

General Conference 2024 Recap

The UMC denomination held its Quadrennial General Conference meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina on April 23 – May 3rd. This is the body that meets once every four years, makes decisions for the denomination, and is the only place that speaks of the denomination as a whole. The General Conference passed many pieces of legislation. A summary of the major issues:

1. Regionalization: This is a constitutional amendment that still requires all 133 annual conferences in the world to vote (likely will take until 2026) before it is ratified. If all 133 annual conferences have an aggregate 2/3's vote it will update our UMC constitution. If passed, Regionalization allows different regions in the world to modify Part VI of our Book of Discipline (the guidebook for our denomination). Part VI deals with organization and administration of the church. Regionalization would allow different parts of the world to have different criteria for ordained ministry, membership in the church, different organizational structures, different hymnals and rituals, and have their own judicial administration while maintaining the same criteria for Parts I-V of the Book of Discipline. Parts I-V include our Constitution, General Book of Discipline, Doctrinal Standards and Theological Task, Ministry of All Christians, and Social Principles. These would continue to apply to all regions equally.

2. Decisions with regard to same sex marriage and LGBTQ+ pastors: Previously, the UMC did not permit pastors to perform same sex weddings and annual conferences to ordain LGBTQ+ pastors. Now decisions on whether or not to perform same sex weddings will be made by local churches and pastors and decisions whether or not to ordain LGBTQ+ pastors will be made by the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Pastors will not be punished for presiding or refusing to preside over weddings, nor will churches face punitive actions for allowing or not allowing weddings to occur in their sanctuary.

3. Revised Social Principles: The Social Principles are Part V of our Book of Discipline. The Social Principles were established in 1972 and have been revised at every General Conference since but have not undergone a full rewrite until now. They define our denominational stances on things like gambling, alcohol, divorce, marriage, war, and a host of other topics. A new set of Social Principles has been adopted by the UMC. The majority of them are similar to previous Social Principles. One change occurred to the definition of marriage: "marriage is a sacred lifelong covenant that bring two people of faith (adult man and woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age) into union of one another and into deeper relationship with God and the religious community."

4. Deacons Sacramental Privilege: The UMC has three orders for pastors: Elders, Deacons, Local Pastors. In the past, Deacons were prevented from serving the Sacrament of Baptism and Communion. This restriction has been removed and Deacons are now able to administer Baptism and Communion.

5. Pension Plan: The pension plan for pastors was updated to reflect the current financial realities of the UMC. This affects all appointed pastors in the UMC.

6. Reduced General Conference Apportionments: Apportionments are the money we pay to the denomination to support the overall mission and ministry of the UMC. The amount that will go to the General Conference was reduced to reflect our current financial reality. This may or may not affect Broad Street's appointments depending on how our Annual Conference choose to allocate our apportionments.

What follows is a full breakdown of the language changes in our Book of Discipline related to the issues currently being discussed.

1. LGBTQ Clergy

Petition 20173 - "Chastity" instead of "Celibacy" (§304.2G) – ADCA page 623

*changed in Plenary session to the below statements

Petition 20177-FO-§304.3-G – A Simple Plan #3

2016 Version with new additions/deletions from 2024

§304. Qualifications for Ordination-

1. Those whom the Church ordains shall be conscious of God's call to ordained ministry, and their call shall be acknowledged and authenticated by the Church. God's call has many manifestations, and the Church cannot structure a single test of authenticity. Nevertheless, the experience of the Church and the needs of its ministry require certain qualities of faith, life, and practice from those who seek ordination as deacons and elders. In order that The United Methodist Church may be assured that those persons who present themselves as candidates for ordained ministry are truly called of God, the Church expects persons seeking ordination to:

- a) Have a personal faith in Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.
- b) Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness.
- c) Teach and model generous Christian giving with a focus on tithing as God's standard of giving
- d) Acknowledge a call by God to give themselves completely to ordained ministry following Jesus' pattern of love and service.
- e) Communicate persuasively the Christian faith in both oral and written form.
- f) Make a commitment to lead the whole Church in loving service to humankind.
- g) Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry, evidence of God's grace in their lives, and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the Church.
- h) Be persons in whom the community can place trust and confidence.
- i) Accept that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation through faith in God through Jesus Christ; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history, and Church polity; possess the skills essential to the practice of ordained ministry; and lead in making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- j) Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and Discipline and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers.

2. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of the influence of an ordained minister on the lives of other persons both within and outside the Church, the Church expects those

who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life. To this end, they agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and faithful sexual intimacy expressed through fidelity, monogamy, commitment, mutual affection and respect, careful and honest communication, mutual consent, and growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

~~3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.~~

4. The United Methodist Church entrusts those persons who are in the ordained ministry with primary responsibility for maintaining standards of education and preparation for ordination. Having been originally recommended by a charge conference or equivalent body (§ 310.1e) and by authorization of the ordained members in full connection with the annual conference, according to the procedures set out in the Book of Discipline for the examination and approval of candidates for ordination, persons are elected to membership in the annual conference and ordained by the bishop.

5. In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on personal judgement of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the Church. The district committee on the ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry shall not approve or recommend any person for candidacy, licensing, commissioning, or ordination who does not meet the qualifications of § 304.1-3, based on the full examination and thorough inquiry into the person's fitness by the committee and board (see Judicial Council Decisions 1343 and 1344). The bishop presiding in the clergy session shall rule any such unqualified candidate out of order and not eligible to be acted upon.

~~1. "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual; or is living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984, 1020, 1341. 2. See Judicial Council Decisions 984, 985, 1027, 1028~~

2. LGBTQ Marriage

Petition 20730 - Revised Social Principles -¶161 and 162 - ADCA page 208 2.

2016 version:

C) Marriage -We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God's blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

2024 version:

C. Marriage- Within the church, we affirm marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith, an adult man and woman of consenting age, or two adult persons of consenting age into union with one another and into deeper relationship with God and the religious community.

While The United Methodist Church does not recognize marriage as a sacrament, we celebrate and cherish this union as an expression of the couple's faith, grounded in their relationship with God and one another. Marriage thus reflects a continued willingness to grow together in Christ and a commitment to cultivate a covenantal bond that encompasses intimacy, grace, and love.

As members of the larger society, we also affirm the importance of civil marriage, the legal recognition of domestic unions by the state. Such legal recognition is vital for guaranteeing family stability and the orderly regulation of inheritances, and for providing assurance that spouses and children are afforded all the rights, benefits, and protections to which they are entitled.

1. Child Marriage

We reject marital relationships with children and youth under the age of eighteen (18), even in places where such relationships are culturally or legally permissible. Child marriages and premature sexual activities disrupt the normal course of emotional, biological, and social development of minor children. For underage girls, in particular, premature sexual activities—and the pregnancies resulting from such activities—can permanently damage internal organs, lead to lifelong medical problems, and preclude other opportunities in their lives. Waiting until a more appropriate age to wed offers better opportunities for children and youth to grow into healthy adulthood and become full, contributing members of society. We therefore believe that young people should be of legal age to give their consent before entering into marriage.

3. Individual Church Authority

A. LGBTQ Clergy

2016 Version with Additions/deletions for 2024

Section VIII. Appointment-Making:

¶ 425. Responsibility-1. Clergy shall be appointed by the bishop, who is empowered to make and fix all appointments in the episcopal area of which the annual conference is a part. Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement. Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-parish relations committees, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, economic condition, sexual orientation, or age. The concept of itineracy is important, and sensitive attention should be given in appointing clergy with physical challenges to responsibilities and duties that meet their gifts and graces. Through appointment-making, the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible.

2. Appointment-making across conference lines shall be encouraged as a way of creating mobility and open itineracy. The jurisdictional committee on ordained ministry will cooperate with bishops and cabinets in providing information on supply and demand within the jurisdiction.

3. The United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of an inclusive church (¶ 4. Article IV) with the formation of open itineracy (¶ 425.1).

4. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background. Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, bishops, cabinets, and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergypersons so appointed and for their congregations.

¶ 427. Criteria—Appointments shall take into account the unique needs of a charge, the community context, and also the gifts and evidence of God’s grace of a particular pastor. To assist bishops, cabinets, pastors, and congregations to achieve an effective match of charges and pastors, criteria must be developed and analyzed in each instance and then shared with pastors and congregations.

1. Congregations—The district superintendent shall develop with the pastor and the committees on pastor-parish relations of all churches profiles that reflect the needs, characteristics, and opportunities for mission of the charge consistent with the Church’s statement of purpose. These profiles shall be reviewed annually and updated when appropriate to include:

- a) The general situation in which a congregation finds itself in a particular setting: size, financial condition, quality of lay leadership, special needs for pastoral ministry, and history.
- b) The convictional stance of the congregation: theology; prejudices, if any; spiritual life.
- c) The ministry of the congregation among its people for the sake of the community: service programs, basis for adding new members, reasons for losing members, mission to community and world, forms of witness.
- d) The qualities and functions of pastoral ministry needed to fulfill the mission, goals, and special needs of the congregation.

B. LGBTQ Marriage

Petition 20717 - Local Discernment of Marriage and Wedding Services (¶419.12-G) – ADCA page 980

Add new subparagraphs after ¶ 419.12:

13. The superintendent shall not penalize any clergy for performing, or refraining from performing, a same-sex marriage service.

14. The superintendent shall neither require any local church to hold or prohibit a local church from holding a same-sex marriage service on property owned by a local church.

4. Israel Resolution 6112

Petition 20553-CC-R6112-G United Nations Resolutions on the Israel-Palestine Conflict (update of R6112 - adopted in 2000, 2008, 2012)

1. Revise paragraph 1:

- i. Whereas, negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority still have not achieved a just and lasting peace for ~~the Palestinian~~ both peoples; and

2. Revise paragraph 3:

- i. Whereas, The UMC in the Social Principles recognizes and affirms the role of the United Nations in the just and lasting resolution of ~~this~~ conflict, “Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples, we endorse the United Nations and its related bodies and the International Court of Justice as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law.” (§ 165D), and

3. Revise paragraph 6:

- i. Whereas, for more than ~~40~~ 50 years the government of Israel has continued its military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza and the seizing of more and more Palestinian land for illegal settlements in direct violation of U.N. resolutions as well as United Methodist General Conference resolutions, and

5. Revise paragraph 9:

- i. Whereas, May ~~2012~~ 2020 marks over ~~70~~ 60 years since the establishment of the State of Israel as well as the dispossession of over 750,000 ~~900,000~~ Palestinians who are still seeking their full human rights, and

6. Revise paragraph 14:

- i. Be it further resolved, that The United Methodist Church call upon the United States, ~~as a~~ and all permanent members of the UN Security Council, to accept the authority of Security Council resolutions, to refrain from vetoing resolutions, and abide by Security Council Resolutions 242, ~~and~~ 338, and 2334 as well as all other relevant UN resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings, that provide a framework for bringing this conflict to a just and permanent end.

5. Israel Resolution 9999

Petition 20539-CA-R9999-G Exclude Government Debt of Countries Involved in Prolonged Military Occupations

WHEREAS, Amos 5:24 (CEB) says “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” and Psalm 103:6 (CEB) says “The LORD works righteousness; does justice for all who are oppressed,” and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church, through its general agencies and annual conferences, has endeavored to be accountable to our Social Principles through screening against investment in military occupations, and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (§ 165D) state “. . . we endorse the United Nations, its related bodies, the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law,” and

WHEREAS, three nations have held subject populations under prolonged military occupation: Israel has occupied the Palestinian territories since 1967, Turkey has occupied Northern Cyprus since 1974, and Morocco has occupied Western Sahara since 1976, thus denying the subject populations their self-determination in violation of the system established by the Charter of the United Nations and International Law in general, and

WHEREAS, the above-named occupying powers have been named in United Nations Security Council resolutions and/or International Court of Justice rulings as having engaged in prolonged military occupations and are thereby violators of international law and are responsible for human rights abuses, generally including reduction of food assistance to refugees, failure to protect civilian persons, land confiscation, home demolition, and violence against civilians, and

WHEREAS, government debt (also called sovereign debt), especially that held in bonds denominated in foreign currencies, is unrestricted funds that a government uses at its own discretion and without any formal mechanism for advocacy by the bond holder, unlike stocks that represent an ownership interest in a corporation and provide a platform to advocate for change, and

WHEREAS, holders of the government debt of countries complicit in prolonged military occupations are effectively financing the high military expenditures of those governments that are necessitated by that military occupation and holders of that debt are therefore

earning money in the form of interest payments from the human rights abuses and violations of international law of those countries, and

WHEREAS, Wespith Benefits and Investments, the holder of United Methodist pension funds (formally named the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits), in their human rights investment guideline says “Wespith also may exclude from investment the sovereign debt of any country demonstrating a prolonged and systematic pattern of human rights abuses,”

Therefore, be it resolved, that the General Conference prayerfully calls upon the boards and agencies throughout the connection and its own investment managers to add to their human rights guidelines explicit language with regard to governmental debt so as to exclude those governments maintaining a prolonged military occupation that have been the subject of United Nations Security Council resolutions and/or International Court of Justice rulings, and to align their portfolios accordingly, avoiding the governmental debt of each such country until the time when each government ends their military occupation.

6. Abortion

2016 Social Principles:

K) Abortion

The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child. We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection or eugenics (see Resolution 3184).

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. This procedure shall be performed only by certified medical providers. Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion. We entrust God to provide guidance, wisdom, and discernment to those facing an unintended pregnancy.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We mourn and are committed to promoting the diminishment of high abortion rates. The Church shall encourage ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies such as comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education, advocacy in regard to contraception, and support of initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls around the globe.

Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel that they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. They should also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy. We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption. (See ¶ 161M.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.

2024 Social Principles:

K. Reproductive Health and Abortion

We support the provision of comprehensive, age-appropriate education for sexual health, as well as access to consistent, effective, and affordable contraception. We also affirm ministries and initiatives aimed at promoting reproductive health and enhancing the quality of life for women and girls. Because of the dangers and risks involved in childbearing, we believe that women and girls should have consistent access to gynecological care. We, therefore, urge governments, businesses, churches, and other civic institutions to make access to prevention education, medical check-ups, treatment, and counseling high priorities for women and girls of childbearing age.

Our commitment to the sanctity of human life makes us reluctant to condone abortion. We unconditionally reject it as an acceptable means of birth control or a mechanism for gender selection and other forms of eugenics. We support measures requiring parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood, except in cases of alleged incest.

We oppose late-term or partial-birth abortion, a process also known as dilation and extraction. We call for the end to this practice, except when the life of the mother is in danger, no other medical treatments are feasible, or when severe abnormalities threaten the viability of the fetus. We recognize that these and other tragic conflicts of life with life may justify decisions to terminate the life of a fetus. In these limited circumstances,

we support the legal option of abortion and insist that such procedures be performed by trained medical providers in clean and safe settings.

We urge all those considering abortions to seek appropriate medical advice and pastoral counseling and to engage in searching, prayerful inquiries into other alternatives, such as making babies available for adoption. We pray for those facing unintended pregnancies and offer our prayers and support as they attempt to discern God's will and seek God's wisdom and guidance. Regardless of the circumstances in which someone might get an abortion, we do not condone bullying or shaming people for their decisions or actions.

We acknowledge that young women of childbearing age frequently report that they lack the ability to make meaningful life choices or exercise effective control over their own lives. We challenge pastors, congregations, campus ministries, and others to be at the forefront of efforts to empower these young women. Additionally, we support resource centers that offer compassionate care and help women explore alternatives to abortion.

We recognize that access to reproductive health services is too often limited by economic factors. Women living in poverty are often unable to make choices about when to become pregnant or about the size of their families. They also lack access to safe prenatal and postnatal care. Such a lack of agency perpetuates cycles of poverty by restricting the ability of women to participate in the workforce and by increasing the strain on scarce family resources. We support policies and programs that extend reproductive health services to women in economically challenged areas.

We support the use of a variety of reproductive strategies for those desiring to have children, including fertility treatments, in vitro fertilization (IVF), embryo or sperm donation, surrogacy, and others. We believe the decision whether to use reproductive alternatives is best left to those considering the use of these options, in consultation with their health care providers. In all instances, the use of reproductive alternatives should be in keeping with the highest ethical standards, prioritizing the health and well-being of both women and children.

7. Appointments

2016 BOD with additions and deletions for 2024

2. ¶ 425. Responsibility-1. Clergy shall be appointed by the bishop, who is empowered to make and fix all appointments in the episcopal area of which the annual conference is a part. Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itineracy. Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic ~~origin~~, gender, color, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement. Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-parish relations committees, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic ~~origin~~, gender, color, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. The concept of itineracy is important, and sensitive attention should be given in appointing clergy with physical challenges to responsibilities and duties that meet their gifts and graces. Through appointment-making, the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible.

Appointment-making across conference lines shall be encouraged as a way of creating mobility and open itineracy. The jurisdictional committee on ordained ministry will cooperate with bishops and cabinets in providing information on supply and demand within the jurisdiction.

2. The United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of an inclusive church (¶ 4. Article IV) with the formation of open itineracy (¶ 425.1).

3. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are appointments of clergypersons to congregations in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergyperson's own racial/ethnic and cultural background.

Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, bishops, cabinets, and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergypersons so appointed and for their congregations.

4. Appointment-making/consultation paragraph (no changes from 2016):

¶ 427. Criteria—Appointments shall take into account the unique needs of a charge, the

community context, and also the gifts and evidence of God's grace of a particular pastor. To assist bishops, cabinets, pastors, and congregations to achieve an effective match of charges and pastors, criteria must be developed and analyzed in each instance and then shared with pastors and congregations.

1. Congregations—The district superintendent shall develop with the pastor and the committees on pastor-parish relations of all churches profiles that reflect the needs, characteristics, and opportunities for mission of the charge consistent with the Church's statement of purpose. These profiles shall be reviewed annually and updated when appropriate to include:

- a) The general situation in which a congregation finds itself in a particular setting: size, financial condition, quality of lay leadership, special needs for pastoral ministry, and history.
- b) The convictional stance of the congregation: theology; prejudices, if any; spiritual life.
- c) The ministry of the congregation among its people for the sake of the community: service programs, basis for adding new members, reasons for losing members, mission to community and world, forms of witness.
- d) The qualities and functions of pastoral ministry needed to fulfill the mission, goals, and special needs of the congregation.

8. Paragraph 2553

Petition 21087-CO-¶2553 Remove Disaffiliation Agreement adopted in 2019. Does not affect SCUMC and our process because we were not using said paragraph.

9. Paragraph 2549

Petition 21058-LC-¶2549.2b Expanding Authority for Closing or Discontinuing Local Churches

¶2549.2.b) Upon a recommendation by the district superintendent, and with the consent of the presiding bishop, a majority of the district superintendents, and the appropriate district board of church location and building, the annual conference may declare a local church closed. In the alternative, the annual conference may declare a local church closed in response to a petition submitted jointly by the local church's Church Council, appointed or assigned Pastor in Charge, and at least one of its lay members of the annual conference. If the annual conference closes a local church, title to all the real and personal, tangible and intangible property of the local church shall immediately vest in the annual conference board of trustees, who shall hold said property in trust for the benefit of the annual conference.

(Rationale: Currently, with the exception of a few members of the board of church location and building, a recommendation for closing a local church is exclusively clergy driven. This will expand this authority to include the possibility of significant lay empowerment in this process.)

10. African Delegation and General Conference Makeup

1. *775 of 862 delegates seated*

487 of 492 US delegates

278 of 370 central conference delegates (75% seated)

2. *Credentialing report:*

- Some African Annual Conferences submitted wrong numbers of names or no names
- Some gave conflicting reports
- The Credentialing Committee used Conference Journals when possible to attempt to create accurate lists
- Fraudulent letters were sent to non-credentialed persons complicating the visa certification process
- Couldn't issue too early because of visa expiration dates

3. *Budget*

- 2016-20 General Conference Budget: \$604 million (\$151 million/year)
- 2024-28 General Conference Budget: \$373.4 million (\$93.35 million/year)
 - i. Contingent on collection rates being at 90% or more for the next two years
 - ii. If giving is below 90%, the budget bottom line the budget will be \$353.6 million.

4. *Reduction of US bishops*

32 in US (down from 39 serving and 46 in 2016 budget)

9 in SEJ (down from 13)

11. Funding and LGBTQIA+

Petition 20191-FA-¶806.9-G

The 2016 BOD included this paragraph:

¶ 806.9 Fiscal Responsibilities [of the General Council on Finance and Administration] The General Council on Finance and Administration] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" (¶ 161F). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.¹⁸It shall not limit the Church's ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.

The 2024 General Conference:

Delete ¶ 806.9 and substitute the following:

9. To ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any group or otherwise use such funds to reject any LGBTQIA+ person or limits the response to the HIV epidemic, in order to follow the commitment of The UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian or gay members and friends” (¶ 161.G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.

(Rationale: Whereas, in ¶ 140 defines “inclusiveness” as “openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination” (*The Book of Discipline*, 2016).)

Additional Actions

Delegates also:

- Approved a constitutional amendment addressing the denomination's commitment to eradicating racism.
- Approved an apology to victims and survivors of sexual misconduct by clergy and lay leaders in the church. The resolution also encourages the reporting of sexual abuse and states that the abuse of power will not be tolerated in the church.
- Approved an apology for the role of Methodists in the overthrow of the kingdom of Hawaii in 1893.
- Approved allowing deacons to preside at the sacraments – Holy Communion and baptism-- in their ministry contexts.
- Approved updating jurisdictional young people's ministries, including changing the Division on Ministries with Young People to the Young People's Connectional Network.
- Approved a new retirement plan for U.S. clergy, called Compass, which would be a defined contribution plan similar to what many corporate employers provide. The plan takes effect in 2026.
- Approved a full communion agreement with the Episcopal Church. If the Episcopal Church affirms the agreement, it will mean the denominations recognize each other as the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in which the Gospel is rightly preached and taught."
- Approved adding two bishops for Africa, for a total of 15, and set the number of U.S. bishops at 32 – a decrease from the 39 active bishops and one retired bishop currently serving episcopal areas in the U.S.
- Adopted a new Book of Resolutions, including readopting many resolutions and approving new ones, addressing topics such as climate change, rights of farm workers in the U.S., the observance of the Children's Sabbath, caring for Native people and opposition to racial profiling.
- Adopted a resolution condemning racial-ethnic discrimination and gender-based violence against Asian Americans.
- Approved a resolution calling on United Methodist institutions not to invest in the government bonds of countries that have been cited by the U.N. Security Council or the International Criminal Court for prolonged military occupations.
- Approved a motion to allow four Eurasian conferences to leave the denomination and form an autonomous church.
- Celebrated the impact of Africa University and milestone anniversaries – the 200th anniversary of Methodist mission, the 100th anniversary of the United Methodist

Building in Washington, D.C., and the 80th anniversary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

- Elected a new Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, and filled positions on the Commission on the General Conference, University Senate, general boards and agencies of the church and other entities, as well as trustees to John Street United Methodist Church in New York, the oldest continuously operating Methodist church in the United States.