

# Guide for First-Time Members to the Tennessee Annual Conference

There are 129 annual conferences around the world, with 54 in the United States. The Tennessee Conference, in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, is led by Bishop Bill McAlilly, who was elected as a bishop at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in 2012. Bishops often serve for two consecutive four-year terms.

Our conference has 561 churches or charges and approximately **109,456 members**. Bishop McAlilly presides over the Annual Conference Session but does not vote. *We offer this short guide to help familiarize new members – and remind others – of the nuts and bolts of our holy conferencing.*

## *THE MISSION OF THE TENNESSEE CONFERENCE*

*...is to discover, equip, connect, and send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world one neighborhood at a time.*

Conference staff includes the bishop; five district superintendents, a leadership strategist and their respective district administrators; several program and support staff; and financial/operations and communications staff. The District Superintendent's are:

Caney Fork River District - District Superintendent Donna Parramore

Cumberland River District - District Superintendent Scott Aleridge

Harpeth River District - District Superintendent Allen Black

Red River District - District Superintendent Pat Freudenthal

Stones River District - District Superintendent Chip Hunter

Each local church and charge belongs to a district. Most churches or charges (two or more churches with one pastor) are presided over by either an ordained Elder or a probationary Elder, local pastors, part-time local pastors, student pastors, certified lay ministers or certified lay speakers.

## **Who are members of annual conference?**

All clergy (Elders and Deacons) hold their membership in the Annual Conference, not in a local church. Deaconesses and diaconal ministers, both retired and active, are lay members of Annual Conference. The Book of Discipline requires an equal number of laity and clergy to be members of the Annual Conference Session.

To be a voting member, a lay person must be elected by his or her local church through a nomination and voting process that is held at the annual Charge Conference.

The Charge Conference is to the local church what the Annual Conference Session is to the Conference; i.e., the annual business meeting. Charge Conferences may happen more often, but they must happen at least once a year, under the rules of the Book of Discipline. A district superintendent or her/his designee presides. The laity are *members* of Annual Conference – not *delegates*. There are several “at-large” members to Annual Conference, who, by virtue of their district, conference or national positions, are also voting members of the Annual Conference.

## 53rd SESSION OF THE TENNESSEE CONFERENCE

Theme: By Faith

The Annual Conference Session is presided over by Bishop Bill McAlilly, who is the legal chairperson of the Annual Conference. Other officers include the Conference Secretary (Monica Mowdy), elected for a four-year term at the beginning of the quadrennium; the Conference Treasurer (Jim Allen); the Conference Lay Leader (Holly Neal); and the Chancellor (Lisa Carson).

The bishop’s decisions must conform to the Rules of Order. Under our rules, during speeches, the bishop recognizes each person asking to speak, and allows three minutes. See rules at [www.tnumc.org/Rules](http://www.tnumc.org/Rules).

### **What is the business of Annual Conference Session?**

This year, members will be called upon to vote on several items including resolutions and reports in a Consent Agenda, all which are with pre-conference materials on the conference website and in the annual conference App. The App step-by-step download instructions are available at [tnumc.org/ac2020](http://tnumc.org/ac2020).

Annual Conference also includes many opportunities for inspirational worship, reports from areas of the conference; and the Ordination and Commissioning service. Worked in are celebrations of various kinds, prayers for discernment and times of learning and fellowship.

**View the Conference Schedule at [www.tnumc.org/AC2020](http://www.tnumc.org/AC2020)**

### **Annual Conference 2020 Offering**

The 2020 Tennessee Annual Conference offering will go to support our disaster response teams and ongoing Tornado Recovery Connection activities associated with the March 2020 storms. Checks can be mailed to the conference office: Tennessee Conference, 304 S. Perimeter Park Drive, Suite 1, Nashville, TN 37211 (*please note that this is for Tornado Response*)

Online giving is preferred since our staff continues to work remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. Online giving link: [Tornado Response](#).

## **Who can vote and how do I vote?**

The Conference Secretary has been provided by District Offices with lists of all lay people elected to serve as voting members of the annual conference. These laity and all clergy who are eligible to vote will receive voting codes to use during the electronic voting process.

Early in the conference schedule, the bishop declares the boundaries of the bar. In 2020, the bar will be the Annual Conference Zoom Webinar. Only voting members are to attend and participate in this zoom meeting.

People who are not allowed to vote, i.e. guests and friends, staff and a few others, must stay “outside the bar.” In 2020, that means that they can watch the live stream broadcast of the Annual Conference Zoom Webinar.

To be eligible and able to vote, members must be online and have their voting code at the time of voting. Lay members vote. Clergy vote. Guests do not.

Any voter may speak from the floor to a motion. The bishop controls who speaks, speeches are limited to three minutes. Robert’s Rules of Order are followed.

Alternate Members, elected by each church, may attend to hear the debate and procedures, but may not vote. If a Lay Member to Annual Conference is unable to fulfill their duties as the representative of a charge to Annual Conference, the Alternate Lay Member to Annual Conference from that charge, elected at charge conference, can fill their position. However, they can only vote as a substitute for the Lay Member after they have officially been recognized by the Conference Secretary.

To fill this substitute position, the Lay Member needs to turn in their voting credentials (voting code) to the Annual Conference Secretary and then the new voting credentials (a new voting code) can be distributed to the Alternate Lay Member to serve in the role of Lay Member.

Do not share your voting code with anyone! It is unique to you.

If you cannot reach the Conference Secretary, the pastor of the charge can submit an email to [AC2020@tnumc.org](mailto:AC2020@tnumc.org). (If the pastor is not able to do so, the same can be submitted by the District Superintendent of the District for the charge.)

Until something official has been submitted, the Alternate to Annual Conference will not be given a voting code.

## **Q & A Zoom Webinar Function**

A **Zoom webinar** is a view-only platform where the attendees cannot see each other, and the Host cannot see the attendees. During our **webinars**, there will not be a chat feature. Instead, we will use a Question/Answer feature that allows all attendees to submit questions (and comments) to the bishop and conference secretary. If you are recognized to speak, your voice will be heard by everyone, however, you will not appear on the screen (so you do not need a web camera).

Someone speaking to a motion is asked to give his or her name and their church name before beginning to speak to only one issue. This will be submitted via the Q&A function of the zoom webinar. If proposing an amendment, the speaker is asked to type out a statement and submit it via the Q&A function so words are recorded properly.

Any member may “move for the question,” which takes precedence over the debate going on. It requires two-thirds agreement. The Annual Conference Session follows its own “Rules of the Session.” In any parliamentary situation not clearly covered by the Rules of the Session, the Conference is governed in its actions by the current edition of **Robert’s Rules of Order**.

**Q & A page** is available on the Conference website for further information and updates. <https://www.tnumc.org/ac2020questions/>

## **What if I have questions while attending Annual Conference?**

Questions of all sorts can be asked by emailing conference staff at [AC2020@tnumc.org](mailto:AC2020@tnumc.org) or by using the Q&A function during the webinar. Technical questions can be asked directly to our production crew with GNTV. An email and phone number will be provided for that during your zoom webinar training session.

The Communications team will do an annual conference recap – available on the TNAC2020 App and on the conference website at [www.tnumc.org/AC2020](http://www.tnumc.org/AC2020). That page is where you can find links to everything you will need to know about Annual Conference. This summary of the actions of Annual Conference is to assist you in reporting to your local church.

## **Sometimes I don’t understand what is meant. Can you help?**

Here is a list of “jargon,” words that we United Methodists use without thinking, but that someone new to the process might have trouble with. It’s in alphabetical order for easy reference.

*Apportionments*: Every church is expected to pay its apportionments, the share of the overall expenses of running a large denomination, jurisdiction, annual conference and district. Apportionment giving financially underwrites United Methodist ministry and mission beyond the local church. The amount for each church is reached by a specific formula.

*Book of Discipline:* This is the official manual of procedures and regulations. It covers every aspect of church life, doctrine, guidance for Christian behavior, procedures for becoming a church member or minister, protocols for organizing and administering local churches, annual conferences, districts and churchwide boards and agencies, as well as rules of church law. It is revised every four years at General Conference. The current one is dated 2016.

The last General Conference was May 10-20, 2016, in Portland, Ore. A Special Session of the General Conference took place February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri. The next officially scheduled General Conference is Aug. 29-Sept. 7, 2021, in Minneapolis, Minn.

*Book of Resolutions:* This book explains the many social and justice ministries' actions that The United Methodist Church believes in, teaches, and practices. It contains all resolutions or pronouncements on issues approved by the General Conference and currently valid.

*Cabinet:* The Appointive Cabinet includes the bishop and five district superintendents.

*Central Conference:* This refers to the seven geographic areas of Africa, Europe and the Philippines, each composed of annual conferences. In the Central Conferences, there are currently 79 annual conferences with 10,394 active clergy. Our partner conferences in Zimbabwe and Russia are each part of the Central Conferences. We are also partners with Methodist churches in South Korea and Puerto Rico.

*Charge Conference:* The basic policy-making body of the local church. It reviews the congregation's ministries, endorses candidates for ministry and sets clergy compensation.

*Connectional:* You often hear this word used, as in "We're a connectional church." It's unique to The United Methodist Church and simply means all United Methodist leaders and congregations throughout the world are connected by certain loyalties and commitments that call us to live in covenantal accountability. "Connectionalism" empowers us to be in ministry around the world and our relationships are on equal footing, not one dominating over another.

*Deacon:* A person ordained to lifetime ministry of Word and service to community and congregation. Deacons are not part of the itinerant system, which appoints pastors to churches; they find their own positions that are then approved by the bishop. They, along with the Elders, are ordained at Annual Conference. After ordination, they carry the title "Reverend."

*District:* Regional group of churches or charges, supervised by a district superintendent. The TN Conference has five district superintendents, who are appointed by the bishop to administer the work of the church within a particular geographic area.

*Elder:* A person ordained to a lifetime ministry of service, Word, sacrament and order. He or she is authorized to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and to order the church for mission and ministry. After ordination, they are referred to as "Reverend."

*Itinerancy:* The system of The United Methodist Church by which pastors are appointed to their charges by the bishops, unlike other denominations where a pastor is “called.” Pastors are under obligation to serve where appointed.

*Local Pastor:* A licensed pastor, annually approved by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, who is authorized to perform all duties of an ordained minister while assigned to a particular church or charge under the supervision of a district superintendent.

*Provisional or Probationary Elder or Deacon:* In the process toward ordination for either Deacons or Elders, there is a three-year period that is somewhat like an internship. He or she serves in a church as its leader or in an associate position, studies, takes tests and develops their spiritual life. After successfully completing the time, the person can be ordained. The term has changed from “probationary” to “provisional,” but the old name lingers.

*Social Principles:* A document setting forth the basic position of The United Methodist Church on important social issues. Each General Conference reviews the **Social Principles** document, makes changes, and reissues it in full in the Book of Discipline.

## Information on the General Church



The United Methodist Church had 6,951,278 full members in the United States at the end of 2016, and 5,663,340 full members in the Central Conferences (Conferences located outside the United States). This does not include the more than 54,000 clergy worldwide.

In total, The United Methodist Church counts more than 44,000 churches around the globe. Average attendance at weekly worship services in the United States was 2,659,106 in 2016. There are 46 active bishops who govern and administer the roughly 32,000 churches in the United States. Outside the U.S., there are 20 active bishops, of whom 13 are in Africa.

**The United Methodist Church** was formed in 1968 with the union of the Evangelical United Brethren (thus the “United”) and Methodist Episcopal churches. There is no single central office, no archbishop and no pope.

The governance of The United Methodist Church is made up of four levels:

The General Conference: The United Methodist General Conference meets every four years, with no fewer than 600, nor more than 1,000 delegates. It **last met in 2016**, in Portland, Ore. At the General Conference session, delegates from all over the world voted on many items which then amend and add to the **Book of Discipline** and the **Book of Resolutions**.

The General Conference might be compared to the legislative branch of the U.S. government.

The General Conference is the only official voice of The United Methodist Church. Though bishops preside over the General Conference, they have no vote.

The Tennessee Conference had four clergy and four laity delegates elected to the 2016 General Conference during the Annual Conference Session in 2015. Tennessee Conference also had four alternates. Those twelve delegates became the first people elected to the Jurisdictional Conference delegation. In addition, two clergy and two laity were elected to the Jurisdictional Conference, with four alternates from the laity and four from the clergy.

Working with the General Conference is the Council of Bishops, 164 active and retired bishops from all over the world, who meet somewhat like the executive branch of the U.S. government. Currently, the U.S. has 46 bishops who administer 54 annual conferences. They elect their own leader each quadrennium.

The president of the Council of Bishops is Bishop Ken Carter, who serves the Florida Episcopal Area. In Arica, Europe, and the Philippines are 20 bishops administering 79 annual conferences, varying a great deal in geographic size.

As the denomination's "Supreme Court," a nine-member Judicial Council composed of both laity and clergy, interprets church law and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. It usually meets twice a year in the spring and fall to consider whether actions of various church bodies adhere to the constitution and Book of Discipline.

The next largest body is the Jurisdictional Conference. There are five jurisdictions in the United States: Northeastern, North Central, Southeastern, South Central and Western.

The Tennessee Conference is one of 15 conferences (13 bishops) that belong to the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

The Jurisdictional Conference meets every four years following the General Conference; its primary function is to elect bishops. It also conducts business of interest to the whole region, such as mergers of Conferences. The last Jurisdictional Conference was held July 11-15, 2016, in Lake Junaluska, NC. At this meeting the Tennessee Conference, Bishop Bill McAlilly was reassigned to serve our conference.

Much more information about the United Methodist Church is available at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org).