a clear, Christ-centered framework for missional unity and collaboration across our worldwide connection.

The Mission of the denomination is our driving purpose, our why.

The Vision tells us where we are going and how we will continue to live into and accomplish our mission.

In this season, God is calling United Methodists to embody this vision as we

- Grow and form disciples
- Develop Christ-like leaders
- Stand in solidarity with the poor and the vulnerable
- Seek health and wholeness for all people and creation



LEARN MORE
ResourceUMC.org/Vision

Who Are the United Methodist People?

The United Methodist Church is a worldwide connection of over 11 million members throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. We are the person next door, the church on the other side of the country, and the worshipping community across the globe. Together, we share a legacy of living as disciples of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love both in what we say and how we serve our neighbors.



Our Heritage: A Faith Shaped for Life

The United Methodist Church is part of a long Christian tradition shaped by a simple but powerful conviction: **faith is meant to be lived every day, not only believed.**

In the 1700s, John Wesley and others began organizing small groups of Christians who met regularly to pray, study Scripture, care for one another, and serve their neighbors. These groups emphasized growing in love of God and love of neighbor – what Wesley described as holiness of heart and life. Faith was not private or passive; it was active, accountable, and rooted in community.

As this movement spread, it took on a distinct character:

- God's grace is available to all people
- Spiritual growth happens best in community
- Following Jesus involves personal devotion and care for the world

Over time, Methodists joined with other Christians who shared similar commitments to grace, discipleship, and connection. In 1968, these traditions united to form The United Methodist Church – a worldwide denomination grounded in shared mission rather than uniform culture.

Today, our heritage continues to shape who we are. United Methodists organize faith communities, respond to human need, educate leaders, and work for justice – not as isolated congregations, but as a connected church. Our past is not simply a story to remember; it is a foundation that continues to guide how we live, serve, and lead.

Learn more about our full history:

[UMC.org/History](https://www.UMC.org/History) | [UMCHistory.org](https://www.UMCHistory.org)





What Do United Methodists Believe?

The United Methodist Church is founded on a Wesleyan theology of grace, anchored in Scripture, and grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, together with the continuing movement of the Holy Spirit. We understand salvation as an open gift from God, received by individuals through God's grace and accepted in freedom.

As part of our shared Christian and ecumenical heritage, United Methodists use the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed in common with many other Christian traditions. These historic creeds express core affirmations of the Christian faith that unite Christians across denominations.

According to our foundational statement of beliefs in The Book of Discipline, The United Methodist Church shares the following basic affirmations with other Christian communities: God is the one true, holy, and living God – Eternal Spirit – Creator, Sovereign, and Preserver of all things visible and invisible, infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and love.

Learn more: [UMC.org/What-We-Believe](https://umc.org/What-We-Believe)



We Believe there are two Sacraments that were ordained by Christ

BAPTISM

- Baptism is the rite of entrance into the saving work of God and membership in Christ's body, the Church. In it, we die with Christ to our old selves and are raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. By the water and the Holy Spirit, the baptized receive cleansing from sin and new birth into the life of God.
- Baptism is offered to all persons of any age or ability. All who are baptized should be nurtured and led to faithful discipleship to Jesus Christ, and, when they are ready, to profess the faith of the Church for themselves.



HOLY COMMUNION

- The sacrament of Holy Communion is the instituted means of grace by which God sustains the Church in the redeeming love and work of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. In it, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, with our gifts of bread and wine, and seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us and the gifts "that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ, and we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood."
- The table of the Lord is open to all persons who love Christ, earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to be at peace with one another.

We Believe in the Trinity, that there is one God in three persons

- God the Father and Creator, who brings creation into existence, upholds and reveals the ways of life that make 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, convicts, sustains, challenges, guides, and empowers us to participate in God's life and mission in the world.

We Believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is fully human and fully divine

- The eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit
- He lived as a ministering Servant, suffered, and died on the cross
- He was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, and shall return
- He is the only Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all people will be judged.

We Believe the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation

- The Old and New Testaments reveal God's saving work through the Word of God, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.
- The Bible is received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice
- Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation

United Methodist Beliefs: What Sets Us Apart?

While United Methodists share core beliefs with other Christians, our tradition is shaped by a distinctive Wesleyan understanding of grace, a commitment to personal and social holiness, and a connectional approach to faith that unites worship, discipleship, and mission around the world.

Although Wesley shared with many other Christians a belief in grace, justification, assurance, and sanctification, he combined them in a distinctive way to guide living the full Christian life.

Creation's Goodness

We affirm that God's grace is present in all creation, despite suffering, violence, and evil. Creation's goodness finds fulfillment in human beings called into covenant partnership with God, endowed with dignity, freedom, and responsibility for our lives and the world.

Imago Dei

In God's self-revelation, Jesus Christ, we see the splendor of our true humanity. Even sin – with its destructive consequences – cannot alter God's intention for holiness and joy, nor remove our accountability for living faithfully. Despite our brokenness, God's grace restores the divine image within us.

Faith and Good Works

Faith is the essential response to God's grace, yet it naturally produces good works. Wesley taught that repentance should be accompanied by "fruits meet for repentance" – works of piety and mercy. Faith and good works belong together within a theology of grace, flowing from God's love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

Mission and Service

God's saving work in us and through us is never for us individually alone. It always propels us into mission and service to share God's love with every neighbor. The General Rules of the Wesleyan tradition, [Do no harm, Do Good and Attend Upon the Ordinances of God] express this connection, making theology a servant of piety, and piety the ground for social conscience and action.

God's Grace

Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, loving action of God in human existence through the Holy Spirit. While God's grace is undivided, it comes to us as prevenient grace (preceding salvation), justifying grace (forgiving and restoring), and sanctifying grace (bringing growth in holiness).

■ Prevenient Grace

God's prevenient grace surrounds all humanity and comes before any conscious response. It prompts our first desire to please God, our first understanding of God's will, and our first awareness of sin. This grace awakens a longing for deliverance and moves us toward repentance and faith.

■ Justification and Assurance

Through justifying grace, God forgives the repentant and restores us to favor. This decisive change in the heart – sometimes sudden, sometimes gradual – marks conversion, a new beginning in an ongoing process. God's justifying grace gives us assurance of salvation as the Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

■ Sanctification and Perfection

God's work is not limited to forgiving our sins or restoring our relationship with God and all creation; it also seeks to free us from the power of sin itself. The justifying grace that begins in us through the new birth continues as sanctifying grace, shaping us to become holy as God is holy – made perfect in love for God and for every neighbor. As we grow in this sanctifying work and allow God's grace to keep forming our lives, we find ourselves increasingly "habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor."

Nurture and Mission of the Church

Christian faith is nurtured in fellowship. Wesley said there is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. United Methodists respond to God's Spirit in community, nurturing personal growth and equipping for mission. Connectional ties bind us together in faith and service, enabling our global witness and deepening our commitment to peace and justice.

How Are We Connected?

The United Methodist Church has evolved from what had been a tightly bound network of Methodist societies focused intently on forming accountable disciples of Jesus who were actively growing in faithfulness and “watching over one another in love.” It has grown into highly connected worldwide denomination that includes congregations, small groups for accountable discipleship, and networks of educational, health care, missionary, advocacy, and international aid organizations that express the same passion to “reform the church and spread scriptural holiness” across all the lands where we are in mission.

Connection has always been at the heart of Methodism. Today it continues to be found most notably in shared funding, the formation and deployment of clergy within annual conferences and beyond, our polity grounded in bringing people together for decisions that affect us all in a region or churchwide (conferencing), and through our shared giving toward the ministries that extend well beyond our local churches (apportionments, Special Sundays and The Advance).

Local churches are also connections themselves — connections to each other within the local body, connected by being part of districts and their annual conference, and a rich source of connections for the communities where they gather. Each United Methodist in each local church is connected to every other United Methodist in every other United Methodist local church worldwide, as well as the wider networks of institutions we have created together and new mission efforts we pioneer, in accomplishing our mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



How Does the Wesleyan Quadrilateral Shape United Methodist Life?

One of the most distinctive tools used in United Methodist theology is the Wesleyan Quadrilateral – a framework for understanding how we grow in faith. The four elements are:

SCRIPTURE – the primary source of Christian faith and truth

TRADITION – the wisdom and practices handed down through generations

REASON – the thoughtful reflection and discernment that help us interpret faith

EXPERIENCE – the personal and communal encounters that make God’s grace real

The concept of the Quadrilateral was developed by United Methodist theologian Albert Outler, who observed that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, emphasized experience alongside the Anglican authorities of Scripture, tradition, and reason. While all four elements inform faith, Scripture remains the foundation, with the others serving as lenses that help us interpret and live out its message.

The Quadrilateral reminds United Methodists that faith is both deeply rooted and personally engaged. It invites each believer to think critically, reflect on experience, and grow in understanding. As a tool of both formation and revelation, it helps us see how God is revealed – primarily through Scripture, yet also through the living tradition, reasoned understanding, and experiences that bear witness to God’s grace transforming our lives.

How Does the Quadrennial Cycle Shape United Methodist Life?

In The United Methodist Church, our organizational and decision-making processes operate on a four-year cycle known as the “quadrennium.” United Methodists understand that our ministries and the needs of our churches and the world are dynamic, always changing. The quadrennial cycle allows for regular reflection, planning, and adaptation to ensure that our efforts remain faithful and effective.

The Role of the General Conference

The General Conference, the highest legislative body in The UMC, meets every four years to set the direction for the denomination by adopting policies, revising the Book of Discipline, and addressing emerging issues. This gathering reflects our commitment to a prayerful approach to governance, ensuring that decisions are made in alignment with our theological principles.

Connectionalism: Shared Responsibility

Our connectional system emphasizes that all United Methodists share in the responsibility of ministry. The quadrennial cycle reinforces this by providing opportunities for the global church to come together, discern God’s will, and renew our collective commitment to mission and ministry. This interconnectedness ensures that our work is not isolated but is part of a larger, unified effort to spread the message of Christ’s love and justice.



How Does The United Methodist Church Serve Communities Worldwide?

The United Methodist Church is a worldwide community dedicated to making a positive impact in people's lives. Our mission extends beyond local congregations, reaching into various aspects of society to provide essential services and support.

Education

The United Methodist Church is connected to nearly 800 educational institutions in 80 countries. In the United States, it supports more than 100 colleges and universities. Around the world, many of these institutions participate in the Methodist International Student Exchange Network, which promotes student exchanges and collaborative programs among Methodist-affiliated universities. These schools provide quality education grounded in Christian values while nurturing leadership and a spirit of service in their students.

Healthcare

Through annual conferences and denomination-wide ministries, United Methodists and our predecessor denominations have launched hospitals, clinics, and health programs in more than 27 countries, bringing essential medical care to communities in need. These ministries provide treatment, education, and preventive care to improve health and address disparities – living out the church's mission of compassion and service worldwide.

Mission and Relief Efforts

Through the Advance program administered by Global Ministries, we support more than 700 mission projects in 111 countries. These projects encompass a wide range of initiatives, including disaster relief, clean water access, education, and support for marginalized populations.

Ecumenical Relationships

Through intentional relationships with other Christian churches, The United Methodist Church affirms its belief in one universal church of all who follow Jesus. Rooted in Wesleyan tradition, these partnerships focus on the shared mission of making disciples. They take different forms, including formal agreements, cooperative arrangements, and **full communion relationships**.

In all of these efforts, The United Methodist Church embodies its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, demonstrating God's love through action and service.

LEARN MORE
about Ecumenical Relationships



What is the Organizational Structure of The United Methodist Church?

The polity of The United Methodist Church is grounded in conferencing, bringing lay and clergy leaders together to discern and make decisions guiding the ministries of the church. This happens in local churches, districts, annual and regional conferences, and the General Conference. Leadership in general agencies is grounded in ongoing conferencing between elected boards and agency staff along with a leadership body called the Connectional Table which brings leaders together to consider the overall trajectory of the work and the needs and opportunities for the Church as a whole. At the General Conference, lay and clergy delegates elected from each annual conference deliberate together over petitions and resolutions contributed by United Methodists worldwide

The Local Church

The local church regularly gathers disciples of Jesus for worship and connects them to opportunities for growth in discipleship, service and mission in the world. It provides spiritual, physical, and emotional support in its community and is connected to a district and an annual conference, keeping it rooted in the broader UMC family. Pastors are appointed by a bishop, in consultation with a District Superintendent. There are approximately 40,000 United Methodist churches worldwide.

District

A district is a sub-region of an annual conference that develops common mission strategy across that area and helps connect resourcing for ministry from the annual conference to the churches and people of that area.

Annual Conference

The annual conference is the basic organizational body of The United Methodist Church. It is where ministry is coordinated, clergy are ordained, and decisions are made about the mission and governance of the church within a specific region. Each annual conference is led by a bishop; in some cases, a single bishop may oversee more than one annual conference. Each annual conference elects an equal number of clergy and lay delegates to represent them at jurisdictional or regional conferences, and at the global General Conference. There are approximately 137 annual conferences worldwide.

Regional Conferences

Regional Conferences have both legislative and elective roles for geographic areas beyond individual annual conferences. Everywhere, they may adapt some parts of the Book of Discipline to serve the needs of their context better. They also receive and process requests for annual conferences within them to become autonomous Methodist denominations. Outside the US, they set the boundaries of annual conferences, elect bishops and assign them to their episcopal areas and elect officers for their region and as board members for general agencies and other churchwide organizations. In the US, these three functions are performed by the jurisdictions. The US Regional Conference has primarily a legislative role.

The United Methodist Church has nine regional conferences:

- Africa: East Africa, Mid Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa
- Asia: Philippines
- Europe: Central and Southern Europe, Germany, and Nordic-Baltic-Ukraine
- The United States

Each of them contains several annual conferences and often several countries.

See [UMC.org/en/content/regional-conferences](https://www.umd.org/en/content/regional-conferences) for more information.

General Conference

The General Conference is the highest legislative body of The United Methodist Church and meets every four years. It is the only body that can speak officially for the entire denomination. Delegates — an equal number of clergy and laypersons — are elected from each annual conference around the world to participate. Together, they set church law, approve budgets, revise The Book of Discipline, and The Book of Resolutions, and guide the global mission and ministry of the church.

How Does Governance Work in The United Methodist Church?

As a global denomination, we have three branches of governance:

Council of Bishops and Bishops

The Council of Bishops brings all United Methodist bishops together to provide collective guidance for the denomination and to help the bishops support one another in their common ministries.

Bishops serve as teachers, shepherds, prophets, and guardians of unity within the entire church and especially within their assigned episcopal areas. They also serve as administrative leaders in boards and other leadership bodies in annual conferences, jurisdictions, regions, and general agencies, as well as affiliated ministries such as hospitals and universities.

General Conference

A body of elected delegates gather every four years to discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, annual conferences, and other groups within the denomination. These actions establish the rules and polity for virtually every aspect of the church's life. Clergy and laity make up the body of this group. Bishops attend and lead sessions, but do not vote.

Judicial Council

The Judicial Council clarifies the meaning and application of church law in cases brought before it by annual conferences, the Council of Bishops, jurisdictions, regions, general agencies, or the General Conference during the session of the General Conference.

The Judicial Council normally convenes twice each year (spring and fall) to consider the cases brought before it. Its members must be professing members of the United Methodist Church and active in their local church or other places of service in the denomination. They may be lay or clergy. They are not paid for their work, but the expenses related to their work (travel, lodging, meals) are covered by the general budget of the denomination.



Regionalization

In 2024, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church approved a plan for worldwide regionalization. This proposal was ratified by annual conferences in 2025. Regionalization allows United Methodists from across the worldwide connection to have more voice and influence in decisions and guidance for the church. By creating a separate regional conference where the United States can address its own issues, as all other regional conferences already do, matters affecting only the United States no longer need to be addressed by the General Conference.

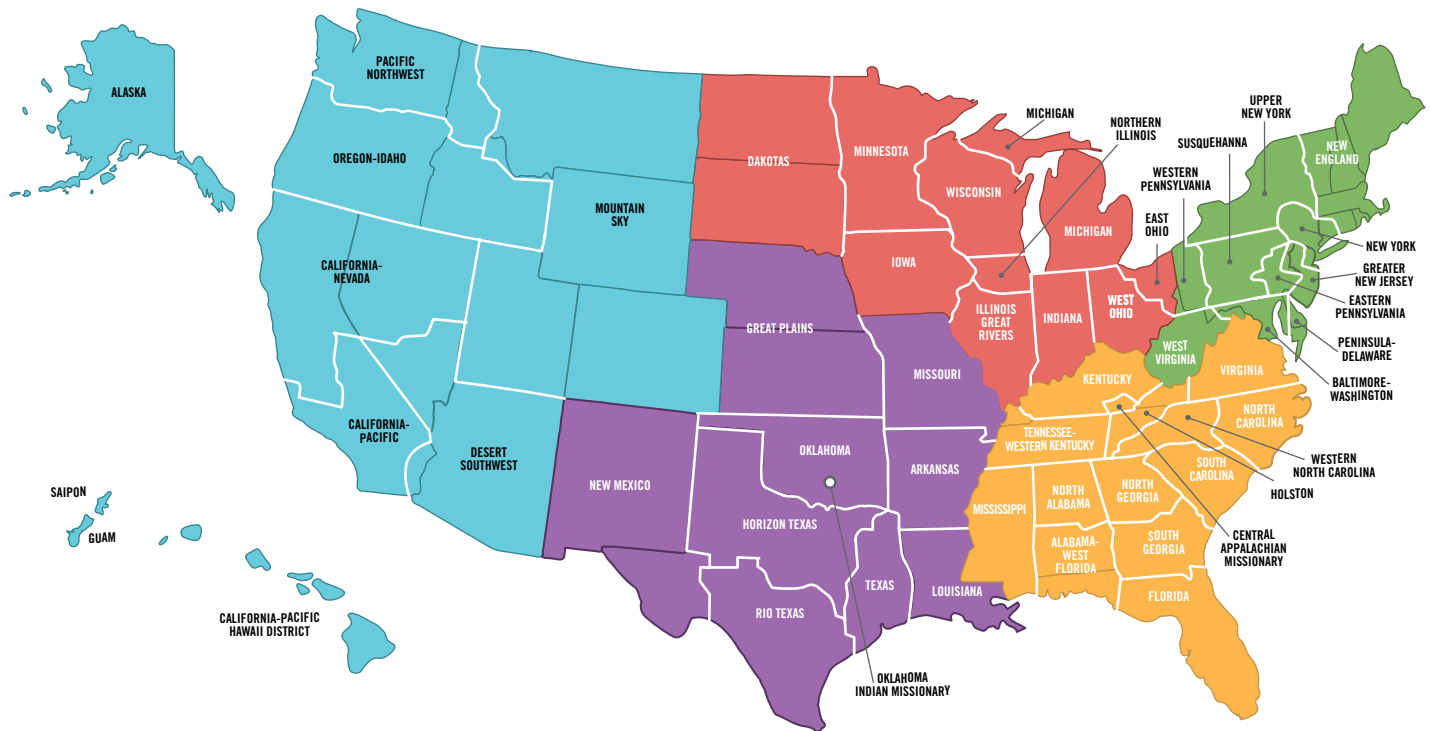
Each regional conference has the ability to set qualifications and educational requirements for ministry, set qualifications and standards of conduct for membership, structure its own regional, annual, district and charge conferences consistent with the laws of their countries, establish its own hymnal and ritual, including the rites of marriage and burial and create its own judicial court for matters arising from sections of the Book of Discipline adapted by that regional conference.

This change will help the church remain united in mission while allowing each region to adapt its ministries and governance to its unique context.



LEARN MORE
about worldwide regionalization

The United States Regional Conference



The United States Regional Conference is divided into five areas known as jurisdictions. 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.

There are many missional churches supported by The United Methodist Church around the world. For more detailed information about specific locations, please explore episcopal areas, jurisdictions, and annual conferences. You can also learn more about missional work and the communities supported through The United Methodist Church here: [UMCMission.org/Work/Where-We-Work](https://umcmmission.org/Work/Where-We-Work)

- **Western Jurisdiction**
WesternJurisdictionUMC.org
- **North Central Jurisdiction**
NCJUMC.org
- **South Central Jurisdiction**
SCJUMC.org
- **Northeastern Jurisdiction**
NEJUMC.org
- **Southeastern Jurisdiction**
SEJUMC.org/AnnualConferences

The Europe Regional Conference

The Europe Regional Conference is divided into three regional conferences and within each conference there are episcopal areas. An Episcopal Area acts as a "diocese" that facilitates regional governance, with the bishop providing oversight and leadership for that area.

There are many missional churches supported by The United Methodist Church around the world. For more detailed information about specific locations, please explore episcopal areas, jurisdictions, and annual conferences. You can also learn more about missional work and the communities supported through The United Methodist Church here: UMCMission.org/Work/Where-We-Work.

- **Nordic & Baltic Episcopal Area**
UMC-NE.org
- **Germany Episcopal Area**
EMK.de
- **Central and Southern Europe Episcopal Area**
UMC-CSE.org



The Africa Regional Conference

The Africa Regional Conference is divided into four regional conferences and within each conference there are episcopal areas. An Episcopal Area acts as a "diocese" that facilitates regional governance, with the bishop providing oversight and leadership for that area.

There are many missional churches supported by The United Methodist Church around the world. For more detailed information about specific locations, please explore episcopal areas, jurisdictions, and annual conferences. You can also learn more about missional work and the communities supported through The United Methodist Church here:

UMCMission.org/Work/Where-We-Work.



■ West Africa Regional Conference

Liberia Episcopal Area

LiberiaUMC.org

Nigeria Episcopal Area

UMCNigeria.org

Sierra Leone Episcopal Area

SierraLeoneUMC.org

Côte d'Ivoire Episcopal Area

Note: On Tuesday, May 28, 2024, the Côte d'Ivoire Conference voted to separate from The United Methodist Church. The Council of Bishops is committed to work with the conference to become an Autonomous Methodist Church.

■ East Africa Regional Conference

East Africa Episcopal Area

EAeaUMC.org

■ Mid-Africa Regional Conference

Central Congo Episcopal Area

CentralCongoUMC.org

East Congo Episcopal Area

EastCongoUMC.org

North Katanga Episcopal Area

UMCNorthKatanga.org

South Congo Episcopal Area

UMCSouthCongoZambia.org

■ Southern Africa Regional Conference

East Angola Episcopal Area

IMUCaoa.org

Mozambique-South Africa-Eswatini-Madagascar Episcopal Area

IMUMmoz.org

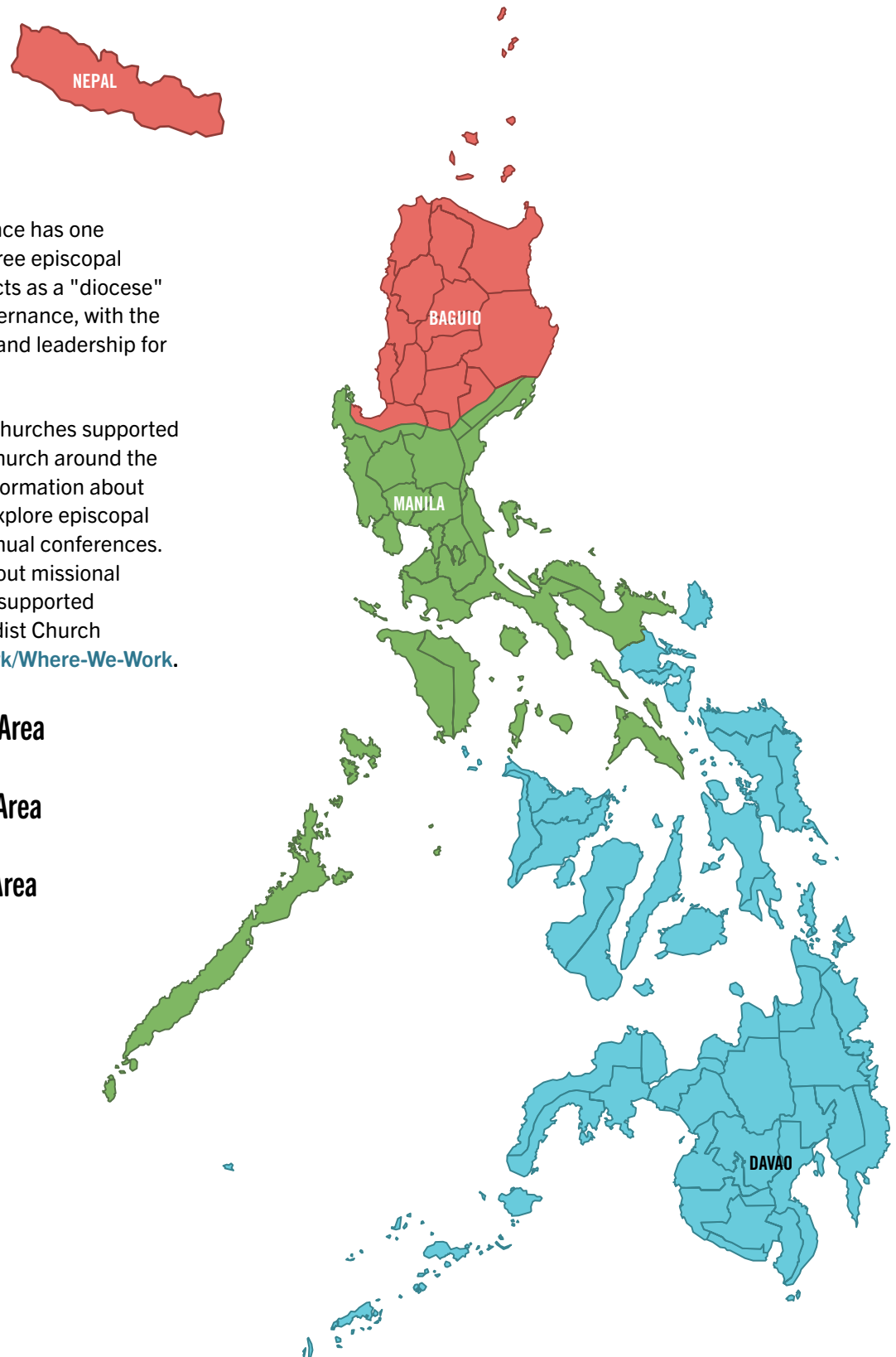
Western Angola Episcopal Area

IMUCaoa.org

Zimbabwe Episcopal Area

UMCzzmbea.org


The Asia Regional Conference



The Asia Regional Conference has one regional conference and three episcopal areas. An Episcopal Area acts as a "diocese" that facilitates regional governance, with the bishop providing oversight and leadership for that area.

There are many missional churches supported by The United Methodist Church around the world. For more detailed information about specific locations, please explore episcopal areas, jurisdictions, and annual conferences. You can also learn more about missional work and the communities supported through The United Methodist Church here: [UMCMission.org/Work/Where-We-Work](https://umcmmission.org/Work/Where-We-Work).

- **Baguio Episcopal Area**
[UMCBEA.org](https://umcbea.org)
- **Manila Episcopal Area**
[UMCMEA.org](https://umcmea.org)
- **Davao Episcopal Area**
[UMCDEA.org](https://umcdea.org)



What are the General Agencies and The Connectional Table and How Do They Support The UMC Mission?

General agencies are created by and accountable to the General Conference to serve the entire United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Book of Discipline states that agencies are a part of our connection, the web of interactive relationships throughout the denomination. The purpose of the general agencies is to provide resources and services that will equip local congregations and provide a connection for ministries throughout the world. Through the work of these agencies, The United Methodist Church can maintain a common vision, mission, and ministry across our worldwide connectional system.

The Connectional Table

While not a general agency, The Connectional Table serves as the primary coordinating body for the general agencies and ministries of the church. It provides oversight and strategic direction to ensure alignment with the denomination's mission and priorities.

ResourceUMC.org/Connectional-Table

General Board of Discipleship (Discipleship Ministries)

Connects laity and clergy around the world with contextually-appropriate resourcing and materials, training, consulting and networking to support spiritual formation, new church development and revitalization of local churches.

UMCDiscipleship.org

General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)

Leads, equips, and challenges United Methodists in ministries of social advocacy based on The Social Principles and The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church.

UMCJustice.org

General Board of Global Ministries and UMCOR (GBGM)

Connects the church in mission through sending and supporting short- and long-term missionaries, engaging volunteers, planting churches, addressing poverty and global health, and responding to natural and civil disasters.

UMCMission.org

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

Coordinates and supports the work of United Methodist institutions in higher education and annual conferences in the formation of clergy leaders.

GBHEM.org

General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH)

Gathers, preserves, and disseminates materials on the history of The United Methodist Church and its antecedents.

GCAH.org

General Commission on Religion and Race (GCROR)

Advocates for the full and equal participation of racial and ethnic constituencies in the church and monitors United Methodist Church practices; committed to leading The United Methodist Church in becoming intentionally diverse.

GCROR.org

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW)

Advocates for the full participation of women at every level of church life, researches and monitors United Methodist practices, and operates UMSexualEthics to support survivors of clergy misconduct through the complaint process.

GCSRW.org

General Commission on United Methodist Men (GCUMM)

Assists men in growing their relationships to Jesus Christ and his church by providing resources and support for evangelism and stewardship programs, and by leading United Methodist Church scouting ministries.

UMMen.org

General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA)

Manages with fiscal integrity the finances, the financial plan and administrative needs of The United Methodist Church, and serves as the general treasurer of the denomination.

GCFA.org

The United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH)

Serves as the official publisher of The United Methodist Church, by developing, producing and distributing print, digital, and multimedia resources and supplies for Christian clergy and laity.

UMPH.org and Cokesbury.com

United Methodist Communications (UMCom)

As the communications, branding, and marketing agency for The United Methodist Church, United Methodist Communications works to increase the denomination's visibility and awareness worldwide through three primary channels: UMC.org, UMNews.org, and ResourceUMC.org. It also provides services and resources to support communications ministry.

United Women in Faith (Formerly United Methodist Women)

Nurtures and connects women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education to inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

UWFaith.org

Wespath Benefits and Investments

Supervises and administers the pension and benefits programs, plans, and funds of The United Methodist Church, and administers and disburses the retirement and benefit funds of the various annual conferences.

Wespath.org



Ethnic and Racial Ministries

The United Methodist Church is committed to celebrating diversity and promoting equity through a wide range of ethnic and racial ministries. These ministries support the spiritual growth, leadership development, and community engagement of Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and Indigenous peoples, and Pacific Islander communities. By nurturing culturally relevant ministries and advocating for racial justice, the church strives to live out its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world – together, among all people and places. Funding for all six ethnic and racial plans is made possible through the World Service Fund.



Asian American Language Ministry Plan

Provides funding and guidance to help Asian American churches grow and serve both new immigrants and U.S.-born generations.



Korean Ministry Plan

Integrates Wesleyan tradition and Korean spirituality to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Trains leaders and supports small groups to grow new churches. The plan also helps Korean American families, focusing on younger generations, and supporting programs for diverse and multiracial communities.



El Plan for Hispanic/Latine Ministry

Embraces the cultural richness and diversity of the Hispanic and Latino communities to cultivate initiatives to address the expansion of new congregations and to address pertinent social issues as part of a holistic program of leadership development.



Native American Comprehensive Plan

Provides resources, strengthens, and advocates for the local church in Native American and Indigenous peoples communities/context for all generations. The plan focuses on resources, leadership development, and training for Native Americans and Indigenous peoples to serve at every level of the church.



Pacific Islanders' Ministry Plan

Helps Pacific Islanders grow in faith and lead in The United Methodist Church. It trains first-generation leaders, supports youth, and helps build new churches. The plan also creates resources in Pacific Island languages and promotes health and community.



Strengthening the Black Church for the Twenty-First Century (SBC21)

Strengthens Black congregations to transform communities through leadership development, discipleship-making systems, revitalization, and real-time social justice ministry.



How Does Connectional Giving Work in The United Methodist Church?

No matter where or how we serve Jesus Christ, United Methodists live out our faith through a unique covenant of connection. One important expression of this is connectional giving – a shared system of financial support that enables us to accomplish far more together than any congregation could alone. United in impact, our combined resources create real and lasting change.

At its core, connectional giving is a tangible expression of our unity in Christ. It fuels our collective mission to make disciples and transform the world – locally, regionally, and globally.

United Methodists give in two primary ways:

- Apportioned giving, where local churches contribute a portion of their offerings to support the wider mission of the church.
- Designated giving, which allows individuals or churches to give directly to specific ministries or needs.

While the vast majority of giving stays in your local church – impacting your local community – a portion supports ministries across your annual conference and general church ministries.

These funds support disaster response, hunger relief, new church starts, education, leadership development, advocacy, and more.

Connectional giving reflects what we believe: We are stronger together.

UNITED ^{IN} IMPACT



LEARN HOW
the **United in Impact** campaign
helps us live out that belief at
ResourceUMC.org/UnitedinImpact.



What Do Apportioned Funds Support in The United Methodist Church?

United Methodists support apportionment funds through a connectional giving system that proportionally distributes the churchwide budget across all conferences. Local churches contribute to these funds as part of their connectional commitment.

There are seven official apportioned funds that sustain the church's global mission and ministry. These funds support everything from leadership development, global mission work, and theological education to communication, justice ministries, and the operations of the general church. All U.S. annual conferences support all seven funds, while annual conferences outside of the U.S. support two, based on structure and contextual needs.

World Service Fund

Provides financial support for general agencies that carry out the shared vision, mission, and ministries of The United Methodist Church, offering services beyond the reach of local congregations and annual conferences.

Africa University Fund

Supports the general operating expenses of Africa University, located in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe, including faculty and staff salaries and vital infrastructure. Additional donations through World Service Special Gifts support scholarships and the endowment fund.

Black College Fund

Supports eleven United Methodist-related Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) – more than any other church body in the United States. These HBCUs provide educational opportunities for students of all races, classes, genders, and ethnic backgrounds.

The Episcopal Fund

Funds the salaries, office and travel expenses, pension and health insurance of United Methodist bishops.

General Administration Fund

Funds the administrative functions of General Conference as well as supports the work of The Connectional Table, The Judicial Council, pension and salary aid, General Council on Finance, and Administration and General Commission on Archives and History.

Interdenominational Cooperation Fund

Enables United Methodists to participate in ecumenical and interreligious organizations advocating for unity among the worldwide Christian Church.

Ministerial Education Fund

Supports the recruitment and education of ordained and licensed ministers. Also supports programs, scholarships, and services at thirteen United Methodist seminaries in the United States, continuing education of ordained, licensed and diaconal ministers, and courses of study.



What Does Designated Giving Support in The United Methodist Church?

Designated gifts help the giver, whether an annual conference, a local church, a ministry group, or an individual, know exactly what they are supporting with their gift and develop a closer relationship with the projects and people they support. They help personalize the connection. Rooted in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 9:7 – “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” – this kind of giving becomes an act of faithful worship.

Each designated gift is a way to invest in God’s vision and purpose, creating space for God to work through us. Our weekly offerings are more than a routine – they are vital to changing lives, transforming communities, and renewing the church.

The United Methodist Church offers a variety of designated giving opportunities, each aligned with ministries that bring hope and healing to individuals and communities around the globe. These gifts are made possible through the generosity of individuals who choose to give with purpose and compassion.

The Advance

The Advance for Christ and His Church is the official giving network of The United Methodist Church for voluntary donations. This network is designed to support mission programs and missionaries around the world. Every dollar of each donation is used to support the program, ministry or missionary designated by the contributor.

Youth Service Fund

Established to support youth and youth ministries as they grow as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, United Methodist teens raise money for other teens doing ministry in their churches and communities impacting poverty, illiteracy, absenteeism, and social justice.

World Service Special Appeals

General Agencies, some United Methodist institutions and the Council of Bishops, with the approval of the Connectional Table, may make appeals for designated gifts to support special projects beyond what is supported through the apportioned funds.





Churchwide Special Sundays

Six Churchwide Special Sundays are observed annually on dates determined by the General Conference. A special offering is collected on each date to fund specific ministries.

Human Relations Day (January)

Raises awareness and support to strengthen human relations through community and youth outreach. Ministries supported on this Sunday include Community Developers, United Methodist Voluntary Services, and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.

UMCOR Sunday (March)

Raises awareness and support for the ministry of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which coordinates denominational responses to disasters and humanitarian needs. United Methodists cover the operational cost of UMCOR through this Special Sunday to ensure 100% of any donations for specific project or missionary work will go towards that project and not administrative costs. This allows UMCOR to focus on immediate relief and recovery for those in need.

Native American Ministries Sunday (April/May)

Raises awareness and support to affirm Native American people, their languages, cultures, and gifts to the church and the world. Half of the donations collected remain in the annual conference to develop and strengthen ministries through the local Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). The remaining dollars support scholarships and vital ministries to develop new programs.

United Methodist Student Day (May)

Raises awareness and support for over seventy scholarships for undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral United Methodist students. Every dollar received assists in educating a new generation of principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

Peace with Justice Sunday (May/June)

Raises awareness and support for peace-related ministries. Half of the donations collected remain in each annual conference to strengthen local social justice ministries and fund a local peace with justice coordinator. The remaining dollars fund three grants that support ethnic/minority local church ministries and are made available to United Methodist congregations and organizations.

World Communion Sunday (October)

Raises awareness and support in the journey of our inclusive and diverse connection. The foundation for this Sunday is Holy Communion to remind us of our unity in Jesus Christ. Ministries supported on this Sunday include scholarships, grants, mentoring, and training for leadership development.

Churchwide Annual Conference Special Sundays

Five Special Sundays may be observed annually on dates determined by local annual conferences that collect a special offering to fund local ministries. Donations received for these Sundays are governed by local annual conferences.

Christian Education Sunday

Celebrates discipleship at every stage of life. Ministries supported on this Sunday help congregations and districts offer educational and small-group ministries, equipping people to teach, motivate, and lead in service to the church, community, and world.

Disabilities Awareness Sunday

Promotes full inclusion of people with disabilities in church and community. Ministries supported on this Sunday often fund architectural and attitudinal accessibility improvements that foster lasting change in attitudes and practices.

Golden Cross Sunday

Supports health and welfare ministries serving people of all ages within the annual conference. Ministries supported on this Sunday support health and welfare ministries, including hospitals, retirement communities, and agencies serving children, families, and persons with disabilities.

Rural Life Sunday

Honors United Methodists who have rural heritage, affirms the importance of agricultural workers, and addresses challenges they face worldwide. Funds raised support outreach and witness ministries in rural settings. Ministries supported on this Sunday strengthen outreach and witness in rural congregations.

Volunteers in Mission Sunday

Supports the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) program, which provides guidance and training for short-term mission service and serves as the official channel for mission engagement. Organized by jurisdiction and funded by annual conferences.

Churchwide Awareness Special Sundays

Five Special Sundays are observed each year to raise awareness of ministries within the church and to recognize how local congregations serve and support their communities. These Sundays do not have a special offering but commit a day to celebrate those who achieve this work.

Heritage Sunday (May)

Recognizes the church's history, how it shapes us, and inspires us to move forward in personal and social holiness. Typically celebrated on Aldersgate Sunday or the preceding Sunday.

Laity Sunday (October)

Honors the work and mission of lay Christians, empowered to make disciples and serve in all areas of life. Usually observed on the third Sunday in October.

Men's Ministry Sunday

Highlights the contributions of men in the church and community through fellowship, spiritual growth, and outreach. Observed on a date chosen by the congregation.

Women's Ministry Sunday

Celebrates the achievements and ministry of women in the church and community, including organizations like United Women in Faith. Observed on a date chosen by the congregation.

Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday (November)

Raises awareness of the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and encourages participation. Typically observed on the second Sunday in November.



Where Can I Learn More About The United Methodist Church?

While there are many places to find information about The United Methodist Church, the most trusted sources are official denominational channels – created, approved, and maintained by United Methodist Communications, the church’s official communication, branding, and marketing agency.

Together, these official channels help ensure that United Methodists – and those exploring the denomination – have access to trusted, up-to-date, and mission-driven information.

Websites

UMC.org

As the official website of The United Methodist Church, [UMC.org](https://www.UMC.org) offers reliable information about our history, structure, beliefs, policies, and ways to connect with congregations and ministries around the world. Visit [UMC.org](https://www.UMC.org) to stay connected to the life and mission of the church.

In addition to the website, the church shares updates, stories, and resources through its official social media platforms:

Facebook – Facebook.com/UnitedMethodistChurch

Instagram – Instagram.com/UnitedMethodistChurch

YouTube – Youtube.com/user/UMCVideos

Ask The UMC

As the official information service of The United Methodist Church, Ask The UMC provides quick, accurate answers to questions about the denomination.

Visit UMC.org/AskTheUMC to explore the FAQ library, submit a question, chat online, or email AskTheUMC@umc.org.

UM News

As the official news-gathering agency of The United Methodist Church, UM News delivers comprehensive and objective stories that support the mission and ministry of the church. Visit UMNews.org to explore the latest updates.

ResourceUMC

As a resource for church leaders of The United Methodist Church, ResourceUMC offers links to all general agencies, resources and topics specific to the denomination.

Visit ResourceUMC.org to explore more.

Newsletters

Newsletters are one of the most popular ways people stay informed about what matters to them. United Methodist newsletters share the latest Church news, new resources, ministry tips, and inspiration for daily life. Subscribe today to stay connected and informed about what's happening across the connection.

Official Denominational Newsletters

United Methodist Now is a bi-monthly newsletter that offers inspiration for daily living.

The Source is bi-monthly newsletter that offers timely content, ideas, and inspiration for clergy and lay leaders.

The UM News Digest newsletter is emailed Monday, Wednesday and Friday and offers current and breaking news that affect the church.

Topic or Agency-Specific Newsletters

Church and Society newsletter provides updates on the latest social issues on which The UMC has claimed a position.

Cokesbury News offers the latest news, sales, and deals from Cokesbury.

The Collaborator is a monthly newsletter featuring news and updates for administrative and financial needs from GCFA.

Dimensions newsletter supports your path to well-being with useful personal wellness and financial information.

Duru Allimi is a bi-monthly newsletter that offers inspiration and ideas for the Korean community.

Engage is a monthly newsletter offering news, stories, updates, and events from Global Ministries.

Equipping Disciples is a bi-monthly newsletter that features discipleship success stories from Discipleship Ministries.

Historians Digest publishes several times a year and includes news, ideas, articles, and essays.

MyCom is a bi-monthly newsletter that offers communication and outreach tips for your ministry.

Religion and Race is a monthly newsletter with updates on anti-racism efforts, justice-related news, resources, and events.

UMVIM newsletters offer the latest mission news and volunteer opportunities.

United Methodist Men newsletter provides information about UMMen activities, resources, and news.

The Upper Room newsletters are daily, weekly or monthly to keep you encouraged in your spiritual formation.

Wisdom Talks is a monthly newsletter offering information to facilitate the advancement of women at all levels of The UMC.

Women of Faith newsletter provides information about new resources, classes, shows, books, releases, special events and updates.

Podcasts

Podcasts help you think about and grow in your faith while driving the car, getting some cardio on the treadmill, walking the dog, folding laundry or just relaxing. Find your favorite podcast and subscribe or explore individual episodes for topics that interest you.

Compass shares insights on finding the presence of the Divine in day-to-day life.

Expanding the Table shares experiences to inform and inspire others on how to work towards racial justice.

Get Your Spirit in Shape features conversations with leaders who inspire and encourage us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Faith Talks features conversations with women exploring topics that empower us to put faith, hope, and love into action.

Justice Takes Courage explores social witness and responses to today's pressing justice issues, both nationally and globally.

MyCom teaches communities of faith how to effectively find their audience and share their story with the world.

Un-Tied Methodism communicates how to understand the past, contextualize the present, and envision the future.

Worship Matters explores how to plan worship using the common lectionary that are engaging, relevant, and adaptable.

For links to these and more United Methodist podcasts, visit [UMC.org/podcasts](https://www.UMC.org/podcasts).

What Do Common Terms in The United Methodist Church Mean?

The United Methodist Church uses terms that may be unfamiliar to those new to the denomination. This glossary is here to help you understand common words and phrases used in our faith and structure.

APPORTIONMENT: The United Methodist Church apportions (divides out) the churchwide budget the General Conference approves to each annual conference as part of its own budget. Each annual conference then apportions its total budget to its local churches based on a formula the members of that conference approve.

ADVANCE: The Advance for Christ and His Church is the official giving network for voluntary donations to support mission programs and missionaries around the world.

BENEVOLENCES: A term used to describe monetary gifts to causes carrying out the mission and program of the denomination. These funds do not cover administration expenses. In the annual conference they are called conference benevolences. In the general church they are called World Service benevolences.

BISHOP: An elder who has been elected by their jurisdictional or regional conference and consecrated by other bishops to give oversight over the clergy and mission of one or more annual conferences and leadership for the sake of the unity, integrity and mission of the whole church.

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

BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS: The volume containing the text of all valid and current resolutions or declarations on issues approved by the General Conference. It also contains policy statements passed by the most recent General Conference. The text of any resolution is considered the official position of the denomination on that subject.

BOOK OF WORSHIP: The official ritual book of The United Methodist Church.

CABINET: The organization in an annual conference that consists of the resident bishop and the district superintendents. The Cabinet provides oversight and direction for the work of the annual conference, districts, and local churches. The Cabinet works as a unit on developing the appointments for the ministerial members, which are made or fixed by the bishop.

CANDIDACY: A vocational discernment and decision-making process recognized by The United Methodist Church to assist candidates and annual conferences in discerning and affirming an applicant's call to licensed or ordained ministry.

CHARGE: Consists of one or more congregations under the spiritual leadership of a minister or ministry team.

CHARGE CONFERENCE: The basic governing body of each United Methodist local church and is composed of all members of the church council. All members of the charge conference must be members of the local church.

CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE: The name given to the conference at which the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was formally organized. The meeting occurred during the Christmas period and has traditionally been called the Christmas Conference.

CHURCH COUNCIL: The church council plans and implements the programs and ministry of the local church as well as oversees the administration of the church. The church council is open to the charge conference.

CIRCUIT: Two or more local churches joined together for pastoral supervision. The churches on a circuit constitute one pastoral charge.

CIRCUIT RIDER: From the earliest years of the denomination, pastors were appointed to serve a large number of local churches and preaching places located within a large geographic area. These ministers traveled regularly throughout their assigned areas and came to be known as circuit riders.

CLERGY: Individuals who serve as commissioned ministers, deacons, elders, and local pastors under appointment of a bishop (full- and part-time), who hold membership in an annual conference, and who are commissioned, ordained, or licensed.

COMMUNION: One of the sacraments of The United Methodist Church, often called the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. It is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done to save us, particularly in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. In it, we receive the body and blood of Christ to sustain us as his faithful disciples. Communion is available to all who love Christ, earnestly repent of their sin and seek to be at peace with one another.

CONFIRMATION: Refers to both a process of preparation to profess the baptismal and membership vows and the rite in which the profession itself takes place. Persons who are confirmed thereby become professing members of The United Methodist Church.

CONNECTION: The principle that all leaders and congregations are connected through a covenant of common mission and governance to reach out into the world to share the love of Jesus Christ.

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

COLLEGE/COUNCIL OF BISHOPS: The bishops elected within a given jurisdictional or regional conference. It is in the colleges of bishops that bishops both support and provide oversight for each other, including addressing matters of formal complaint against a bishop of their number.

CONNECTIONAL TABLE: The Connectional Table is the body that discerns and articulates the vision of The United Methodist Church and stewards its mission, ministries, and resources in alignment with the General Conference and the Council of Bishops. It provides oversight, fiscal responsibility, and policy guidance to carry out the church's mission.

DEACON: A deacon is an ordained clergy person called to serve all people, equipping and leading laity in ministries of compassion, justice, and service. Deacons teach, lead worship, assist elders with baptism and Holy Communion, preside over the sacraments when contextually appropriate, and perform marriage ceremonies and funerals.

DELEGATE: A lay or clergy person elected by the laity or clergy of the annual conference to the voting body of the General, jurisdictional or regional conference. Delegates have the power to vote and have a voice at the conferences.

DESIGNATED GIFT: A contribution for a specific purpose or project. These are most recognized in The United Methodist Church through giving for Special Sundays, The Advance for Christ and His Church and World Service Special Gifts.

DISTRICT: A geographical subunit of an annual conference set by the conference to connect the churches within it in mission and ministry.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT: An elder appointed by a bishop to articulate and lead missional strategy throughout the area covered by the district. As part of this work, the district superintendent presides at charge conferences, participates with the bishop in making appointments, and is available for consultation by clergy and local church leaders.

ECUMENISM/ECUMENICAL: The practice of Christian unity – working together across denominations in shared faith and mission, rooted in the belief that the church is one universal body of Christ. United Methodists continue Wesley's practice of working in common mission with Christians of many backgrounds and seeking the greatest level of unity possible among them.

ELDER: A person ordained to a lifetime ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament and Order. Elders are authorized to preach and teach God's Word, provide pastoral care and counsel, administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the church for ministry. Elders are members of the annual conference and not a member of the local church they serve. Elders are required to itinerate, that is, move wherever the bishop appoints them. This is why elders are guaranteed an appointment at all times of their years of active service.

EPISCOPACY: The system of church polity whereby bishops serve as general superintendents, overseers, and exercise certain authority within the denomination.

EPISCOPAL AREA: The geographical area, which may contain one or more annual conferences, over which a bishop is assigned supervision.

GENERAL AGENCY: A term used generically to refer to any council, board, commission, committee or other unit established to carry out denominational work. General agencies are accountable to the General Conference.

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

GENERAL FUNDS: Funds approved by the General Conference to support various aspects of denominational work. These funds are not designated funds. The General Council on Finance and Administration serves as the treasurer of the general funds.

JURISDICTION: One of five geographic subunits within the United States responsible for electing bishops, establishing the boundaries of annual conferences within it, and creating a connection for ministries and the support of missional institutions of various kinds across its area.

JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCE: The quadrennial meeting of clergy and lay delegates from the annual conferences within the boundaries of one of five U.S. jurisdictions. Half of the delegates are laypersons and half are clergy. Its main purpose is the election of bishops and setting of conference boundaries. General Conference delegates are also members of the jurisdictional conference.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL: Rules on the meaning of church law, the legality and constitutionality of all decisions of law by bishops and actions of the church brought to it by bodies with standing to do so, including the Council of Bishops, general agencies, jurisdictional conferences, regional conferences and the General Conference. Its lay and clergy members are elected by the General Conference.

LAITY: A term to describe the members of a congregation. The term means “people of God.”

LAY LEADER: The primary lay representative of the laity in a local church, district, or annual conference. A lay leader is elected annually by the charge conference in a local church, or by the district or annual conference. Responsibilities in the local church include fostering awareness of the role of the laity, meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the needs for ministry, and voting membership in the charge conference, church council, committee on nominations and leadership development, pastor-parish relations committee, and the finance committee.

LOCAL PASTOR: A person who has been approved by the district committee on ordained ministry to attend licensing school, has completed licensing school, has been approved by the clergy session of the annual conference and is appointed by the bishop to a particular charge or extension ministry. A local pastor is authorized to perform all pastoral duties within the bounds of the appointment, subject to making satisfactory progress in the Course of Study and ongoing review by the district committee on ordained ministry. A local pastor is not required to itinerate and so is not guaranteed ongoing appointment.

MISSION: The Mission of the denomination is our driving purpose, our why: “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” This is set by the General Conference.

MISSIONARY: A lay or clergy person trained, vetted and commissioned by the General Board of Global Ministries to provide needed leadership to expand the ministry of the denomination in a primary setting typically other than a local church.

ORDINATION: An act of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by a bishop to establish and empower a person elected by the clergy session into full connection in the order of deacon (Word, Service, Compassion, Justice) or elder (Word, Service, Order, and Sacrament).

QUADRENNIUM: The official four-year period beginning January 1 following each General Conference, during which The United Methodist Church implements General Conference legislation.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE: A body created by the General Conference with the authority to adapt General Conference legislation, elect bishops, create annual conferences, and provide a connection for ministries extending the mission of the church within a given region of the world, also established by the General Conference. It is composed of the lay and clergy delegates to the General Conference plus an equal number of additional lay and clergy delegates elected by each annual conference within the region.

REGIONALIZATION: Regionalization allows United Methodists from across the worldwide connection to have more voice and influence in decisions and guidance for the church. By creating a separate regional conference where the United States can adapt General Conference legislation to address its own issues more effectively, as all other regional conferences already do, matters affecting only the United States no longer need to be addressed by the General Conference.

SACRAMENT: Rites instituted by Jesus through which God promises to give us saving grace. United Methodists recognize two such rites: baptism, in which we are given new birth and communion in which we are sustained in our life in Christ.

SPECIAL SUNDAYS: Those Sundays authorized by the General Conference to be set aside for a denomination-wide emphasis. A majority of the Special Sundays include an offering, while some do not.

VISION: Our Vision tells us where we are going and how we will continue to live into and accomplish our Mission: “The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.” This is set by the Council of Bishops with the Connectional Table.



UNITED IN IMPACT

You are part of the incredible work God is doing through The United Methodist Church.

Giving is an act of worship—

a faithful response to God's grace and a reflection of our trust in God's provision.

Generosity is a response to grace—

not out of obligation, but from gratitude for all that God has already given.

Giving is a spiritual practice —

that shapes our hearts, deepens our faith, and aligns our lives with God's purposes.

Generosity isn't about what we offer—

it's about the story we tell with our lives. Every gift becomes a testimony to God's faithfulness.

SHARE YOUR STORY

The **UNITED IN IMPACT** campaign calls on all United Methodists to share inspiring stories of sacrificial giving—whether it's a congregation rallying together for a special cause or an individual making a meaningful personal sacrifice. These stories will be shared across the UMC community to inspire others and demonstrate the power of generosity in action. To contribute your story, email UnitedinImpact@UMC.org



Every story makes an impact, inspiring faith, shining a light on God's work through The United Methodist Church, and inviting others to join the journey.

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, **SERVE ONE ANOTHER** with whatever gift you have received. -1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV)

Resource**UMC.org/UnitedinImpact**

LOVE | SERVE | LEAD

The United Methodist Church Handbook

2025–2028

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

Contact Information:

Visit ResourceUMC.org/UMCGiving, UMC.org/AskTheUMC or
email AskTheUMC@umc.org.



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church®