

Methodist Church Structure

History

The United Methodist Church was created on April 23, 1968, when The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church united to form a new denomination. But [Methodism dates back to 1736](#) and the leadership of John and Charles Wesley. United Methodists share an historic [connection to other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies](#).

Constitutional Structure

The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. Duties are divided among bodies that include the General Conference, the Council of Bishops and the Judicial Council. Each of these entities is required by our Constitution, a foundational document, to be part of our structure, and plays a significant role in the life of the church.

General Conference

The General Conference, the primary legislative body of The United Methodist Church, is the only body that speaks officially for the church. Meeting once every four years to determine legislation affecting connectional matters, it is composed of no fewer than 600 and no more than 1,000 delegates.

Council of Bishops

The Council of Bishops gives general oversight of the ministry and mission of the church and spiritual leadership to the entire church connection. Composed of all active and retired bishops, the council meets as a group at least once a year.

Bishops are elected by Jurisdictional Conferences and assigned to a particular area, made up of one or more annual conferences. Each bishop provides oversight of the ministry and mission of annual conferences in his or her area and appoints all clergy to their places of service.

Judicial Council

As the denomination's highest judicial body or "court," the Judicial Council interprets church law and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life.

Its nine members, made up of laity and clergy, are elected by the General Conference and normally meet twice a year to consider whether actions of the various church bodies adhere to the constitution and follow the rules outlined in the Book of Discipline.