I. General and Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church

Regular sessions of The General and Jurisdictional Conferences are held quadrennially in The United Methodist Church. These are residential conferences of two weeks or one week duration, respectively, occurring in years whose numbers are exactly divisible by four.

II. Duties and Responsibilities of The General and Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church

In all things, The General and Jurisdictional Conferences are to encourage, enable, facilitate, and seek God’s guidance in the fulfillment of the Mission of The United Methodist Church, which is “To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.”

A. Duties and Responsibilities of The General Conference

The specific duties of The General Conference include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To serve as the primary legislative body of The United Methodist Church. Most of the time of The General Conference is spent in the legislative process. The legislative process itself is based upon Robert’s Rules of Order. There are many similarities between the legislative process of The General Conference and that of the United States Congress, despite the fact that each of these bodies has its own set of rules.

2. To receive, and as may be appropriate, to act upon petitions, and resolutions (which may include reports, recommendations, and/or requests) from the Council of Bishops, the agencies of The United Methodist Church, the Jurisdictional Conferences, the Annual Conferences, Districts, and individual and/or groups of members of The United Methodist Church.

3. To review, and as may be appropriate, to revise through amendment, addition, deletion, or otherwise The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

4. To review, and as may be appropriate, to revise through amendment, addition, deletion, or otherwise The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church.

5. To set “missional priorities” for The United Methodist Church.

6. To set the quadrennial budgets for The United Methodist Church and its agencies.

7. To elect members to certain agencies and responsibilities within The United Methodist Church, specifically including:
   a. The Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church
   b. The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church
   c. Certain of the members of the University Senate of The United Methodist Church
B. Duties and Responsibilities of The Jurisdictional Conferences

The specific duties of the Jurisdictional conferences include:

1. To elect eligible persons to membership on the Council of Bishops and the respective Jurisdictional College of Bishops.
2. To fix the geographic boundaries of the annual conferences within the Jurisdiction. (The Jurisdictional College of Bishops creates episcopal areas made up one or two adjoining annual conferences.)
3. To fix the appointment of individual members of the Jurisdictional College of Bishops to episcopal leadership of specific Episcopal Areas for the coming quadrennium.
4. To elect members to general agencies and responsibilities within The United Methodist Church, except for those agencies and responsibilities specifically included in the duties of The General Conference.
5. To elect members to jurisdictional agencies and responsibilities.
6. To serve as the legislative body of the respective Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.
7. To receive, and as may be appropriate, to act upon reports, recommendations, requests, petitions, and resolutions from the Jurisdictional College of Bishops, the agencies of the Jurisdictional Conference, and the Annual Conferences, Districts, and individual and/or groups of members of The United Methodist Church within the Jurisdiction.
8. To set the quadrennial budget for the Jurisdiction.

C. Special Duties and Responsibilities of the Total Jurisdictional Delegation

Additional special responsibilities, not of the Jurisdictional Conference, but rather of the total Jurisdictional Delegation itself, are:

1. To recommend to the Annual Conferences procedures by which the total conference may nominate and/or endorse eligible clergy to be candidates for election to the episcopacy (that is, the Jurisdictional College of Bishops) at the session of the Annual Conference held immediately preceding the Jurisdictional Conference, and to oversee and otherwise encourage the process itself once adopted by the Annual Conference. While not mandating any votes at the Jurisdictional Conference, the delegation will be expected to guide the nominated episcopal candidates through the election process at the Jurisdictional Conference.
2. In consultation with the Bishop, to recommend to the session of the Annual Conference held immediately preceding the Jurisdictional Conference persons to be placed within a pool of persons to be elected to general agencies of the Church by the Jurisdictional Conference. (This pool will include the total Jurisdictional Conference Delegation itself.)
III. Election of Delegates to The General and Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church

Voting Delegates and Reserve Voting Delegates to these conferences shall be elected by the respective annual conferences, and may serve as representatives of the annual conference from which they were elected. The number of Delegates to be elected by each annual conference is dependent upon the membership of the respective annual conference and is based upon a formula in the most recent edition of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. Equal numbers of professing lay members and fully ordained clergy members, excluding bishops, shall be elected through the use of procedures based upon the provisions contained within *The Book of Discipline*, at the regular session of each respective annual conference during the year immediately preceding the year of The General Conference. (Bishops are not eligible to serve as Delegates to either of these Conferences. They are present and may serve as presiding officers of plenary sessions, resource persons, and parliamentarians.) Lay and clergy Delegates and Alternate Delegates are elected, separately, in the following categories:

A. The number of [Full Voting] Delegates to The General Conference from each respective Annual Conference based upon the formula contained within *The Book of Discipline*. These Delegates shall serve as [Full] Delegates to both the General and the Jurisdictional Conferences; shall be eligible to receive (full or partial) reimbursement from The General Conference or the Jurisdictional Conference, as appropriate, for travel, lodging, and eating expenses incurred in conjunction with their presence at these conferences; and may receive additional reimbursement for expenses from their Annual Conference. These Delegates may receive legislative committee assignments following the election of the total slate of [Full Voting] Delegates, and subsequently, may also receive appointments and/or invitations to serve on administrative committees of the General Conference. Until 2012, the total number of [Full Voting] Delegates at The General Conference has been one thousand.

B. An additional number of Delegates (to be set by each respective Annual Conference, but less than the number of [Full] Delegates to The General Conference described above). These Delegates shall serve as Reserve Delegates to the General Conference and as [Full] Delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference; shall be eligible to receive (full or partial) reimbursement from their respective Annual Conference for travel, lodging, and eating expenses incurred in conjunction with their presence at The General Conference; shall be eligible to receive (full or partial) reimbursement from the Jurisdictional Conference for travel, lodging, and eating expenses incurred in conjunction with their presence at the Jurisdictional Conference; and may receive additional reimbursement for expenses from their Annual Conference.

C. A sufficient number of additional Delegates who shall serve as [Full] Delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference to bring the total number of [Full] Delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference to twice that of [Full] Delegates to The General Conference. These Delegates shall be eligible to receive (full or partial) reimbursement from the Jurisdictional Conference for travel, lodging, and eating expenses incurred in conjunction with their presence at the Jurisdictional Conference; and may receive additional reimbursement for expenses from their Annual Conference.

D. Additional Delegates, at the discretion of the Annual Conference, who shall serve as Reserve Delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference, and may receive (full or partial) reimbursement from the Annual Conference for travel, lodging, and eating expenses incurred in conjunction with their presence at the Jurisdictional Conference.
Printed Resources to Facilitate the Role of Delegates

The following printed resources will facilitate the role of Delegates, and should be available to each Delegate, in the forms indicated, while preparing for The General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences and throughout the sessions of the Conference:

A. *The Holy Bible*: This one is unofficial, but insofar as it is the most fundamental foundational document of our Church, it should be readily available for reference at all times. Each Delegate should come to the conferences prepared with his or her own Bible, or purchase one from the on-site Cokesbury Store.

B. *The United Methodist Hymnal*: There was a time when complimentary copies of this resource (with specially designed covers) were provided to every Delegate at The General Conference in order to facilitate the singing of hymns during worship services. The use of electronically controlled digital screens have made the complimentary hymnals no longer necessary; the existence of other widely-used Church-produced and published music resources, such as The Faith We Sing and Worship & Song have made the complimentary hymnals no longer sufficient. Copies of hymnals with special covers, as well as copies of the other resources, may be purchased from the on-site Cokesbury Store.

C. The latest edition of *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*: The review and revision of this document is one of the major responsibilities of The General Conference; thus it is both a working document and a reference document to be used during necessary preparation for and participation throughout The General Conference. Each Delegate should have a copy to assist in his or her preparation for the conferences, and should come to the conferences prepared with his or her own copy, or purchase one from the on-site Cokesbury Store. (Advanced orders for the next edition, containing changes made by The General Conference, may be placed at the on-site Cokesbury Store.)

D. The latest edition of *The United Methodist Book of Resolutions*: The review and revision of this document is one of the major responsibilities of The General Conference; thus it is both a working document and a reference document to be used during necessary preparation for and participation throughout The General Conference (particularly when issues Church and Society are the subject). Each Delegate should have a copy to assist in his or her preparation for the conferences, and should come to the conferences prepared with his or her own copy, or purchase one from the on-site Cokesbury Store. (Advanced orders for the next edition, containing changes made by The General Conference, may be placed at the on-site Cokesbury Store.)

E. *The Daily Christian Advocate*: There are advance editions and regular daily editions of this resource, which are used to support both The General and the Jurisdictional Conferences throughout their meetings. Delegates should bring these materials to all formal sessions, both committee and plenary.

1. The Advance Edition of *Daily Christian Advocate*: This somewhat bulky resource (in excess of 1500 finely printed pages) is delivered to each [Full] Delegate, and to each “First” Reserve Delegates at least two months before the opening of The General Conference, to enable intensive study. The Advance Edition will include copies of all reports being sent to The General Conference; copies of all (of the potentially thousands of) resolutions, petitions, proposals, recommendations, requests, etc. being...
sent to The General Conference for action; and budget proposals for the next
quadrennium. It may come in several sections. It will include a Handbook which will
include schedules, rosters, rules, and a variety of other useful items. This resource is
essential to preparation for The General Conference, and should be brought to pre-
conference Delegate meetings as well as to the Conference itself.

2. The Daily Editions of the *Daily Christian Advocate*: This resource is printed daily
(over-night) from the opening session of The General Conference through the closing
session, and is delivered to the seats of [Full] Delegates and a central distribution point
in the on-site Cokesbury Store every morning, before the worship service, with a final
edition (a summary) mailed to Delegates following the closing of The General
Conference. It includes the proceedings of the previous day, including plenary and
committee actions, verbatim transcripts of legislative activities from the plenary
session, reports, announcements, daily consent calendars, all actions to be acted upon
in plenary session, and everything else that may be useful. Delegates are advised to
arrive at their assigned seats early in the morning to enable time to read (or at least
skim) that day’s Daily Christian Advocate, or at least the (ever-growing) consent
calendar. By the end of The General Conference, the total size of the composite daily
editions will rival that of the advance edition.

The *Daily Christian Advocate* is also published during the Jurisdictional Conferences, where its
content and uses are similar to and analogous to that of The General Conference.

A large, strong tote bag (if not provided by The General Conference) or a substantial, wheeled
book carrier is recommended and strongly encouraged!

There may also be a large number of unofficial flyers prepared unofficial and caucus groups
within the Church, and by outside agencies. These may be manually distributed to Delegates, outside
of the meeting site, as the Delegates approach the site. (General Conference rules prohibit the
distribution of unofficial materials within the Conference site.)

V Agenda: Activities During the General Conference

Until 2012, there have been ten days of formal activity at The General Conference: Tuesday
through Saturday during the first week, and Monday through Friday during the second week; this
may be reduced. Normal daily activity hours during The General Conference are from 8:00AM until
10:00PM with a two hour recess for lunch and a two-and-one-half hour recess for dinner!

Administrative committees may meet on Monday, the day before the formal opening, and in
the morning on Tuesday, the day of formal opening. The opening ceremony on Tuesday afternoon
features a service of prayer and Holy Communion with the President of the Council of Bishops
preaching, and other organizational matters.

The typical daily schedule begins with an opening worship service (usually with a bishop
preaching), and usually includes oral, vocal, musical, and other presentations. This is followed by
plenary legislative session. The plenary business during the first week is usually limited to oral
presentations, elections, and daily action on the “consent calendar.” The bulk of the time during the
first week is spent in legislative committees. Each of the (usually many thousand) resolutions and/or
petitions sent from throughout the Church must pass through and receive a (positive or negative)
recommendation (for final adoption by the plenary session of The General Conference) from a legislative committee before it can be acted upon by the plenary session. Committee actions (often referred to as items) that are unanimous, or nearly unanimous, may be placed on the consent calendar on which they may be expedited through the plenary session unless formally removed from the consent calendar during a plenary session. Controversial items receiving (positive or negative) recommendations from a legislative committee may come to the plenary session with a minority report attached, in which case, both must be considered by the plenary.

During the second week, following the daily opening worship service, the time is spent almost entirely in plenary session, acting upon the (ever growing) consent calendar and, often following intensive parliamentary debates, and either approving or disapproving each of the many recommendations coming from the legislative committees or formally removed from the consent calendar.

On the final (Friday) evening, adjournment may not occur at the planned time, and there may be unfinished business. The General Conference closes in prayer.

VI. Agenda: Activities During the Jurisdictional Conference

The Jurisdictional Conferences, which are held simultaneously in different locations, are far less intense than is The General Conference, and there is very little legislative activity. On the first morning (Monday), administrative committees meet. The remainder of Monday and all-day Tuesday are spent in group interview sessions with the individuals (one at a time) that have been nominated for the episcopacy. The remainder of the time is spent in plenary session. The formal opening ceremony is on Wednesday morning and includes Holy Communion, reports, and organizational formalities. The first episcopal ballot is an “order of the day” across all of the jurisdictions. Every morning begins with a service of worship. Further ballots are taken as needed, as late into the evening on Thursday as it takes to get sixty percent majorities for the number of bishops to be elected. Elections and other jurisdictional business is interspersed between episcopal ballots. Following the last election, the Jurisdictional Episcopal Committee meets for the purpose of making recommendations for the assignment of bishops to episcopal areas for the quadrennium. The Conference meets to approve the episcopal assignments on Friday morning and ends on Friday afternoon with a service of Holy Communion, and Consecration for the newly elected bishops.

VII. Qualifications, Requirements, Expectations and Preparations of, and Anticipations for, General and/or Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

A. Prayer Commitments: It is expected that Delegates to the General and/or Conferences will be in constant prayer for guidance by the Holy Spirit: for the World in which we find ourselves, for the nations of the World, for the Church itself and other churches, for their colleagues at The General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences, for their communities, their families, and themselves.

B. Familiarity with The Scriptures: It is anticipated that all Delegates to the General Conference will have a familiarity with the Scriptures that provide the foundation of the Church and guide it in the ministry if disciple making, at least at the level of Disciple [I], Becoming Disciples through Bible Study.

C. Familiarity with Parliamentary Procedure: In order to enhance the effective participation of each individual Delegate, it is important that they have more than a rudimentary
understanding of Robert’s Rules of Order and the Rules of Order of The General Conference (usually contained in the Handbook distributed with the advance editions of the Daily Christian Advocate). In particular Delegates should be comfortable with such parliamentary procedures as the amendment of propositions, the processing of minority reports, and the processing of alternative motions.

D. Familiarity with the Polity of The United Methodist Church and with a broad spectrum of challenges, opportunities, and problems confronting the Church. Delegates should not expect to be able to devote themselves to a single issue while at The General Conference.

E. Pre-Conference Preparation of Delegates, individually and collectively

It is impossible to estimate the amount of time that individual members of the delegation will need to study all of the materials delivered to them, individually, before the opening of The General Conference. The intensity of this activity will greatly increase once the advance editions of the Daily Christian Advocate arrive.

It is expected that the total membership of the General Conference Delegation (including reserves) shall meet together several times before attending The General Conference for the purposes of sharing concerns, understandings, insights, etc. regarding duties and responsibilities of the total delegation, including administrative matters related to attendance at The General Conference, and subject matters related to the agenda of The General Conference. These meetings shall include the members of the Jurisdictional Conference Delegation when similar issues related to the Jurisdictional Conference are to be discussed, including issues related to Annual Conference responsibilities and opportunities for nomination of persons to be candidates for election to the Jurisdictional College of Bishops and other general church agencies by the Jurisdictional Conference. It is understood that there is to be no binding of Delegates to specific positions in advance of any conference; Delegates are expected to be spiritually guided in their positions and votes throughout these conferences.

It is expected that all Delegates will make every effort to be present, physically or electronically, at all pre-conference Delegation meetings between June, 2015 and July, 2016, and that, as much as possible, these meetings will be scheduled at such times and in such a manner as to accommodate personal time commitments and the realities of travel.

F. Other Time Commitments for the Conferences

1. It is expected that, prior to the opening session of The General Conference, all Delegates will make time available for prayer, for the study of the challenges, opportunities, problems, and other issues facing the Church, and to intensively study pertinent portions of the editions of the Daily Christian Advocate distributed in advance of the Conferences, particularly those sections related to rules and procedures, and to their specific legislative committees. (It is anticipated that advanced editions of the Daily Christian Advocate will be distributed at least two months before the opening of The General Conference will be in excess of 1500 finely printed pages.)

2. It is expected that 2016 General Conference Delegates, and those additional General Conference Delegates who will be functioning as Reserve Delegates, will be able to adjust their schedules to enable them to travel to Portland, Oregon, before May 9,
2016, to be present in Portland, Oregon for two weeks, from May 9 until May 21, 2016, and to enable them to travel home after May 21, 2016.

3. It is expected that 2016 Jurisdictional Conference Delegates, and those additional Jurisdictional Conference Delegates who will be functioning as Reserve Delegates, will be able to adjust their schedules to enable them to travel to the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area before July 20, 2016, to be present in the Philadelphia, Oregon for one week, from July 20 until July 24, 2016, and to enable them to travel home after July 24, 2016.

4. It is expected that Delegates, individually or in groups, and within reason, will respond to invitations to share concerns with individual and groups of local churches, and districts within reasonable distances of their homes, prior to the meeting of The General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences.

5. It is expected that Delegates will study the daily editions of the Daily Christian Advocate as they become available. Ideally, this will be a morning activity.

6. It is expected that Delegates, individually or in groups, and within reason, will respond to invitations to report actions and share reactions from the General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences with their Annual Conference, individual and groups of local churches, and districts within reasonable distances of their homes, after the meetings of the General and/or Jurisdictional Conferences.

G. Personal Considerations for the Health and Well-being of Delegates to The General Conference

In addition to the time commitments itemized above, it must be recognized that the role of Delegate is physically strenuous and demanding; thus there is an implicit requirement for good health.