

Administrative Order

Who is the head of the United Methodist Church? President of the Council of Bishops? No: s/he is just the presiding officer over the semi-annual meeting of the Council and has no special authority over the Church at large not shared by the other bishops. Chief staff person of the Connectional Table (coordinates total work of the program agencies of the Church)? No: s/he is not in charge of the total work of the UMC. Executive head of one of our boards or agencies? No: s/he only in charge of a certain portion of the work of the Church. Fifteen-25 bishops share task of presiding at General Conference. President of the Judicial Council? No: Judicial Council just decides cases. No “pope”, no “president” of the UMC. Only the General Conference can speak for the UMC.

Very American, keen distrust of too much power centralized in one person. Various boards/agencies go their own independent ways that sometimes overlap and even conflict with each other. Not always the best uses of our resources. Most of the members of General Conference are also members of the boards/agencies so they are often reluctant to vote to change the status quo. Need to rule out dual membership in a board/agency and in General Conference? A more effective authority over the boards/agencies is evident. Perhaps the Connectional Table that replaced the General Council on Ministries in 2004 will be able to establish a sense of unity and coherence and missional focus for the entire program of the Church. Increasing calls for Council of Bishops to assume more leadership.

Structure of General Agencies

General agencies are constituted by the General Conference—not by the constitution (unlike the Council of Bishops and Judicial Council). Not include task forces or committees related to the General Conference session. Persons cannot be members of more than one agency (with certain exceptions). One cannot be the chair of more than one agency or a division of it, and staff members of agencies cannot be members of any agency, nor are any persons who receive compensation from it. Eight-year term limits except for UM Publishing House (12 years). No person (except bishops) can serve for more than 16 consecutive years as a member of general agencies.

All agencies amenable to General Conference and during interim between General Conferences, to the Connectional Table. Every agency has one or more bishops in its membership and many elect the bishop to chair it or be president of it. This serves as an informal means of correlation of agencies through the bishops’ association with the other bishops.

Classification of agencies not clear-cut, but Bishop Tuell puts them in three categories for the sake of discussion in this chapter: agencies for administration, support service agencies, and program agencies. Administration: have responsibility for oversight of the work of the Church; Support: involved with serving the needs of the Church so it can carry out its mission; Program: involved in carrying out the mission of the Church through preaching, teaching, and action.

Agencies for Administration

Council of Bishops

Constitutionally-established agency made up of all the bishops, including retired (have voice but no vote). Usually meets semi-annually to “plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.” There is a WIDE assortment of tasks the Church places in the bishops’ hands. Bishops are also the “chief pastors” with responsibility for expressing and implementing the pastoral concern of the whole Church.

Connectional Table

Created by the 2004 General Conference, replaces General Council on Ministries that had been part of our structure since 1972. Place where “ministry and money are brought together to coordinate the mission, ministry, and resources of the UMC.” Not a General Agency, but a category all its own. Hopefully, it will be a leaner, less bureaucratic and more effective way of coordinating the total program of the Church than the GCOM.

Membership: 21 persons elected from jurisdictions based on membership; 1 from each of the seven Central Conferences; an active bishop who serves as chair; presidents of the program boards and commissions; one youth and one young adult from the Division on Ministries with Young People; and one rep each from four ethnic caucuses => total of 47 members. The General Secretaries also present but no vote. Located in Dayton, OH.

General Council on Finance and Administration

Top fiscal control body of the UMC. Forty members, including 4 bishops. No member may be a member of or employed by any general agency. Council elects a general secretary who is also the treasurer of the council. Prepares the quadrennial budget for the entire UMC at the general level. All World Service agencies have their budgets determined in collaboration with the Connectional Table within a total budget approved by GCFA.

GCFA requires periodic audits of all agencies and has a responsibility to search out cases of overlapping activities of agencies and call this to the attention of the agencies. Then it must work the problem out with the agencies and may, in consultation with the Connectional Table, decline to release funds if the matter is not properly resolved. Extensive property and management functions on behalf of most of the agencies and holds title to certain properties on behalf of the entire Church.

Annual conference CFA composed of 5 to 21 persons so there is at least one more lay than clergy. Same restrictions of membership as for GCFA. Prepare budget every year. GCFA headquarters in Evanston, IL.

Support Services Agencies

The United Methodist Publishing House

Originated in 1789. Operation of a multimillion-dollar publishing, distribution, and retail establishment. Forty-three member board: 2 bishops, 10 members elected by the board, 30 persons elected by the jurisdictional conferences (clergy # = lay #), and one from the Central Conferences.

Board elects president/publisher and a book editor who with the publisher approves all manuscripts for publication and for supervising the editing of all our books and the *Quarterly Review*.

Publishing House provides revenue for the support of its pension program for clergy and other beneficiaries. Can property and build buildings without clearance from Connectional Table (unlike all other agencies). Headquarters in Nashville, TN.

General Board of Pension and Health Benefits

Thirty-two member board responsible for the entire pension and health benefits program of the UMC. Billions of dollars in investments and careful compilations of records of service of thousands of personnel of the Church. Board elects a general secretary and other staff as necessary. Staff works closely with annual conference board of pensions, each of which may have slightly differing pension programs and needs. The annual conference board must recommend to the annual conference ways to raise money to fund the pension program and it must recommend the annuity rate to be paid. The annual conference board has at least 12 members: 1/3 laywomen, 1/3 laymen, 1/3 clergy.

Recommended annuity rate for defined benefit pension should be “not less than 1 percent of the average salary of the conference.” Example: if average salary is \$30,000, the rate should be \$300, so annual pension = \$300 * years of service prior to 1982. In 1982 a “defined contribution” (like 401k) system of pensions went into effect. Headquarters in Evanston, IL.

General Commission on Communications

Also called United Methodist Communications (UMCOM). Helps the Church meet its communication needs, and is the official news-gathering and distributing agency for the Church and its general boards/agencies. It can elect a general secretary. Headquarters in Nashville, TN.

General Commission on Archives and History

Twenty-four member commission is the official historical agency of the Church. Presided over by a bishop, commission made of ex-officio members, members elected by General Conference, and nine members at large elected by commission. General secretary and other staff may be elected. All official documents, minutes, correspondence, and papers of all bishops, general Church officers, agencies, committees, and other groups are deposited in the archives “when they no longer have operational usefulness”. Also recommends to General Conference for all national historic and heritage landmarks.

Optional jurisdictional and mandatory annual conference commissions carry out those functions at their levels. Headquarters in Madison, NJ.

Program Agencies

General Board of Church and Society

Relates the gospel of Jesus Christ to the society in which we live. It feels called to give forthright leadership and witness and to speak its convictions to the church and the world, recognizing the freedom and responsibility of all Christian to make their decisions on these matters according to their own Christian calling. Often involved in controversial issues; but United Methodists recognize that applying the gospel to all of life always results in controversy. The Church charges the GBCS with responsibility to apply the gospel to the most pressing social concerns of our time, and let the chips fall where they may.

Membership for all program boards: each annual conference, on nomination from its General and jurisdictional conference delegates sends nominations to the jurisdictional conference. At least 15 nominations from 8 categories, from 1-5 in each category: clergy, laywomen, laymen, racial and ethnic minority, youth, young adult, older adult, and people with disabilities. Goal for membership to be 1/3 laywomen, 1/3 laymen, 1/3 clergy; adequate representation of youth, young adults, older adults, people with disabilities, and persons from small membership churches; and at least 30% of the total be racial and ethnic persons.

Council of Bishops names six bishops to GBCS and the board can elect up to nine additional members. Headquarters in Washington, D.C., but also a United Nations office in New York City which is operated in cooperation with the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. There may be an annual conference version.

General Board of Discipleship

Brings together all of the agencies serving the local church. Responsibility for education, evangelism, worship, stewardship, and ministry of the laity. United Methodist Men used to be under the board, but the 1996 General Conference created a new freestanding agency: the General Commission on United Methodist Men. GBD has responsibility of interpreting and spreading through the Church all of the rich meanings of the universal priesthood of believers, of Christian vocation, and of the ministry of the laity. Provides resources for all of the local church committees and the various levels of the UMY Ministry.

Curriculum Resources Committee develops curriculum resources for the education program of the Church. Division of Ministries with Young People, created in 2004 will “empower young people as world-changing disciples of Jesus Christ. DMYP made up of 22 youth, 17 young adults, 8 adult workers with youth, 5 members of the GBD, 2 members from the UM Student Movement, and 5 additional members added for inclusiveness and expertise. Headquarters in Nashville, TN.

General Board of Global Ministries

Membership same as other boards except for Women's Division that is predominantly women. The total board membership is approximately 50% laywomen, 25% clergy, 25% laymen. Six program areas: 1) Evangelization and Church Growth; 2) Community and Institutional Ministries; 3) Mission Contexts and Relationships; 4) Mission Education; 5) Mission Volunteers; and 6) Mission Personnel. Also, Committee on Deaconess Service, and Deaconess Program Office. Women's Division is the body relating to the entire United Methodist Women organization throughout the Church.

Health and Relief Unit is within the GBGM. Within that unit is the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Health and Welfare Ministries. The board has a long history of missionary outreach to the world. The annual conference is to have a board of global ministries or "equivalent structure". Our annual conference (California-Nevada) is the only annual conference with paid staff coordinating missionary outreach to the world through its United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM). GBGM headquarters in New York City.

General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

This board prepares and assists persons in fulfilling their ministry in Christ as this has been historically understood by United Methodism, and to provide general oversight and care for our institutions of higher learning. Two divisions:

- **Division of Higher Education:** maintains advisory relationship with the over 123 schools, colleges, and universities of our Church. Also concerned with efforts to establish a campus Christian movement and a ministry to the educational community. Committed to an ecumenical approach, although some work still carried on through the denominational Wesley Foundations as well. Office of Loans and Scholarships administers an extensive loan/scholarship program for UM college students using funds from UM Student Day offerings as well as other sources.

University Senate is the accrediting and standardizing agency for all the educational institutions of the Church. Claremont School of Theology in Claremont and University of Pacific in Stockton are the two UM-related higher-ed institutions in California. Willamette University in Salem, OR and University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA are two others north of California. University Senate made up of 25 persons who are not members of the GBHEM, picked for their training and experience in the work of establishing standards and evaluating educational institutions. Associate secretary of the Division is the executive secretary of the Senate. One of the oldest agencies of the Church, the University Senate pioneered the whole matter of accreditation of institutions of higher learning in the US.

- **Division of Ordained Ministry:** involved at general level with all the concerns of annual conference boards of ordained ministry through the Section of Deacons and Diaconal Ministers and Section of Elders and Local Pastors. Involves recruitment, guidance, training, qualifications, courses of study, conference relations of clergy, continuing formation, and relationships with all the seminaries

of the Church (currently 13), as well as ecumenical involvements. Section of Chaplains and Related Ministries has dual responsibility: *administrative* in that it recruits, endorses, oversees, and aids all the chaplains in the military and in institutional work of all kinds; *providing ministry* to persons in the armed forces and in institutions, and to help local churches and other groups do the same.

Each annual conference is to have a board of higher education and campus ministry. GBHEM headquarters in Nashville, TN.

General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-Religious Concerns

Has the task of proclaiming and working for the unity of the whole of Christ's church. Composed of 40 members, with 22 elected by jurisdictions; one member from the central conferences, elected by the Council of Bishops; 9 members at large; 4 bishops; and 2 members from other denominations of the Consultation on Church Union. Develops and interprets the primary relationships of the Church to ecumenical and interreligious organizations (e.g., World Council of Churches); to united churches; and to concordat and covenanting churches. Dialogues with National Association of Evangelicals and the World Evangelical Fellowship. Special relationship with the Council of Bishops, since the council officially represents the UMC in relations with other denominations. Commission also responsible for relationships with non-Christian religions. Commission's headquarters in New York City.

General Commission on Religion and Race

Forty-three members with a strong representation of ethnic minority groups. Assists in every way the cause of empowerment of ethnic minorities, including working with non-church-related groups involved in the same cause. Has a major educational task in the area of racism and racist attitudes. May also have annual conference version. Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

Forty-three members, a majority of whom are women and whose president is to be a woman. Responsibility "to challenge the UMC... to a continuing commitment to the full and equal responsibility and participation of women in the total life and mission of the Church." May also have annual conference version. Headquarters in Evanston, IL.

General Commission on United Methodist Men

Twenty-three members, including two bishops, 5 jurisdictional presidents of United Methodist Men, 6 reps of the National Association of Conference Presidents of United Methodist Men, one UMM rep from central conferences, president of the UMM Foundation, president of National Association of UM Scouters, 6 members at large, and one rep from men's ministry in a Pan-Methodist church. Headquarters in Nashville, TN.