



General Conference Highlights

created by Rev. Laura & Jeff Rainwater from various denominational reporting and resources.

General Conference by the Numbers

- 133 Annual and Central Conferences Represented
 - 862 voting delegates (50% clergy, 50% laity)
 - Delegates:
 - 55.9% from the U.S.
 - 32% from Africa
 - 6 % from the Philippines
 - 4.6% from Europe
 - 1,099 valid submitted petitions were reviewed
- Conference included:
- 26 plenary sessions
 - 18 worship services
 - 14 legislative committees
 - Nine special addresses and celebrations
 - Four official written languages: English, French, Kiswahili, Portuguese
 - Ten languages spoken via interpreters onsite.

Regionalization Approved

Regionalization means that while we will remain united by our shared doctrine and theology, good portions of our polity (governance, rules, rituals, etc.) will be regional, allowing each area of the world to do ministry in its context. In other words, The UMC will be a worldwide church rather than a U.S. church with global locations. The primary legislation achieving this is constitutional amendments that must be voted on and approved by 67% of all United Methodists across the 133 annual and Central conferences. If approved, the four Regional Conferences will be Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the United States.

Human Sexuality

All restrictive and punitive language against the LGBTQ+ community has been removed from the Book of Discipline:

- GC removed the statement, “The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- UMC clergy and churches are no longer prohibited (nor required) to perform same-gender weddings.
- There is no prohibition on ordination or marriage for LGBTQ+ clergy, and the consecration of LGBTQ+ bishops is now allowed.
- GC removed the funding ban for organizations that support LGBTQ+ causes and added a ban on funding organizations that discriminate against LGBTQ+ persons.
- The revised Social Principles now state: “Within the church, we affirm marriage as a sacred lifelong covenant that brings two people [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.”

Disaffiliations & Separations

- GC discontinued the pathway for disaffiliation, which was approved in 2019 (Paragraph 2553).
- GC created a path for churches to re-affiliate with the UMC.
- GC approved the 4 Eurasia (Russia) Annual Conferences separating from the UMC to form an autonomous church.



Disaffiliation by the numbers (shared by Lewis Center for Church Leadership Report in early 2024):

- Total disaffiliated in the U.S.: 7,631 churches
- 25% of UM churches in the U.S. disaffiliated, representing 24% of U.S. membership.
- 50% of disaffiliating churches were in the Southeast Jurisdiction (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA).
- 21% of disaffiliating churches were in the South Central Jurisdiction (AR, KS, LA, MO, NE, NM, OK, TX).
- In the Mountain Sky Conference, 48 churches disaffiliated, 13% of the total churches (CO, WY, UT, MT).

Other Decisions

Lower Annual Conference Apportionments

The denominational budget was reduced by 42% compared to the 2016 budget, with significant cuts in global missions. The U.S. Annual Conferences will be asked to pay lower apportionments than what delegates passed in 2016. For 2025 and 2026, the conferences will shift from the current base rate of 3.29% to a base rate of 2.6%.

Ordained Deacons now have sacramental authority to preside over holy communion and baptisms in their appointed ministry settings.

New Social Principles have been updated to address various current and global topics.

A New Clergy Pension Plan was adopted, shifting from a partial defined-benefit plan to a wholly defined-contribution plan. This change was made because it was determined the defined-benefit plan was unsustainable.

Changes Coming in Episcopal Assignments

There will continue to be five bishops in the Western Jurisdiction, but there will be no new episcopal elections in 2024. With two bishops retiring this summer (Bishop Oliveto and Bishop Carcaño), two from another jurisdiction will be assigned in the Western Jurisdiction (as some jurisdictions now have more active bishops than conferences). Mountain Sky's new Bishop will likely be assigned at the Western Jurisdiction Conference this summer.

Other Celebrations

- Bishop Tracy S. Malone, resident bishop of the East Ohio Conference, is **the first black woman in the worldwide denomination's history to be elected president of the Council of Bishops.**
- Bishop David Wilson, resident bishop of the Great Plains Conference, was elected **the first Native American Bishop in a historic election in 2022, thus becoming the first Native American Bishop to preside at a General Conference** in our history.
- **The GC approved full communion with the Episcopal Church in the U.S.** If approved by the Episcopal Church, this new status will allow for the sharing of clergy and recognition of sacramental rights between the two denominations.