

Organization

Section I. Conferences



¶ 8. Article I. —There shall be a General Conference for the entire Church with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.

¶ 9. Article II. —There shall be jurisdictional conferences for the Church in the United States of America, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth;¹¹ provided that in The United Methodist Church there shall be no jurisdictional or central conference based on any ground other than geographical and regional division.

¶ 10. Article III. —There shall be central conferences for the church outside the United States of America and, if necessary, provisional central conferences, all with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.

¶ 11. Article IV. —There shall be annual conferences as the fundamental bodies of the Church and, if necessary, provisional annual conferences, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.¹²

¶ 12. Article V. —There shall be a charge conference for each church or charge with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.¹³

11. See Judicial Council Decision 128.

12. See Judicial Council Decision 354.

13. See Judicial Council Decision 516.

Section II. General Conference

¶ 13. Article I. —1. The General Conference shall be composed of not less than 600 nor more than 1,000 delegates, one half of whom shall be clergy and one half lay members, to be elected by the annual conferences. The missionary conferences shall be considered as annual conferences for the purpose of this article.¹⁴

2. Delegates shall be elected by the annual conferences except that delegates may be elected by other autonomous Methodist churches if and when the General Conference shall approve concordats with such other autonomous Methodist churches for the mutual election and seating of delegates in each other's highest legislative conferences.

3. In the case of The Methodist Church in Great Britain, mother church of Methodism, provision shall be made for The United Methodist Church to send two delegates annually to

the British Methodist Conference, and The Methodist Church in Great Britain to send four delegates quadrennially to The United Methodist Church General Conference, the delegates of both conferences having vot and being evenly divided between clergy and laity.¹⁵

¶ 14. Article II. —The General Conference shall meet in the month of April or May once in four years at such time and in such place as shall be determined by the General Conference or by its duly authorized committees.

A special session of the General Conference, possessing the authority and exercising all the powers of the General Conference, may be called by the Council of Bishops, or in such other manner as the General Conference may from time to time prescribe, to meet at such time and in such place as may be stated in the call. Such special session of the General Conference shall be composed of the delegates to the preceding General Conference or their lawful successors, except that when a particular annual conference or missionary conference¹⁶ shall prefer to have a new election it may do so.¹⁷ The purpose of such special session shall be stated in the call, and only such business shall be transacted as is in harmony with the purpose stated in such call unless the General Conference by a two-thirds vote shall determine that other business may be transacted.¹⁸

¶ 15. Article III. —The General Conference shall fix the ratio of representation in the General, jurisdictional, and central conferences from the annual conferences, missionary conferences,¹⁹ and the provisional annual conferences, computed on a two-factor basis: (1) the number of clergy members of the annual conference and the missionary conference,²⁰ and (2) the number of professing²¹ members in the annual conference and the missionary conference;²² provided that each annual conference, missionary conference,²³ or provisional annual conference shall be entitled to at least one clergy and one lay delegate in the General Conference and also in the jurisdictional or central conference.²⁴

14. Amended 1976.

15. Amended 1996.

16. Amended 1976.

17. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 221, 226, 228, 238, 302.

18. See *Judicial Council Decision* 227.

19. Amended 1976.

20. Amended 1976.

21. Amended 2000.

22. Amended 1976.

23. Amended 1976.

24. See *Judicial Council Decision* 403.



¶ 16. Article IV. —The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional, and in the exercise of this power shall have authority as follows:²⁵

1. To define and fix the conditions, privileges, and duties of Church membership, which shall in every case be without reference to race or status.²⁶
2. To define and fix the powers and duties of elders, deacons, supply preachers, local preachers, exhorters, and deaconesses,²⁷
3. To define and fix the powers and duties of annual conferences, provisional annual conferences, missionary conferences and missions, and of central conferences, district conferences, charge conferences, and congregational meetings.²⁸
4. To provide for the organization, promotion, and administration of the work of the Church outside the United States of America.²⁹
5. To define and fix the powers, duties, and privileges of the episcopacy, to adopt a plan for the support of the bishops, to provide a uniform rule for their retirement, and to provide for the discontinuance of a bishop because of inefficiency or unacceptability.³⁰
6. To provide and revise the hymnal and ritual of the Church and to regulate all matters relating to the form and mode of worship, subject to the limitations of the first and second Restrictive Rules.³¹
7. To provide a judicial system and a method of judicial procedure for the Church, except as herein otherwise prescribed.
8. To initiate and to direct all connectional enterprises of the Church and to provide boards for their promotion and administration.³²
9. To determine and provide for raising and distributing funds necessary to carry on the work of the Church.³³
10. To fix a uniform basis upon which bishops shall be elected by the jurisdictional conferences and to determine the number of bishops that may be elected by central conferences.³⁴
11. To select its presiding officers from the bishops, through a committee; provided that the bishops shall select from their own number the presiding officer of the opening session.³⁵
12. To change the number and the boundaries of jurisdictional conferences upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences in each jurisdictional conference involved.³⁶
13. To establish such commissions for the general work of the Church as may be deemed advisable.
14. To secure the rights and privileges of membership in all agencies, programs, and institutions in The United Methodist Church regardless of race or status.³⁷
15. To allow the annual conferences to utilize structures unique to their mission, other mandated structures notwithstanding.³⁸
16. To enact such other legislation as may be necessary, subject to the limitations and restrictions of the Constitution of the Church.³⁹

25. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 96, 232, 236, 318, 325, 544.

26. See *Judicial Council Decision 558*.
 27. See *Judicial Council Decisions 58, 313*.
 28. See *Judicial Council Decision 411*.
 29. See *Judicial Council Decision 182; amended 1976*.
 30. See *Judicial Council Decisions 35, 114, 312, 365, 413*.
 31. See *Judicial Council Decision 694*.
 32. See *Judicial Council Decisions 214, 364, 411*.
 33. See *Judicial Council Decision 30*.
 34. See *Judicial Council Decisions 598, 735*.
 35. See *Judicial Council Decision 126*.
 36. See *Judicial Council Decisions 55, 56, 215*.
 37. See *Decisions 4, 5, Interim Judicial Council; Judicial Council Decisions 427, 433, 442, 451, 540, 558, 567, 588, 594, 601*.
 38. See *Judicial Council Decision 825; amended 1996*.
 39. See *Judicial Council Decision 215*.

Section III. Restrictive Rules



¶ 17. Article I.—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine.⁴⁰

¶ 18. Article II.—The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Confession of Faith.

¶ 19. Article III.—The General Conference shall not change or alter any part or rule of our government so as to do away with episcopacy or destroy the plan of our itinerant general superintendency.

¶ 20. Article IV.—The General Conference shall not do away with the privileges of our clergy of right to trial by a committee and of an appeal; neither shall it do away with the privileges of our members of right to trial before the church, or by a committee, and of an appeal.⁴¹

¶ 21. Article V.—The General Conference shall not revoke or change the General Rules of Our United Societies.⁴²

¶ 22. Article VI.—The General Conference shall not appropriate the net income of the publishing houses, the book concerns, or the Chartered Fund to any purpose other than for the benefit of retired or disabled preachers, their spouses, widows, or widowers, and children or other beneficiaries of the ministerial pension systems.⁴³

40. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 86, 142, 243, 358, 847, 871.

41. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 351, 522, 557, 595, 982.

42. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 358, 468, 847, 871.

43. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 322, 330.

Section IV. Jurisdictional Conferences



¶ 23. Article I.—The jurisdictional conferences shall be composed of as many representatives from the annual conferences and missionary conferences⁴⁴ as shall be determined by a uniform basis established by the General Conference. The missionary conferences shall be considered as annual conferences for the purpose of this article.⁴⁵

¶ 24. Article II.—All jurisdictional conferences shall have the same status and the same privileges of action within the limits fixed by the Constitution. The ratio of representation of the annual conferences and missionary conferences⁴⁶ in the General Conference shall be the same for all jurisdictional conferences.

¶ 25. Article III.—The General Conferences shall fix the basis of representation in the jurisdictional conferences; provided that the jurisdictional conferences shall be composed of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates to be elected by the annual conferences, the missionary conferences⁴⁷ and the provisional annual conferences.

¶ 26. Article IV.—Each jurisdictional conference shall meet at the time determined by the Council of Bishops or its delegated committee, each jurisdictional conference convening on the same date as the others and at a place selected by the jurisdictional committee on entertainment, appointed by its College of Bishops unless such a committee has been appointed by the preceding jurisdictional conference.

¶ 27. Article V.—The jurisdictional conferences shall have the following powers and duties and such others as may be conferred by the General Conferences:

1. To promote the evangelistic, educational, missionary, and benevolent interests of the Church and to provide for interests and institutions within their boundaries.⁴⁸
2. To elect bishops and to cooperate in carrying out such plans for their support as may be determined by the General Conference.

3. To establish and constitute jurisdictional conference boards as auxiliary to the general boards of the Church as the need may appear and to choose their representatives on the general boards in such manner as the General Conference may determine.⁴⁹
4. To determine the boundaries of their annual conferences; provided that there shall be no annual conference with a membership of fewer than fifty clergy in full connection, except by the consent of the General Conference; and provided further that this provision shall not apply to annual conferences of the former Evangelical United Brethren Church during the first three quadrenniums after union.⁵⁰
5. To make rules and regulations for the administration of the work of the Church within the jurisdiction, subject to such powers as have been or shall be vested in the General Conference.
6. To appoint a committee on appeals to hear and determine the appeal of a traveling preacher of that jurisdiction from the decision of a trial committee.

44. Amended 1976.

45. Amended 1976.

46. Amended 1976.

47. Amended 1976.

48. See Judicial Council Decision 67.

49. See Judicial Council Decision 183.

50. See Judicial Council Decision 447.

Section V. Central Conferences

¶ 28. Article I. —There shall be central conferences for the work of the Church outside the United States of America⁵¹ with such duties, powers, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth. The number and boundaries of the central conferences shall be determined by the Uniting Conference. Subsequently the General Conference shall have authority to change the number and boundaries of central conferences. The central conferences shall have the duties, powers, and privileges hereinafter set forth.

¶ 29. Article II. —The central conferences shall be composed of as many delegates as shall be determined by a basis established by the General Conference. The delegates shall be clergy and lay in equal numbers.⁵²

¶ 30. Article III. —The central conferences shall meet within the year succeeding the meeting of the General Conference at such times and places as shall have been determined by the preceding respective central conferences or by commissions appointed by them or by the General Conference. The date and place of the first meeting succeeding the Uniting Conference shall be fixed by the bishops of the respective central conferences, or in such manner as shall be determined by the General Conference.

¶ 31. Article IV. —The central conferences shall have the following powers and duties and such others as may be conferred by the General Conference:

1. To promote the evangelistic, educational, missionary, social-concern, and benevolent interests and institutions of the Church within their own boundaries.

2. To elect the bishops for the respective central conferences in number as may be determined from time to time, upon a basis fixed by the General Conference, and to cooperate in carrying out such plans for the support of their bishops as may be determined by the General Conference.⁵³
3. To establish and constitute such central conference boards as may be required and to elect their administrative officers.⁵⁴
4. To determine the boundaries of the annual conferences within their respective areas.
5. To make such rules and regulations for the administration of the work within their boundaries including such changes and adaptations of the General Discipline as the conditions in the respective areas may require, subject to the powers that have been or shall be vested in the General Conference.⁵⁵
6. To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions arising on the rules, regulations, and such revised, adapted, or new sections of the central conference Discipline enacted by the central conference.
7. To appoint a committee on appeals to hear and determine the appeal of a traveling preacher of that central conference from the decision of a committee on trial.⁵⁶

51. Amended 1976.

52. Amended 1992.

53. See Judicial Council Decision 370.

54. See Judicial Council Decision 69.

55. See Judicial Council Decisions 142, 147, 313.

56. See Judicial Council Decision 595.

Section VI. Annual Conferences

¶ 32. Article I. —The annual conference shall be composed of clergy members as defined by the General Conference, together with professing⁵⁷ lay members elected by each charge, the diaconal ministers, the active deaconesses under episcopal appointment within the bounds of the annual conference,⁵⁸ the conference president of United Methodist Women, the conference president of United Methodist Men, the conference lay leader, district lay leaders, the president or equivalent officer of the conference young adult organization, the president of the conference youth organization, the chair of the annual conference college student organization,⁵⁹ and one young person between the ages of twelve (12) and seventeen (17) and one young person between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty (30)⁶⁰ from each district to be selected in such a manner as may be determined by the annual conference.⁶¹ In the annual conferences of the central conferences, the four-year participation and the two-year membership requirements may be waived by the annual conference for young persons under thirty (30)⁶² years of age. Such persons must be professing⁶³ members of The United Methodist Church and active participants at the time of election.⁶⁴ Each charge served by more than one clergy shall be entitled to as many lay members as there are clergy members. The lay members shall have been for the two years next preceding their election members of The United Methodist Church⁶⁵ and shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years next preceding their election.⁶⁶

If the lay membership should number less than the clergy members of the annual

conference, the annual conference shall, by its own formula, provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize lay and clergy membership of the annual conference.⁶⁷



¶ 33. Article II. —The annual conference is the basic body in the Church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote on all constitutional amendments, on the election of clergy and lay delegates to the General and the jurisdictional or central conferences, on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy and such other rights as have not been delegated to the General Conference under the Constitution, with the exception that the lay members may not vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy except that the lay members of the conference board of ordained ministry may vote on matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy, with the further exception that lay members of the district committee on ordained ministry be full participating members of the district committee on ordained ministry with vote.⁶⁸ It shall discharge such duties and exercise such powers as the General Conference under the Constitution may determine.⁶⁹

¶ 34. Article III. —The annual conference shall elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference and to its jurisdictional or central conference in the manner provided in this section, Articles IV and V.⁷⁰ The persons first elected up to the number determined by the ratio for representation in the General Conference shall be representatives in that body. Additional delegates shall be elected to complete the number determined by the ratio for representation in the jurisdictional or central conference, who, together with those first elected as above, shall be delegates in the jurisdictional or central conference. The additional delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference shall in the order of their election be the reserve delegates to the General Conference.⁷¹ The annual conference shall also elect reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference as it may deem desirable. These reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conferences may act as reserve delegates to the General Conference when it is evident that not enough reserve delegates are in attendance at the General Conference.⁷²

¶ 35. Article IV. —The ordained⁷³ ministerial delegates to the General Conference and to the jurisdictional or central conference shall be elected by and from⁷⁴ the ordained⁷⁵ ministerial members in full connection with the annual conference or provisional annual conference.⁷⁶

¶ 36. Article V. —The lay delegates to the General and jurisdictional or central conferences shall be elected by the lay members of the annual conference or provisional annual

conference without regard to age; provided such delegates⁷⁷ shall have been professing⁷⁸ members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years next preceding their election, and shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years next preceding their election,⁷⁹ and are members thereof within the annual conference electing them at the time of holding the General and jurisdictional or central conferences.⁸⁰

57. Amended 2000.

58. Amended 1996.

59. Amended 1996.

60. Amended 2000.

61. Amended 1968, 1970, 1980, 1984.

62. Amended 2000.

63. Amended 2000.

64. Amended 1988.

65. Amended 1972.

66. Amended 1976.

67. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 24, 113, 129, 349, 378, 479, 495, 511, 553, 561; and *Decision 7, Interim Judicial Council*.

68. Amended 1996.

69. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 78, 79, 132, 405, 406, 415, 524, 532, 534, 552, 584, 690, 742, 782, 862.

70. See *Judicial Council Decision* 592.

71. See *Judicial Council Decision* 352.

72. Amended 1992.

73. Amended 1996.

74. Amended 1996.

75. Amended 2000.

76. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 1, 308, 403, 473, 531, 534, 875.

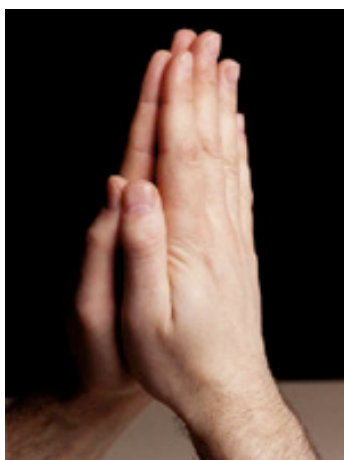
77. Amended 1972.

78. Amended 2000.

79. Amended 1976.

80. See *Judicial Council Decisions* 403, 887.

Section VII. Boundaries



¶ 37. Article I. —The United Methodist Church shall have jurisdictional conferences made up as follows:

Northeastern—Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, the Virgin Islands,⁸¹ West Virginia.⁸²

Southeastern—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South

Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia.

North Central—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

South Central—Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas.

Western—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and the territory of the United States in the Pacific region.⁸³

¶ 38. Article II. —The work of the Church outside the United States of America⁸⁴ may be formed into central conferences, the number and boundaries of which shall be determined by the Uniting Conference, the General Conference having authority subsequently to make changes in the number and boundaries.

¶ 39. Article III. —Changes in the number, names, and boundaries of the jurisdictional conferences may be effected by the General Conference upon the consent of a majority of the annual conferences of each of the jurisdictional conferences involved.⁸⁵

¶ 40. Article IV. —Changes in the number, names, and boundaries of the annual conferences and episcopal areas may be effected by the jurisdictional conferences in the United States of America⁸⁶ and by the central conferences outside the United States of America according to the provisions under the respective powers and pursuant to the respective structures⁸⁷ of the jurisdictional and the central conferences.⁸⁸

¶ 41. Article V. Transfer of Local Churches

1. A local church may be transferred from one annual conference to another in which it is geographically located upon approval by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the following:

- a) the charge conference;
- b) the congregational meeting of the local church;
- c) each of the two annual conferences involved.

The vote shall be certified by the secretaries of the specified conferences or meetings to the bishops having supervision of the annual conferences involved, and upon their announcement of the required majorities the transfer shall immediately be effective.

2. The vote on approval of transfer shall be taken by each annual conference at its first session after the matter is submitted to it.

3. Transfers under the provisions of this article shall not be governed or restricted by other provisions of this Constitution relating to changes of boundaries of conferences.

81. Amended 1980.

82. Amended 1976.

83. Amended 1980.

84. Amended 1976.

85. See Judicial Council Decisions 55, 56, 85, 215.

86. Amended 1976.

87. Amended 1992.

88. See *Judicial Council Decisions 28, 85, 217, 525, 541, 735; and Decisions 1, 2, Interim Judicial Council.*

Section VIII. District Conferences

¶ 42. Article I. —There may be organized in an annual conference, district conferences composed of such persons and invested with such powers as the General Conference may determine.

Section IX. Charge Conferences

¶ 43. Article I. —There shall be organized in each charge a charge conference composed of such persons and invested with such powers as the General Conference shall provide.

¶ 44. Article II. Election of Church Officers—Unless the General Conference shall order otherwise, the officers of the church or churches constituting a charge shall be elected by the charge conference or by the professing⁸⁹ members of said church or churches at a meeting called for that purpose, as may be arranged by the charge conference, unless the election is otherwise required by local church charters or state or provincial law.

89. Amended 2000.

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