

HISTORY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 with the union of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church, established in 1946, represented the union of two U.S.-born denominations: the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. These two churches originated among German-speaking people during the great spiritual awakening in the late 18th-century colonies.

The two fellowships and the Methodist Church were similar, particularly in terms of church polity and evangelistic zeal.

Jacob Albright of Eastern Pennsylvania was a lay preacher who gathered followers in the early 1800s. These “Albright people” formed the Evangelical Association, later to become the Evangelical Church. The Rev. Philip Otterbein, ordained by the German Reformed Church, started the United Brethren Movement in the late 1700s.

The Methodist movement began in England in the early 1700s, under Anglican clergyman John Wesley and his followers. Wesley did not officially organize a new church but sparked a renewal movement within the Church of England. Nonetheless, Methodism spread from England to Ireland and the colonial United States.

Methodist classes and congregations met in the United States from the 1760s. Around Christmas 1784, some 60 ministers gathered in Baltimore and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, with the word “episcopal” referring to the church’s administration by bishops. The denomination grew rapidly and was known for its circuit rider ministers on the advancing frontiers.

With such growth, philosophical differences and division were inevitable. In 1830, a group, largely moved by an insistence on lay representation, separated and became the Methodist Protestant Church.

In the late 18th century, racism in the church caused some groups of African-American Methodists to leave and form their own denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion. In 1870, another division in the parent church led to the creation of a third black Methodist denomination, known today as the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split again over the issue of slavery. The offspring denomination was the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The north and south factions churches reunited in 1939, compromising on the race issue by creating a segregated system. The Methodist Protestant Church was part of the merger. Alongside the five geographic jurisdictions, an overlapping Central Jurisdiction was formed for African Americans. It was dissolved in 1968 with the merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MEN'S MINISTRY

The Methodist Episcopal Church

The year 2008 marks the centennial of the official launch of men's ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

However, there were Methodist men's organizations in the denomination prior to the 1908 General Conference that officially created the Methodist Brotherhood.

In the late 19th century there were groups of men organized under various names including: the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip, the Brotherhood of Saint Paul, and the Mizpah Brotherhood (named for an ancient Israel town four miles northwest of Jerusalem; the word means "an emotional bond between people who are separated"). The Mizpah Brotherhood was later changed to the Wesley Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood of Saint Paul and the Wesley Brotherhood were the largest Methodist groups.

In 1907, the Brotherhood of Saint Paul held its national assembly in Columbus, Ohio. During sessions at the Broad Street Church, the men agreed that their movement would be stronger if all men's ministry were organized under a single banner. They invited the Wesley Brotherhood to appoint an equal number of delegates to attend a meeting to discuss consolidation.

Representatives of the two organizations met March, 1908, in Buffalo, N.Y. By the end of the meeting, delegates had formed the Methodist Brotherhood, an organization designed to include men's ministry groups in some 1,500 churches across the denomination. Harvey Dingley, a layman from Syracuse, N.Y., and former president of the Brotherhood of Saint Paul, was elected president of the new organization.

Later in 1908, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church officially authorized the newly formed Methodist Brotherhood. Delegates to the Baltimore assembly adopted a constitution that allowed any men's organization under any name to affiliate with the Wesley Brotherhood.

The United Brethren Church

In 1906, bishops of the United Brethren Church appointed a committee to consider the formation of a men's organization for the denomination. After several attempts, a proposal was taken to the 1909 General Conference. That assembly created the Otterbein Brotherhood, named in honor of the Philip Otterbein, founder of the denomination.

The Evangelical Church

The Albright Brotherhood of the Evangelical Church was organized in 1931. The organization was named for Jacob Albright, founder of the denomination.

“The organization of the Brotherhood was accompanied by no fanfare and blare of trumpets,” writes Edwin Frye, editor of the *Evangelical-Messenger*. “While the laymen of our Milwaukee General Conference met separately for the purpose of organization and launching of the movement to gather the men of the church into a men’s organization, the announcement of it never got to the General Conference at all.”

Frye says the failure of General Conference to act on the organization was simply an oversight, but the group moved forward without any general church endorsement.

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

The series of twenty-five doctrinal statements considered part of the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church. The original list of thirty-nine was first adopted by the Church of England in 1563. John Wesley abridged this list to twenty-four (editing out much of their Calvinist emphasis). He sent them to America as an appendix to his proposed prayer book for the American Methodists. The 1784 Christmas Conference added what is now Article 23. The 1808 General Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church passed the first Restrictive Rule, which states that the General Conference may not in any way change the Articles of Religion. They remain unchanged to this day and have been printed in every edition of *The Book of Discipline*.

THE WESLEY QUADRILATERAL

The Quadrilateral is a method used by United Methodist to arrive at theological truths. While the method is credited to John Wesley, he did not use the term. Albert C. Outler, a professor at Perkins School of Theology first used the term in 1964.

After examining the manner in which Wesley dealt with theological issues, Outler said the founder of Methodism employed four tools.

- * Scripture – The Old and New Testaments)
- * Tradition – Church historic and current practices and beliefs
- * Reason - Rational thinking and common sense
- * Experience – Personal and group experiences

While United Methodists affirm the quadrilateral process; the four touchstones are not equal in importance. Scripture is primary and the other three tools are used to interpret passages.

THE CONNECTION

United Methodists frequently use the word “connection” to mean the network of United Methodist congregations, annual conferences, General Conference and general agencies. The term originated with John Wesley, who did not refer to followers of the Methodist movement as “members.” Wanting his followers to remain members of the Church of England, he referred to his preachers as being “in connection” with him. When the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in America, the new church was often referred to as “the connection.” Use of the term today declares that our identity is in our wholeness and each interdependent part is vital to the whole.

STRUCTURE

The United Methodist Church has a structure similar to the United States government. The legislative branch is General Conference; the Supreme Court is the Judicial Council. Bishops would be comparable to the Office of the President. The United Methodist Church has no single general officer or executive, although the Council of Bishops elects a president who serves for two years.

Each church in the United States is part of a district, an administrative and program grouping of 40-80 churches with a full-time superintendent. Districts are grouped into annual conferences, regional bodies that meet yearly for legislative purposes. Annual conferences approve programming and budget, elect delegates to General and Jurisdictional conferences, and examine and recommend candidates for ministry. Five geographic jurisdictions (divisions) in the United States include 8-13 annual conferences each. Jurisdictional conferences meet simultaneously every four years to elect and assign bishops and some members of general church agencies, and, in some cases, to develop jurisdictional programs. Each local church is governed by a charge conference with an administrative board as the year-round supervisor. A council on ministries or an equivalent organization coordinates the program of the congregation. In smaller churches, the board and the council are combined.

Bishops and Episcopal Areas: Elected by jurisdictional conferences every four years, bishops are superintendents of their respective areas. The church has 50 active bishops and episcopal areas in the United States, 18 in Europe, Africa and the Philippines. Episcopal areas include one or more annual conferences. The Council of Bishops is the corporate expression of episcopal leadership, which supervises and promotes the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire church.

Jurisdictions: The denomination has five geographic jurisdictions (geographic divisions) in the United States, with 8 to 17 annual conferences in each. Jurisdictional conferences meet simultaneously every four years to elect and assign bishops and some members of general church agencies, and, in some cases, to develop jurisdictional programs. Members of the jurisdictional conferences are General Conference delegates from that region, plus an equal number of additional lay and clergy delegates elected by the region’s annual conferences.

General (churchwide) Agencies: General agencies are similar to U.S. cabinet departments but are primarily accountable to the General Conference rather than to the Council of Bishops. Boards of directors, who are lay and clergy elected jointly by General Conference and regional organizations, govern the agency staffs.

Judicial Council: The denomination's "supreme court" interprets church law and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. Its nine members are elected by General Conference and normally meet twice a year. James Holsinger, serves as president.

Ecumenical Relationships: The United Methodist Church is a member of the World Methodist Council, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America and the World Council of Churches. It is also one of nine denominations participating in the Churches Uniting in Christ. The United Methodist Church is officially part of a Pan-Methodist committee that includes three historically black denominations: African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion and Christian Methodist Episcopal.

BISHOPS

Bishops are elected at jurisdictional or central conferences.

Annual conferences may nominate clergy for the episcopacy at the sessions prior to their jurisdictional conferences. In the United States, jurisdictional conference delegates frequently "endorse" candidates for the episcopacy prior to the elections.

Any ordained elder in good standing can be elected. Endorsement is not required.

The number of U.S. bishops is determined by the number of church members in a jurisdiction with exceptions made when the geographical areas exceed an average of 55,000 square miles. Of course, delegates also elect replacements for bishops who die or retire.

At present, jurisdictions with 500,000 members have six bishops with an additional bishop for each 320,000 members. A jurisdictional committee recommends the assignment of bishops to the episcopal areas within their jurisdiction.

THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

The nine-member Judicial Council is elected in three-year classes by General Conference delegates. The council, frequently referred to as the Supreme Court of the denomination, has the authority to

- Determine the constitutionality of any act of General Conference
- Hear and determine any appeal from a bishop's decision as to a question of law made in a session of the annual conference

- Determine the legality of any action taken by any agency.

GENERAL AGENCIES

The denomination has 14 general (churchwide) agencies, each governed by a board of directors selected from across the denomination, with attention given to racial, gender, age and lay-clergy balance. Chief staff executives are frequently called "general secretaries."

- The Connectional Table coordinates mission, ministries and resources. Organized January 1, 2005, the 47-member group includes 21 persons elected by jurisdictional conferences and 7 elected by central conferences and presidents of the general agencies. Top staff executives of the general agencies have voice, but no vote. President is John L. Hopkins. Since the table has no official office location and only one paid staff, many argue that this is not an agency. Some people say the denomination has a Connectional Table and 13 general agencies.
- The General Council on Finance and Administration, fiscal and record-keeping agency for the denomination, administers trusts; coordinates and distributes church funds; and keeps official membership, real estate and other records. Headquarters is in Nashville, Tenn. The president is Bishop Mary Ann Swenson; the general secretary is Sandra Kelley Lackore.
- The General Board of Church and Society addresses issues of global justice—political, human, and economic rights; human welfare; and environmental protection. It is based in Washington, D.C. The president is Bishop Beverly Shamana; the general secretary is James Winkler.
- The General Board of Discipleship provides training and resources for churches in Christian education, evangelism, devotional life and worship, stewardship and lay ministries. Headquarters is in Nashville, Tenn. The president is Bishop Michael Coyner, Indianapolis, Ind.; the general secretary is the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt.
- The General Board of Global Ministries, the denomination's largest program agency, recruits, trains and deploys missionaries, and educates grass-roots United Methodists about global and national mission concerns. Headquarters is in New York. President is Bishop Joel N. Martinez, San Antonio; the interim general secretary is the Bishop Felton May.
- The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry oversees ordained ministries, sets criteria for training United Methodist chaplains, coordinates United Methodist campus ministries and oversight of institutions of higher learning and seminaries, and administers loans and scholarships and the Black College Fund. Headquarters is in Nashville, Tenn. President is Bishop Gregory Palmer, Des Moines, Iowa; the general secretary is the Rev. Jerome King del Pino.

- The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits oversees \$12.8 billion of assets used to support various benefit plans for clergy and other church professionals. It is based in Evanston, Ill. The president is Bishop Benjamin Chamness, Fort Worth; the general secretary is Barbara A. Boigegrain.
- The General Commission on Archives and History houses historical documents, photographs and other materials of the United Methodist Church and forerunner denominations. It is based at Drew University, Madison, N.J. The president is Bishop Solito Toquero, Philippines; the general secretary is the Rev. Robert Williams.
- The General Commission on Communication (United Methodist Communications), media agency for the denomination, provides umc.org, the denomination's Web site, a computer and computer hardware store; radio and television ministries; information services; interpretation for church programs and funds; program journals; and an international news service. The agency is based in Nashville, Tenn., and has an office in New York. The president is Bishop Ann Sherer, Lincoln, Neb.; the general secretary is the Rev. Larry Hollon.
- The General Commission on Religion and Race advocates racial justice and monitors racial/ethnic inclusiveness in church-related institutions and agencies. It is based in Washington, D.C. The president is Bishop Linda Lee, Wisconsin; general secretary is Erin Hawkins E
- The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women advocates empowerment of women and monitors gender inclusiveness in all institutions and agencies of the church. Offices are in Evanston, Ill. President is Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor of the Columbia (S.C.) Area; general secretary is M. Garlinda Burton..
- The General Commission on United Methodist Men, created in 1996 to coordinate program and resources for men's ministries, including scouting, within the denomination, is headquartered in Nashville, Tenn. President is Gilbert Hanke of Nacogdoches, Texas; general secretary is the Rev. David Adams.
- The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns links United Methodists with the ecumenical movement. Offices are in New York. President is Bishop Ann B. Sherer of the Nebraska Area (bishopsherer@neb.org). The Rev. Larry Pickens is the general secretary
- The United Methodist Publishing House is independent and self-supporting. It does not receive funding through the World Service funding program of the church, as do most other agencies. The agency is based in Nashville, Tenn. Chairperson is William Hatcher of Statesboro, Ga.; president and publisher is Neil Alexander.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church. It meets once every four years -- the next time in 2008 -- and revises *The Book of Discipline* (church law) and Social Principles and adopts resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for churchwide programs for the next four years.

General Conference delegates are elected by their annual conferences the year before the conference is held.

Lay delegates are members of congregations of The United Methodist Church located within the annual conference where they are elected. Clergy delegates are elders and deacons who are full members of the annual conference electing them.

Annual conferences elect equal numbers of lay and clergy delegates to General Conference. Laity vote for lay delegates, and clergy vote for clergy delegates.

The number of delegates from each conference is based on the number of clergy members and the number of lay members. All conferences are guaranteed at least one clergy and one lay delegate.

The denomination's constitution permits General Conference to have 600 to 1,000 delegates, but the final figure is always close to 1,000.

The vast majority of the delegates are elected from United Methodist annual conferences in the United States and in the Central Conferences (groupings of annual conferences outside the United States). Some autonomous Methodist churches also have voting representation in General Conference, as does The Methodist Church in Great Britain.

CONFERENCES

Within the United States, the denomination is organized into five jurisdictions, each including eight to 15 annual conferences.

Outside this nation, the denomination is organized into seven central conferences that include 60 nations with some 55 annual conferences, comprising about 20 percent of United Methodist members.

Central conferences include Africa, Central and Southern Europe, Congo, Germany, Northern Europe, Philippines and West Africa.

These central conferences have the right to change the *Book of Discipline* as special conditions require. However, these conferences may not make changes contrary to the constitution or the general rules of the denomination.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE MEMBERS

The number of lay members of an annual conference must equal the number of clergy members (Article 32, Constitution of the United Methodist Church).

Each local church elects one lay member of the annual conference for each clergy person appointed to the charge. Lay members of the conference also include diaconal ministers, active deaconesses under appointment and the presidents of the conference United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, young adult, youth and college student organizations. Each district must also elect a youth (ages 12 to 17) and young adult (ages 18 to 30) member.

If, after filling these positions, the number of laypersons does not equal the number of clergy members, the annual conference designs a way to elect additional lay members.

Using this formula, it is possible in missionary conferences, where clergy belong to other annual conferences, for the number of lay members to be greater than the number of clergy.

Clergy members of the conference include deacons and elders in full connection and retired clergy. Local pastors under appointment, associate members and probationary members are clergy members with the right to vote on most matters. Retired local pastors may be elected as lay members.

Elected lay representatives at annual conferences are called members, as are clergy. Lay and clergy representatives at jurisdictional and General Conference are called delegates.

Because many of the people leading congregations within the Methodist movement in the 1750s were uneducated, John Wesley required candidates to serve a probationary period before they would be brought into "full connection." Brother Charles Wesley, who was in charge of these examinations, would frequently take a hard line. He told John Bennett, "A friend of ours [without God's counsel] made a preacher of a tailor; I, with God's help, shall make a tailor of him again."

Today, all persons who are commissioned ministers must be appointed by a bishop and serve a minimum of three years as probationary members of the annual conference. During that time the commissioned ministers must be engaged in theological education through covenant groups and mentoring.

PROVISIONAL AND MISSIONARY CONFERENCES

Annual conferences are the fundamental bodies of the United Methodist Church, but there are also provisional and missionary conferences.

A **provisional annual conference** is a conference that, because of its limited membership, does not qualify for annual conference status. At present there are no

provisional conferences in the United States, but seven years ago, 18 clergy and 25 laypersons asked for permission to begin a provisional conference for evangelicals within the California-Nevada Annual Conference. Annual conference leaders declined an invitation to jointly ask General Conference to establish such a unit.

Provisional conferences may be organized in areas where there are at least 10 clergy members and may be continued as long as there are at least six clergy members.

Outside the United States there are now four provisional conferences in Central and Southern Europe Central Conference, five in Northern Europe and four in the Philippines.

Missionary conferences exist because they have limited membership and resources, but they have a special opportunity to be in mission. There are three missionary conferences in the United States: The Alaska Missionary Conference (with 27 churches in that state), the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (with 63 churches in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas) and the Red Bird Missionary Conference with 15 churches in Kentucky. These conferences are led by bishops who also administer annual conferences in neighboring areas. The General Board of Global Ministries provides administrative guidance and financial assistance.

THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice. Early Methodists expressed their opposition to the slave trade, to smuggling, and to the cruel treatment of prisoners.

Each General Conference revises the Social Principles and scores of resolutions are written based on the principles. The Book of Resolutions contains all resolutions passed by the conference.

The Social Principles are arranged under six headings:

The Natural World

“We support and encourage social policies that serve to reduce and control the creation of industrial byproducts and waste.

“We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God’s natural world...although we preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues.

“We call for rigorous inspections and controls on the biological safety of all foodstuffs intended for human consumption.

The Nurturing Community

“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.

“...sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the marriage bond. Sex may become exploitative within as well as outside marriage.

“Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. The UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that “God’s grace is available to all, and we will seek to live together in Christian community. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

“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, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. ...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. ...We oppose the use of late-term abortion.

The Social Community

“... we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We assert the right of all religions and their adherents to freedom from legal, economic and social discrimination.

We affirm women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We, therefore, urge that every effort be made to eliminate sex-role stereotypes in activity and portrayal of family life and in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the church and society.

We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God’s liberating and redeeming love for persons.

“...we recommend total abstinence from the use of tobacco.

“We welcome the use of genetic technology for meeting fundamental human needs for health, a safe environment, and an adequate food supply. We oppose the cloning of humans and the genetic manipulation of the gender of an unborn child.

“United Methodists along with those of other faith groups must be made aware that the mass media often undermine the truths of Christianity by promoting permissive lifestyles and detailing acts of graphic violence.

“We support the goal of universal access to telephone and Internet services at an affordable price.

“All individuals living with HIV and AIDS should be treated with dignity and respect.

The Economic Community

“We claim all economic systems to be under the judgment of God. We support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few.

“We support the right of public and private employees and employers to organize for collective bargaining into unions and other groups of their own choosing.

“In order to provide basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and other necessities, ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world..

“Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, and destructive of good government. Christians should abstain from gambling.

The Political Community

“We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, communications media, and petitions for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education and health care.

“We also strongly reject domestic surveillance and intimidation of political opponents by governments in power and all other misuses of elective or appointive offices.

“The UMC has for many years supported the separation of church and state. The state should not use its authority to promote particular religious beliefs (including atheism), nor should it require prayer or worship in the public schools, but it should leave students free to practice their own religious convictions.

“We recognize the right of individuals to dissent when acting under the constraint of conscience and, after having exhausted all legal recourse, to resist or disobey laws that they deem to be unjust or that are discriminately enforced.

“We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore, and transform all human beings. We oppose the death penalty and urge its elimination from all criminal codes.

The World Community

“We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy, to employed only as a last resort in the prevention of such evils as genocide, brutal suppression of human rights, and unprovoked international aggression.

“...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.”

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Members

There are two categories of members of a local church.

Baptized members include all persons who have received Christian baptism

Professing members include baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith.

For statistical purposes, church membership is equated to the number of professing members.

The Charge Conference

The charge conference is the unit that connects the local church to the general church. The conference should meet at least annually to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church and to adopt new goals. The district superintendent presides at that meeting, or he/she appoints another elder to preside.

The conference receives reports from the church staff, all local church organizations and Volunteer-in-Mission teams. The group may also recommend candidates for the ordained ministry.

The Charge Conference establishes the budget and the sets the compensation for the pastor and other staff members appointed by the bishop.

The conference also elects leaders based on nominations by the Committee on Lay Leadership.

The Charge Conference is composed of the Church Council, but to encourage broader participating, the charge conference may be convened as a Church Conference in which all professing members have the right to vote.

The Charge Conference will elect a lay leader who will meet regularly with the pastor to discuss the church and needs for ministry.

The Charge Conference also elects lay members of the annual conference.

The Church Council

Various local churches call the church council different names, but the responsibilities are the same. The group meets quarterly to plan for and implement a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources.

The council may have as few as 11 members or as large as the church wishes. Members of the council include the lay leader, the chairs of Pastor-Parish Relations, Finance, and Trustees along with the presidents of UM Men, UM Women and a representative of the youth. The treasurer, lay members of the annual conference and the pastors are also on the council. Most councils include chairs of various committees.

United Methodist Men

Each church or charge (more than one congregation served by a single pastor) shall have an organized unit of UM Men chartered and annually renewed through the General Commission on UM Men. Members are encouraged to engage in daily Bible study and prayer, bear witness to Christ's way in daily work, and to engage in Christian service.

Committee on Lay Leadership

Chaired by the pastor, this nine-member committee identifies, develops, and evaluates leaders in the congregation. The group recommends to the charge conference a slate of offers for various church committees. The committee is divided into three groups of three to be elected for three-year terms. New members are elected from nominations from the floor of the charge conference.

Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

The Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations (or "staff parish" if there is more than one staff member) meets quarterly to assist the pastors and staff in assessing their gifts and setting priorities for leadership and service. The committee is composed of between five and nine members serving in three classes.

The committee recommends to the charge conference persons to become candidates for the ordained ministry and lay preachers.

The committee may recommend a change of pastors to the superintendent if the church could be better served by a change in leadership.

Finance Committee

A finance committee compiles a complete budget and submits it to the Church Council. The committee is responsible for establishing plans to raise sufficient funds to meet the budget adopted by the Church Council.

The church treasurer disburses money contributed to causes represented in the church budget. He/she also remits all World Service and conference benevolence funds on hand.

Board of Trustees

A board of trustees shall consist of no fewer than three and no more than nine members elected by class for three-year terms. Elected by the charge conference, the board is responsible for all church property.

All property must be kept, maintained and disposed of for the benefit of the United Methodist Church and subject to the usages and Discipline of the denomination. This clause (referred to as the trust clause) means that if a congregation decides to separate itself from the denomination, the property is retained by the annual conference or a unit of the United Methodist Church.

STEPS INTO ORDAINED MINISTRY

To become a deacon or elder in the United Methodist Church, follow these steps:

1. Belong to the denomination for at least two years (one year in a leadership position).
2. Secure a copy of *The Christian as Minister* from your pastor.
3. Send your district superintendent a letter describing your sense of call and ask for admission to the candidacy program. Ask for a candidacy mentor to be appointed by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM).
4. Follow steps in the Candidacy Guidebook.
5. Commit to following the process to become a deacon (ministry of word and service to the community and the congregation) or an elder (ministry of service, word, sacrament and order).
6. Graduate from high school.
7. Prepare a statement on your call to ministry. Be interviewed by your church's pastor/staff parish relations committee. Receive approval from your charge conference as a candidate for ordained ministry.

8. Complete a psychological assessment and respond in writing to questions about ministry. Be interviewed and approved by the DCOM as a certified candidate.
9. Enroll in a college or university. Send annual transcripts to the DCOM.
10. Complete a bachelor's degree and participate in a DCOM-approved service setting.
11. Elder candidates complete the master of divinity degree from an approved theological school. Deacon candidates either complete a theological master's degree from an approved school or receive a master's degree in an area of specialized ministry and complete basic graduate theological studies.
12. After being a candidate for at least one year and no more than 12, completing half of your theological education, providing a certificate of good health and completing a doctrinal examination, you may be eligible to be recommended for commissioning and probationary membership in the annual conference by the DCOM and the conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Some annual conferences require you to complete your theological education before being commissioned.
13. After completing all educational requirements for full conference membership and three years of post-seminary, full-time service as a probationary member, you are eligible to apply to the conference Board of Ordained Ministry for ordination and full conference membership.
14. Have the Board of Ordained Ministry's recommendation for ordination and conference membership approved by a two-thirds vote of the clergy members in full connection in the annual conference.

Questions about whether a person should be ordained and questions about the character and conference relationships of clergy are considered in executive sessions of the annual conference. Only ordained clergy in full connection and lay members of the board of ordained ministry may vote on these matters. Others may be invited and may speak if approved by the executive session, but they may not vote.

The board of ordained ministry will generally make recommendations about conference relationships to the executive session. These sessions may allow clergy to take a leave of absence or retire. Clergy who are 70 years of age are automatically retired and clergy with 20 or more years of service under appointment may request retirement. If approved by the cabinet, the board of ordained ministry, and a two-thirds vote of the executive session, a clergy member in full connection may be given involuntary retirement.

After examination by district and conference boards of ordained ministry, a candidate may be accepted as a commissioned minister if approved by a two-thirds majority of an executive session. After a minimum of three years of probationary membership, and annual recommendations from the board of ordained ministry and the executive session, a person may be admitted to full connection in the annual conference and ordained as either

a deacon or an elder. Probationary members may cast votes in annual conference sessions on all matters except constitutional amendments, election of General Conference delegates and all matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.

CLERGY SALARIES

The Annual Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation recommends minimum standards for salaries and other support for pastors serving local churches in the conference. The commission generally sets higher salaries for clergy with more years of service.

In consultation with the district superintendent, the charge conference of each local church sets the compensation level of its pastor and other staff members.

Occasionally a local church is unable to pay the minimum compensation. The annual conference then must provide a financial supplement to bring the salary up to the conference minimum.

Money for that salary supplement comes from an Equitable Compensation Fund administered by the commission. After consultation with the commission and final approval by the Annual Conference session, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration sets the amount of money in that fund.

The Annual Conference is required to support the minimum base compensation it adopts and to provide base compensation supplements.

INVESTIGATIONS, TRIALS AND APPEALS

A United Methodist clergyperson may be tried when charged with:

- Not being celibate in singleness or unfaithful in a heterosexual marriage
- Being a self-avowed practicing homosexual or conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions
- Crime
- Failure to perform the work of ministry
- Disobedience to the Order and Discipline of the denomination
- Dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established doctrines
- Behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor
- Child abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Harassment, including sexual and racial harassment
- Racial or gender discrimination.

After a charge has been made, the bishop will name a counsel for the church who will bring written charges to a committee on investigation consisting of four clergy and three

professing members and ten alternate members. The clergyperson against whom the complaint is made will send the committee a written response.

When possible, the committee will interview the person filing the complaint, the clergyperson and other witnesses. If five members of the committee agree the charge(s) are legitimate a trial will be held. If fewer than five agree, the case will be dismissed.

The counsel for the accused and the church counsel will select a trial court of 13 persons out of a pool of 35 or more persons. At least nine of the 13 member court must agree with a guilty verdict before a person is convicted. The findings are subject to appeal to the committee on appeals of the jurisdiction or central conference. The trial court has the power to remove the respondent from professing membership, terminate conference membership, or revoke ordination credentials.

Bishops and laypersons may also be accused, investigated and tried by similar methods.

DEACONESSES AND HOME MISSIONERS

Deaconesses are lay women and home missionaries are lay men. The General Board of Global Ministries approves members of both groups. Bishops commission them during meetings of the board or in other settings approved by the mission agency.

Deaconesses and home missionaries provide full-time service for any agency approved by a global ministries' program office in consultation with the bishop of the area where the agency is located. Most serve in United Methodist agencies, but they may be appointed to others. Their appointments are fixed by the bishops at annual conference sessions.

Deaconesses and home missionaries are members of local churches within the conference where they are appointed. They have voice and vote at annual conference sessions.

THE APPORTIONMENT SYSTEM

The total amounts of funds needed to support worldwide ministries of the United Methodist Church are established by General Conference. These totals are apportioned to annual conferences based on a formula that includes: 1) net expenditures of local churches, including capital expenditures, interest payments, and benevolence giving; 2) per-capita income for counties in the annual conference and local church operating costs; and 3) a base percentage set by General Conference. On average, 70 percent of the local churches pay 100 percent of their general church apportionments and 3 percent do not pay any at all. The remaining 27 percent pay something less than 100 percent.

Each annual conference establishes its own formula to assess local churches for general church apportionments and annual conference, episcopal area and jurisdictional costs.

Of every dollar, 84.3 cents is used in local churches, 12.4 cents supports regional ministries and 3.3 cents supports general church ministries.

Less than one-half of 1 percent of World Service Funds support the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

CLERGY VESTMENTS AND PARAMENTS

Enter United Methodist churches and you may find preachers wearing casual clothing for informal services and vestments for traditional or formal services.

Vestments include albs (full-length white garments) or cassocks (long gowns, usually black) with a surplice (a loose-fitting white vestment with large open sleeves). Some pastors may wear clergy collars.

Most United Methodist clergy will wear robes and stoles. If they are deacons, the stole is generally worn over one shoulder. Elders wear the stole around the neck.

Colors on the stole will indicate the liturgical season: white for Christmas, Easter, All Saints Day, the first and last Sundays after Epiphany and the first and last Sundays after Pentecost; purple for Advent and Lent; red for Pentecost and green for all other Sundays.

Paraments (linen and other cloth hangings on Communion tables, pulpits and lecterns) will be the same color as the pastors' stoles.

CONCERNS ABOUT PRESENT REALITIES IN THE DENOMINATION

The average United Methodist is 57 years old.

In some countries, notably the United States, we are not effectively reaching youth and young adults; United Methodists under age 18 account for 4.6 percent of church membership.

The number of ordained and commissioned elders under age 35 is a mere 850 in the United States.

Membership globally is increasing, but U.S. membership has slipped below 8 million for the first time since the 1930s, even as non-white and immigrant populations in the United States rapidly grow.

While total giving in the United States has increased, the number of givers has decreased.

FUTURE FOCUS AREAS OF THE DENOMINATION

During the 2009-2012 quadrennium the denomination will focus on four issues:

1. Developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world. The church must recruit young people for ministry and provide them with the skills necessary to be effective in this new time of opportunity. That includes women and people of color the world over. Similarly, we must offer leadership training for lay people who are in ministry in countless ways.
2. Creating new places for new people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones. If we are to remain faithful to our commitment to transform the world, we will reach out with genuine hospitality to people wherever they are. We will make them feel welcome as we start new faith communities, seek to renew existing ones and inspire faithful discipleship.
3. Engaging in ministry with the poor. As an expression of our discipleship, United Methodists seek to alleviate conditions that undermine quality of life and limit the opportunity to flourish as we believe God intends for all. As with John Wesley, we seek to change conditions that are unjust, alienating and disempowering. We engage in ministry with the poor, and in this, we especially want to reach out to and protect children.
4. Stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally. Conditions of poverty cause illness and death. The lack of access to doctors, nurses, medications and appropriate facilities is deadly, especially among those who live in conditions of poverty. But the diseases of poverty are not inevitable. We believe the people of The United Methodist Church can play a significant role in educating others about diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and treating and preventing their devastating effects.