

THE ROAD TO GENERAL CONFERENCE

PART 1 OF 4

created by the



FIRST: A QUICK LOOK AT OUR STRUCTURE

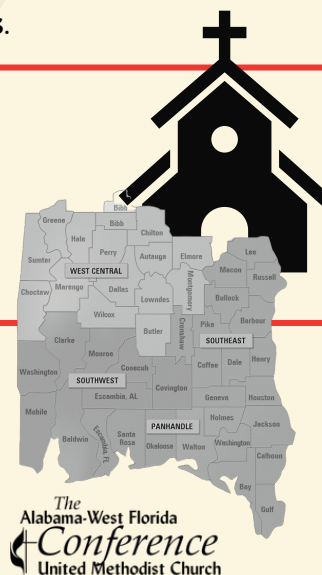


IT STARTS WITH YOU!

You are a committed leader within your local church faithfully participating in the life and ministries of your local congregation through your **prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.**

YOUR CHURCH IS PART OF A DISTRICT

The Alabama-West Florida Conference has **four districts:** Panhandle, Southeast, Southwest, and West Central.



YOUR DISTRICT IS PART OF AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Your church is one of **approximately 300 churches** in the Alabama-West Florida Conference. The United States has 54 annual conferences, supervised by bishops in 46 episcopal areas. There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops.

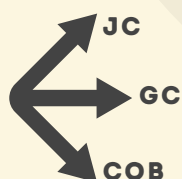


YOUR CONFERENCE IS PART OF A JURISDICTION

There are five US Jurisdictions -- North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern, and Western. Alabama-West Florida is part of the **Southeastern Jurisdiction** or SEJ.

WE ARE A WORLDWIDE CHURCH

Outside the US, Annual Conferences are organized into seven **Central Conferences**. Together we all make up the United Methodist Church.



WE ARE GOVERNED BY THREE BODIES

The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. Duties are divided among bodies that include the **Judicial Council**, the **General Conference**, and the **Council of Bishops**.

GENERAL CONFERENCE SETS POLICY

The General Conference meets every four years. Legislation is examined and voted upon by **persons elected** from Annual Conferences from **across the denomination**. The Council of Bishops presides over General Conference and the Judicial Council reviews passed legislation to determine its constitutionality, legality, or meaning.



THE ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA DELEGATION



DELEGATIONS ARE ELECTED

Delegates to General Conference are elected by Annual Conference members at their Annual Conference meetings every four years. Typically this happens the summer prior to General Conference. The number of delegates ranges from 600-1000. This year there will be **862 delegates**, half clergy and half laity.

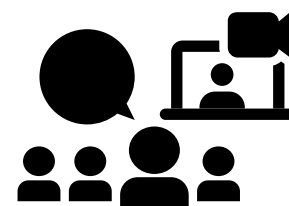


There are **four clergy** and **four laity** (plus alternates on the Alabama-West Florida Conference delegation. These delegates were elected in 2019 and 2023 by AWFUMC members at annual conference.

(Alabama-West Florida's full delegation also includes eight delegates to the SEJ Conference, as well as alternates who were elected in 2023).

MEETINGS

The full Alabama-West Florida Conference delegation has been meeting together since the fall of 2023 to prepare for General Conference. Those meetings included two in-person retreats and monthly Zoom meetings.

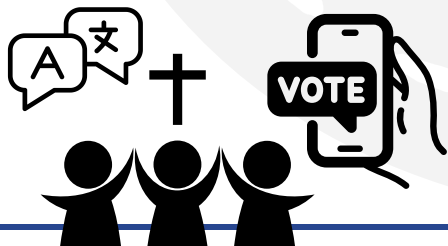


2020 IN 2024

After pandemic-related delays the Judicial Council ruled that 2020 was not canceled but was postponed. When the delegation heads to Charlotte in April they will be participating in the **2020 General Conference**.

AT GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Conference is a 10-day meeting consisting of several parts. Delegates will spend much of the first week **meeting in committees** to review legislation and make edits or changes before passing it to the larger body for voting.



Delegates will participate in **worship** experiences, engage in **conversation** and **dialogue** with fellow delegates from across the world, and ultimately will be tasked with **voting on legislation** put before the body.



WHERE?

General Conference will take place in **Charlotte**, North Carolina.

WHEN?

April 23-May 3, 2024



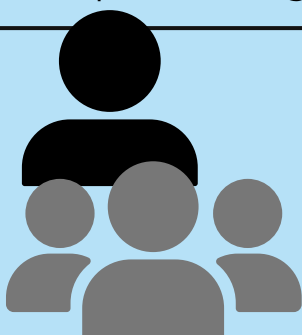
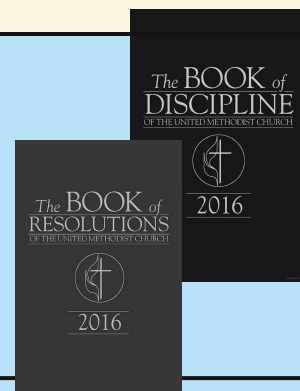
WHAT IS GENERAL CONFERENCE?

General Conference is the body that **sets official policy** and **speaks for the denomination**. This body meets every four years to revise and amend the *Book of Discipline*, the *Book of Resolutions*, and other official documents. It also sets the denomination's budget.



LEGISLATION

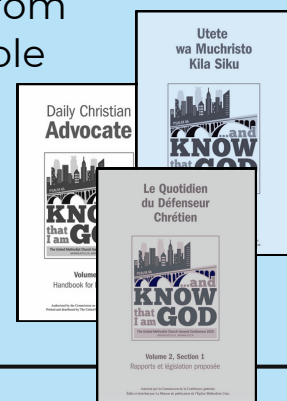
Petitions with changes or additions to the *Book of Discipline*, the *Book of Resolutions*, and other official documents are submitted during the years between General Conferences. This legislation is what General Conference Delegates act upon during General Conference.



AUTHORS

Anyone can submit a petition to General Conference. Some come from individuals, some come from groups of people, some come from official bodies or organizations from within the church, and some even come from whole Annual Conferences.

Legislation is submitted prior to General Conference and is compiled for delegates into volumes of the **Advanced Daily Christian Advocate** to read and review. The ADCA is translated into four languages - English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili.



REVISIONS

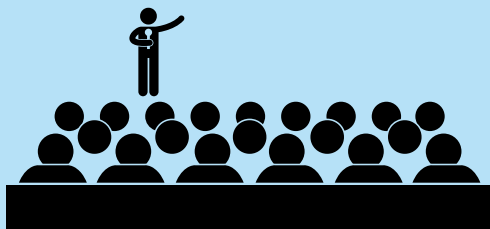
Submitted legislation is **grouped by theme** into one of fourteen **Legislative Committees**. Each General Conference delegate serves on a single committee and spends the first several days in committee reading, having conversations about, and revising what has been submitted.

Often there are **similar pieces of legislation** that aim to do the same thing that can be selected, combined, and/or revised before passing them forward.

Each day General Conference delegates receive **updated legislation** that has moved from committee on to the full body.



WHAT IS GENERAL CONFERENCE? *(continued)*

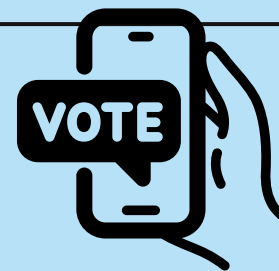


PLENARY SESSIONS

The full body of the General Conference meets together for worship, dialogue, and voting. It is in **full plenary sessions** where votes are taken on petitions and resolutions.

VOTING

Each General Conference delegate votes on legislation brought before the body. Most legislation requires only a **majority vote**.



Changes to the **constitution** require **both** a 2/3 vote by the General Conference and a 2/3 aggregate vote of lay and clergy members in annual conferences.

AFTER GENERAL CONFERENCE



REVISED DOCUMENTS

The *Book of Discipline*, the *Book of Resolutions*, and other documents as approved by the General Conference are updated with revisions. Passed legislation usually becomes effective on **January 1st** of the following year.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Constitutional amendments passed by 2/3 of the General Conference are sent to Annual Conferences for voting. Those **elected to attend Annual Conference** from their church or district will cast a vote.



Once **all Annual Conferences** from across the connection have voted, if 2/3 of the total votes cast are in favor, that legislation becomes official.



LEARN MORE
awfumc.org/2024gc

*Sources: umc.org, umnews.org, resourceumc.org
Crated for the VAUMC and then adapted.*