

The United Methodist 2024 General Conference
April 23 through May 3, 2024
The Charlotte Convention Center—Charlotte, North Carolina

- A gathering of 862 elected delegates, which includes an equal number of clergy and lay delegates (431 of each). There will also be anywhere from 1500 to 2000 in-person guests, observers, and volunteers.
- These delegates come from all around the world, wherever United Methodism exists, and are elected by their particular conferences:
 - 55% of delegates are from the US
 - 33% of delegates are from Africa
 - 7% of delegates are from the Philippines
 - 5% are from Europe (including Russia)
- These delegates gather for this 11 day conference ordinarily quadrennially (every four years). The last regular session of the General Conference was in 2016. There was a special session of General Conference in 2019, the purpose of which was to establish a way forward concerning the denomination's stance and practice concerning human sexuality. The 2020 General Conference was not held due to the pandemic. Therefore, the 2024 General Conference is, in actuality, the rescheduled 2020 General Conference. The Council of Bishops will most likely call a five-day special session of General Conference to be held in 2026, which will be, in actuality, the rescheduled 2024 General Conference. This will put the denomination back into normative rhythm for the 2028 General Conference.
- Every General Conference includes vibrant worship opportunities and informative presentations. The bulk of the delegates' time and energy, however, is devoted to addressing proposed legislation (more than 1000 petitions, nearly 500 pages worth!). The General Conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy, and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs. The legislative work of each General Conference produces a revised Book of Discipline, which is the book of ecclesial law for the United Methodist Church. (Because there was no General Conference in 2020, our denomination is still under the 2016 Book of Discipline, as amended in the 2019 special session of Church Conference.)
- To care for the large volume of legislative proposals, each General Conference delegate is assigned to one of fourteen Legislative Sections. All the legislative proposals are divided among these legislative sections for discussion, debate, amendment, and, ultimately, action. If a proposal has no more than 10 votes against it in a legislative section, it goes onto a daily consent calendar (along with many other proposals approved by legislative committee) which will come before the plenary session of General Conference for approval. (Note: Any item can be pulled from the consent calendar by any delegate obtaining 20 delegate signatures approving such action.)
- United Methodist Bishops preside at the General Conference, utilizing Robert's Rules of Order to the best of their abilities. Although they preside at General Conference, Bishops do not have a vote.

General Conference 2024—Major Points and Legislation

1. Regionalization of the Denomination

There are 8 legislative petitions (presented to General Conference by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters) designed to regionalize and contextualize the way in which our denomination makes its decisions related to mission and ministry around the world. Under the plan proposed by the petitions, the seven current global central conferences (in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines) and the U.S. would become United Methodist regional conferences with the same duties and powers to pass legislation for greater missional impact in their respective regions.

2. General Church Budget

The General Council on Finance and Administration has proposed a 2025-28 denominational budget of approximately \$370.5 million. This marks a nearly 40% reduction from the denomination-wide budget that General Conference approved at its last regular meeting in 2016, reflecting the impact of disaffiliation on the denomination.

3. Revision of United Methodist Social Principles

The United Methodist Board of Church and Society will bring legislation for a *full revision of the Social Principles* — the first such overhaul in nearly 50 years. The goal is for the statements that guide United Methodist public witness to be more succinct, more theologically grounded, and more *globally relevant*.

4. Dealing with Disaffiliations

Over the past four years, the denomination has been grappling with disaffiliations amid the denomination's ongoing debates about homosexuality.

About a quarter of U.S. churches have disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church under a policy approved by the 2019 special General Conference that expired at the end of 2023 (Paragraph 2553, which had a "sunset" of December 31, 2023). Many that disaffiliated had conservative views on homosexuality and Scripture.

The coming General Conference faces a handful of petitions to extend Paragraph 2553 so that it can continue to apply in the U.S. and expand to churches in the central conferences. Another petition set forth a process for churches that seek to reaffiliate with the UMC.

5. LGBTQ Matters

The Book of Discipline, because of the actions of the 2019 special session of General Conference, still prohibits United Methodist clergy from officiating at same-sex weddings and still prohibits United Methodist bishops from licensing, commissioning, ordaining, appointing, or consecrating as a bishop anyone who is found to be a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." There are many pieces of proposed legislation that call for the removal of these restrictions.