

UMARC Glossary of Terms for Webinars

Annual Conference: the term could be referring to any one of three things. The annual conference is a regional body, an organizational unit AND a yearly meeting. As a regional body, the annual conference is described by the church's Constitution and (other parts of the) Book of Discipline as the “basic unit” of the church. 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. As an organizational body, an annual conference has one or more offices with professional staff, overseeing the work of the organization. As a yearly meeting, it refers to the gathering of elected “members” from local churches, equal clergy and laity, for the purpose of setting the direction of the group of churches and boards which accomplish the work of the Conference. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/annual-conferences>

Central Conference: One of seven geographic areas outside the territorial United States, each composed of annual conferences as determined by the General Conference. Central Conferences have responsibilities similar to those of Jurisdictional Conferences. The seven central conferences are in Europe, Africa and the Philippines. The term “central” dates from the use of the word “central” to designate the old “Central Jurisdiction,” a body set up in 1939 at the merger of The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church to form The Methodist Church. The Central Jurisdiction was a non-geographical jurisdiction for all black ministers and congregations. Link: <http://ee.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-central-conference>.

Christmas Covenant: A plan for reorganization of the UMC with a set of legislation and constitutional amendments submitted to the 2024 General Conference establishing regional equity in the structures of the church for missional effectiveness while sustaining connectional unity. The US would be a regional conference with 5 jurisdictions, and establishes a process for organizing this regional conference. Link: <https://www.christmascovenant.com/faqs>

Disaffiliation: The process by which a local church decides to leave the United Methodist Church and affiliate with another Methodist entity, over issues primarily related to human sexuality, and most specifically about “homosexuality” or LGBTQIA persons. Par. 2553, adopted in 2019. Annual Conferences would only be able to disaffiliate if the General Conference approved a proposal that included processes for annual conference disaffiliation. See these links: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-should-united-methodist-congregations-know%20about-disaffiliation> and <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-court-clarifies-disaffiliation-rules>

Episcopacy: Refers to the office of bishop and also the system of church government in which bishops serve as general superintendents of the church and are responsible

individually and collectively for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the denomination. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-episcopacy>

General Conference: An international body of about 850 delegates that meets every four years but has been postponed (from 2020 to 2024) because of the global pandemic. The delegates are elected by annual conferences (at annual conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy. Links: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/general-conference> and <https://www.umc.org/en/who-we-are/structure/general-conference>

GMC: The Global Methodist Church, formed in May, 2022, by more conservative United Methodists unwilling to wait longer for the postponed General Conference of 2024 and whatever decisions might be made there. Link: <https://globalmethodist.org/faqs/> To learn more about the GMC and our concerns, see the following links: [Buyer Beware: What the GMC Book of Doctrines and Discipline Really Says](#) and [What Do We Really Know about the "Global Methodist Church"](#) and [What are the Big Concerns about the GMC?](#)

Judicial Council: Nine persons elected by General Conference who rule on questions of constitutionality in church law and practice. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-judicial-Council> A recent ruling says that US annual conferences may not unilaterally vote to leave the UMC. Link: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-court-conferences-cant-exit-unilaterally>

Jurisdictional Conference: The quadrennial meeting of clergy and lay delegates from the annual conferences within the boundaries of one of five U.S. jurisdictions: North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern and Western. Jurisdictional Conferences convene every four years. The business includes the election and assignment of bishops and may plan and oversee the work of the Jurisdiction. We are now waiting on a ruling of the Judicial Council whether or not Jurisdictional Conferences can meet this year and elect Bishops. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-jurisdictional-conference>

Restrictive Rules: Statements specifying six things the General Conference of The United Methodist Church may not do. They are found in Section III of the Constitution. The General Conference may not "revoke, alter, or change" the Articles of Religion, the Confession of Faith, or the General Rules of the Societies. The General Conference may not do away with the episcopacy or the right of ministers to trial or appeal. Further, the General Conference may not appropriate the net income of the Publishing House for any purpose other than clergy pensions. The Restrictive Rules were established by the General Conference in 1808. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-restrictive-rules-the>

The Protocol: Called the "Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation," this is "a proposal to restructure The United Methodist Church by separation as the best

means to resolve our differences.” It would have “allowed each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person.” It would set up procedures for local churches and annual and central conferences who wish to vote to affiliate with another Methodist body formed because of the passage of the Protocol. It, along with other options, will be considered by the 2024 General Conference. Many consider the Protocol to be dead. Link: <https://www.gracethroughseparation.com/>

Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline: The new Global Methodist Church has a draft of their Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline, to be updated and revised until formally adopted by their first General Conference. Link: <https://globalmethodist.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Transitional-Discipline.2022041257.pdf>

Trust clause: A clause in the deeds to the property of each local United Methodist Church which says that all property is “held in trust for the denomination.” Note that The United Methodist Church is not a separate legal entity in and of itself, but a connection of many entities around the world. The titles to the properties are held by boards of trustees established for the purpose of holding and administering property. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-trust-clause-in-deeds>

UMARC: The United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy and Friends. Initiated by the retired United Methodist Clergy of the Mountain Sky Conference, we welcome all retired UMC clergy and friends who share our commitment to an inclusive United Methodist Church and our four goals:

1. Our unwavering support of our duly nominated, elected, consecrated, and assigned Bishop Karen Oliveto, and a call to others in the church to stop their harassment and abuse of our spiritual episcopal leader.
2. Our commitment to stand in solidarity with LGBTQ laity, clergy, and candidates for ministry, speaking and working to ensure the dignity and safety of all persons in church and society.
3. Our hope that the unity of the church will be attained, but not at the price of sacrificing God’s inclusive love in Jesus Christ for all people.
4. Our prayer is that the postponed 2020 General Conference will respond to the Holy Spirit by developing a new church polity that will truly create the inclusive church envisioned in United Methodism’s Constitution. Link: <https://www.umarc.org/>

UMC: The United Methodist Church, formed in 1968 by the union of the Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church. Members in more than seventy Annual Conferences in five Jurisdictional Conferences in the United States and nearly forty Annual and Provisional Annual Conferences in seven Central Conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-united-methodist-church-the>

United Methodist Book of Discipline: The United Methodist book of order, defined in ¶ 101: “The General *Book of Discipline* reflects our Wesleyan way of serving Christ

through doctrine and disciplined Christian life. We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline, and mission through our connectional covenant. The *General Book of Discipline* expresses that unity. Each central conference may make changes and adaptations to the *General Book of Discipline* to more fruitfully accomplish our mission in various contexts. However, some portions of the General Book of Discipline are not subject to adaptation.” Link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/book-of-discipline-101-general-book-of-discipline>

WCA: “The Wesleyan Covenant Association is a global connection of local churches, laity, clergy, and regional chapters that seeks to partner with like-minded orthodox Christians to build a new global Methodist church.” It was founded by more conservative United Methodists as a precursor to the GMC. Link: <https://wesleyancovenant.org/about-page/>

Wespath: Wespath Benefits and Investments. Formerly the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. Link: <https://www.wespath.org/>

Two other glossary sites:

UMC.org: <https://www.umc.org/en/content#tag=Glossary>

Mountain Sky Conference: <https://www.mtnskyumc.org/glossary>

Further resources:

This web site has extensive documentation of the reactions to the outcome of the 2019 General Conference, including the plans for reorganization, critiques, and reviews of the plans, and comparisons between them. The point of view of the site is inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons in the life of the UMC, and a commitment to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as understood by the author, Ben Roe. Link: <https://jbenjaminroe.com/jbr/>