

General Conference Information Sessions
 February-March 2024
 Christ United Methodist Church

Our history of conferencing goes back to John Wesley, who annually met with his class leaders to conference about the previous year.



- Charge Conference - Christ (can be several churches on a charge/circuit)
- District Conference - Scenic South
- Annual Conference - Holston (East TN, Southwest VA and a few from GA)
- Jurisdictional Conference - Southeastern (four years; elects bishops)
- General Conference - Worldwide (four years; only official speaking body of UMC)

Each Charge elects their representative(s) to Annual Conference
 We have three clergy, so we also have three lay members
 Christ Church Lay Members - Lynn Temple, Jason Hobbs, Sherry Shaver

Each Annual Conference elects their representatives to General and Jurisdiction. Holston has six clergy and six laity at Gen. Conf.; 12 of each at Jur. Conf. Becky Hall is one of the six laity delegates from Holston Conference

General Conference can have up to 1,000 delegates. Equal number of clergy and laity. General Conference this year will have 862 delegates.

55.9% from US
32% from Africa
6% from the Philippines
4.6% from Europe

From the General Conference comes our Book of Discipline. Includes history, core beliefs, social principles, structure and policies

General Conference meets for almost two weeks. First week (April 23-27) - legislation (petitions) are dealt with in committees Those legislative committees are:

Church & Society (3)	Global Ministries
Conferences	Higher Education/Superintendency
Discipleship	Independent Commissions
Faith and Order	Judicial Administration
Financial Administration	Local Church
General Administration	Ordained Ministry

- these petitions are submitted by individuals and groups from throughout the church
- petitions of similar language/issues are often merged together
- either in the first or second week, amendments (words/phrases/sentences added or deleted) can be added that change the meaning
- 1,099 petitions have been received

Second week (April 29 - May 3) - Legislation approved by committees is brought before the total body of the Conference for votes. **This is the week that any changes to the Book of Discipline are made.**

A brief history of the main controversy:
In 1968, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form The United Methodist Church.

In 1972, the General Conference voted to place in the Book of Discipline the language that said “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Ever since then, there has been debate about that subject and over the years, additional paragraphs were added:

all persons are of sacred worth
self-avowed, practicing homosexuals cannot be candidates for ministry
and cannot be ordained as clergy
our pastors shall not conduct services of union
such services are not to be held in our churches

In 2016, after many years of continuing debate and close votes, the members of the General Conference asked the bishops to guide them on this matter. It was determined to conduct a special session of the General Conference in 2019 to deal only with that subject.

At that 2019 General Conference, the traditional language that had been in the Book of Discipline was once again passed by a narrow margin, along with language to strengthen penalties for those who did not follow the Discipline. Because of that vote, there were those who figured that the more progressive factions of the Church would want to leave. So a new paragraph (2553) was added to give churches a pathway to disaffiliate. (With the assumption that the 2020 General Conference would be meeting, the deadline for disaffiliating was set for the end of 2023.)

During the next year, progressive leaders and churches let it be known that they were not leaving the church. Then, COVID hit and caused the 2020 General Conference to be postponed to 2022. However, in 2022, it was determined that many of the delegates from other countries would not be able to attend (because they were still dealing with COVID), so it was decided to again postpone the General Conference until 2024.

This frustrated conservative leaders and churches. So in the spring of 2022, leaders announced that they were forming a new denomination, the Global Methodist Church. They began a campaign of recruiting pastors and churches to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and join their denomination. In 2023, many churches did disaffiliate, but not all joined the new denomination.

There were three primary reasons why conservative leaders chose to disaffiliate:

- frustration over the Book of Discipline not being enforced
- anticipating that the language about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline will be changed in the near future
- desire to take ownership of their property

Two key matters to keep in mind:

- (1) At this point, nothing has changed in the Book of Discipline since 2019.

(2) Leaders of Holston Conference have stated that, if the 2024 General Conference changes the Book of Discipline in ways that other churches want to disaffiliate, they will work with those churches to provide for a graceful exit. Here are the concluding paragraphs of that statement:

NOW, THEREFORE, the Holston Conference resolves that if there are changes made at the 2024 General Conference related to human sexuality that cause our local churches to believe it is untenable to continue as United Methodist churches, the Holston Conference and its trustees commit - within the parameters of the Book of Discipline - to seek a gracious, fair and non-punitive separation process for such local churches at least through December 31, 2024; IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Holston Conference resolves to continue working to advance legislation that provides such a gracious, fair, non-punitive separation process to be considered at the next session of the General Conference and to work collaboratively with other annual conferences to build consensus concerning proposed legislation that would fulfill the aspirations of this Resolution.

Also, what is voted on and approved at General Conference does not immediately go into effect. Often, it is at least January 1 of the following year before it goes into effect; sometimes later than that.

In April, there will be a regional informational session with our Holston delegation at Ooltewah UMC.

General Conference is Tuesday, April 23 through Friday, May 5 in Charlotte, NC.

Statement from Pastor Nathan Malone:

“My hope is that we can continue to be a church where all people are welcomed and included; where we can worship and serve together and learn from each other across our differences. In this church, we have conservatives and liberals, traditionalists and progressives, and everything in between. I pray that we can continue to be a church for all of those groups. More than anything, I encourage us to stay focused on our mission of “Learning to live the way of Jesus Christ and inviting all to follow him.”

Statement from Delegate Becky Hall

It is a tremendous honor to be a delegate to General Conference, but it is also a heavy burden. I have been a delegate to several of these and I always marvel at the wonderful work and outreach that the United Methodists do around the world.

It is inspiring. We have to trust that God has the plan for us so I ask that you be vigilant in your prayers for the delegates and the decisions that are made. I pray for Christ UMC to continue living out its mission.

To view the January 11th Resolution Letter [click here.](#)