WE ARE UNITED METHODIST
A SHARED CALLING A COMMON MISSION
WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS
Our mission statement:
The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and extension ministries of the Church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs. (United Methodist Book of Discipline, para. 120).

A Shared Calling, A Common Mission: Why Membership Matters

We are thrilled you want to learn more about what it means to be a member of a United Methodist congregation. We believe membership matters because we are better together.

God designed us to share our faith journeys together.
• Soon after creating Adam, God said, “It’s not good that the human is alone” (Genesis 2:18 CEB).
• Jesus shared his ministry with 12 disciples and many followers.
• The Apostle Paul taught that we are to be one body in Christ (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12).
• John Wesley, one of United Methodism’s founders, wrote, “Solitary religion is not to be found” in the Bible.

Our Christian faith is to be lived in the community called the church. Church membership matters. Through participation in the church’s ministries, we are shaped into lifelong followers of Jesus Christ. Also, we can do things together that no one person could do alone.

A shared calling: We believe Christians are called to a lifelong journey of growth. Participation in the ministries of the church, like worship, Bible study, missions, and connecting with our neighbors, are ways God works in our lives and hearts.

A common mission: We also believe that call includes participating in the work of God in the world. Through our church membership, we participate in ministries in our community, our region, and around the world. Read on to learn more about our shared calling and common mission. See how we live into this life of discipleship. Find the places where God is calling you to get involved.

I am United Methodist:
“Grace, connectional church, focus on our responsibility of sharing God’s amazing gift of love and grace through outreach to others; doctrine that supports our open hearts, open minds and open doors.” — @swmitton
SOME BASIC UNITED METHODIST BELIEFS

United Methodists share the historic Christian faith passed down through the centuries, with a unique history and distinctive emphases. None of the following definitions are complete. To learn more, visit UMC.org/beliefs.

GOD
- We believe in one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Trinity). Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God saves us and restores and heals all of creation.

US – HUMANITY
- We believe God loves and is present with every person—even before they’re aware of it. God seeks to make us whole and holy.

THE CHURCH
- The Christian church is the community of all Christians around the world, throughout time. The United Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches and extension ministries of the church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs. Through the ministries of the church, we are formed into the body of Christ and participate in God’s restoration project for the world.

THE BIBLE
- The Bible is our primary source for understanding God’s will for our lives and for the world. Our reason, experience, and the history of the church’s interpretation help us to understand more fully what God is teaching us in the Bible.

GRACE
- John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement in England, emphasized God’s grace. God loves and is present with all people by his prevenient grace. God graciously forgives, restores, and receives us through his justifying grace. God continues to grow us into better followers of Jesus through his sanctifying grace.
FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS: A COMMON MISSION

As United Methodists, we seek to form people into followers of Jesus who participate in God’s work of transforming the world. This is a monumental mission. The United Methodist Church has identified four key areas of mission and ministry that became known as “The Four Areas of Focus.” These focus areas provide a long-term vision to help guide the work of the church at all levels.

1. CREATING NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE AND RENEWING EXISTING CONGREGATIONS
2. DEVELOPING PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS
3. ENGAGING IN MINISTRY WITH THE POOR
4. IMPROVING HEALTH GLOBALLY

I AM UNITED METHODIST: “My favorite thing is that we emphasize helping others no matter who they are and what they’ve done just as Jesus did when he walked the Earth.” – @HIGGINSJ99
A CONNECTED CHURCH

Membership in a United Methodist church connects you with the people of your local congregation, and a global denomination of more than 12 million members across five continents—Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. We organize this “connection” into ever-widening groups, many of which we call conferences—a term carried over from the early days of the Methodist movement in the 1700s.

LOCAL CHURCH

The local church is the basic unit of our denomination. In the local church, we worship God, receive the sacraments, serve our communities, study the Bible, and work together to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who have not yet heard it. Every member’s participation in the congregation is vitally important. Don’t just attend your church; find places to serve, grow, and lead.

DISTRICTS

Your congregation is part of a geographic grouping of United Methodist churches called a district. Districts coordinate and support the ministries of the congregations and pastors of the district under the supervision of a district superintendent, an elder appointed by their bishop to serve this role.

ANNUAL CONFERENCES

Districts are part of an annual conference, a geographic grouping led by a bishop. Bishops are elected by a jurisdictional conference or central conference (see below) to serve in this role. Among other things, annual conferences organize and support regional ministries, approve new clergy, and elect members to general and jurisdictional conferences. Bishops, consulting with the district superintendents, pastors, and congregations, appoint clergy to serve the churches of the annual conference. Meetings of the annual conference consist of the clergy of that conference and an equal number of lay (non-clergy) representatives elected by their congregations.

CENTRAL CONFERENCES & JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES

Annual conferences are grouped geographically into central conferences in Africa, Europe, and Asia and jurisdictional conferences in the United States. These conferences coordinate and support the ministry of their annual conferences, and elect and appoint bishops to lead the annual conferences. Central conferences and jurisdictional conferences meet once every four years, a period we call a quadrennium. Their meetings include half clergy and half laity.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Conference is the quadrennial (once every 4 years) global meeting of The United Methodist Church. This is the only body that can speak on behalf of the denomination.

The General Conference creates and approves the Book of Discipline (our organizational guidebook), the Book of Resolutions (official positions on social issues), our United Methodist Hymnal, Book of Worship, and other official documents of The United Methodist Church. General Conference is presided over by our bishops. Membership is one-half clergy and one-half laity.

APPORTIONED FUNDS

There are seven apportioned funds we recognize. Apportioned funding is a method of giving that proportionally allocates the churchwide budget to conferences and local churches.
WHERE DO THE U.S. LOCAL CHURCH EXPENSE DOLLARS GO?

The cost of our Christ-centered global ministry is significant, but it is only a tiny portion of our local church budget.

This example represents how $1 given in the offering is shared across the connection.

85 CENTS STAY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

6 CENTS BENEVOLENT GIVING

7 CENTS GO TO JURISDICTIONS, ANNUAL CONFERENCES AND DISTRICTS

2 CENTS GO TO GENERAL APPORTIONMENTS

Your church’s expense figures will vary, depending on your support of annual conference benevolences.
CONNECTIONAL GIVING

When you give to your local congregation, a small portion of that money supports the work of your annual conference, jurisdictional conference, and the General Conference. Connectional giving is represented through apportioned funds and designated funds. By combining our giving, we are able to accomplish what could never be done alone.

APPORTIONED FUNDS

A method of giving that proportionally allocates the churchwide budget to conferences and local churches. There are seven apportioned funds we recognize:

WORLD SERVICE FUND

The World Service Fund is vital to The United Methodist Church. We use this money to build new churches, train clergy and lay leaders, pay missionary salaries, cooperate with other faith traditions, advocate around the world for peace and justice, provide scholarships and endowments, and so much more. The World Service Fund supports the work of some of our general boards, councils, and agencies. Those organizations include:

GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY
UMC-gbcs.org
Promotes, develops, and distributes resources to inform, motivate, and train United Methodists for action toward social justice.

GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP
DiscipleshipMinistries.org
Provides resources, training, and support to help the church make disciples of Jesus Christ through Upper Room Ministries, new church development, young people’s ministries, and more.

GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES
UMCmission.org
Serves as the global mission and relief development agency of the church and connects United Methodist through mission in 136 countries by coordinating mission, evangelism, and service efforts. As part of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating human suffering around the globe.

GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY
gbhem.org
Supports the recruiting, training, and development of clergy; provides assistance and ministry to college and seminary students; and supports our institutions of higher education.

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS
umcom.org
Meets the strategic communications, public relations and marketing needs of the global church to raise awareness of the mission and ministry of the Church around the globe, and manages the denomination’s official website, umc.org.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN OR UMW
UnitedMethodistWomen.org
Advocates on behalf of women, children and youth around the world, fostering spiritual growth, developing leaders and advocating for justice. UMW raises millions of dollars each year for programs and projects related to women and children around the world.

GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE
 gcorr.org
Promotes the full and equal participation of the racial and ethnic constituencies in the work, witness and life of The United Methodist Church.

GENERAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN
 gcsrw.org and UMSexualEthics.org
Promotes the full and equal responsibility and participation of women at all levels of The United Methodist Church, and leads in preventing, addressing and healing sexual misconduct in The United Methodist Church.

GENERAL COMMISSION ON UNITED METHODIST MEN
 gcumm.org
Works to support ministry to, for and through men within local congregations and surrounding communities, that form men as disciples of Jesus Christ.
AFRICA UNIVERSITY FUND
In 1988, The United Methodist Church voted unanimously to invest in higher education in Africa and founded Africa University, the first fully accredited United Methodist-related school on the African continent. This fund helps with the general operating expenses such as the administrative costs of the university.

BLACK COLLEGE FUND
In 1972, The United Methodist Church established the Black College Fund to provide a constant, reliable way to support United Methodist-related historically Black colleges. We are proud to support more historically Black colleges and universities than any other religious denomination.

EPISCOPAL FUND
Our bishops provide important leadership to our churches. The Episcopal Fund pays their salaries, benefits, pensions, and office and travel expenses.

COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
umc.org/CouncilOfBishops
Provides oversight and spiritual leadership of The United Methodist Church to more than 12.7 million members on five continents.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION FUND
The General Administration fund finances the general church administrative functions, like the General Conference. This fund supports the work of The Connectional Table, The Judicial Council, pension and salary aid and two agencies—General Council on Finance and Administration and General Commission on Archives and History.

THE CONNECTIONAL TABLE
umc.org/ConnectionalTable
Coordinates the denomination’s mission, ministries, and resources; discerns the church’s vision; and establishes policies and procedures.

THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL
umc.org/JudicialCouncil
Determines whether acts of official bodies of the church conform to The Book of Discipline, including decisions of law made by bishops.

GENERAL COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
gcah.org
Preserves materials of historical significance to The United Methodist Church and its antecedent bodies with special care to highlight the historic witness of women, racial and ethnic minority peoples and other constituencies not usually covered in historic documentation.

GENERAL COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
gcfa.org
Coordinates and administers our finances; safeguards our legal interests and rights; provides an insurance program and investment opportunities.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION FUND
This fund supports the activities we share with global ecumenical organizations to advocate for peace and justice all over the world.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION FUND
This fund helps us prepare people to be pastors and leaders in The United Methodist Church. Through our giving, we support our 13 United Methodist seminaries, course of study programs, continued education for active clergy, and assist annual conferences in recruiting church leaders.
UNITED METHODIST AGENCIES 
NOT SUPPORTED BY 
WORLD SERVICE FUND

WESPATH BENEFITS AND INVESTMENTS
wespath.org
Provides pensions, benefits, and more for clergy and United Methodist Church employees.

THE UNITED METHODIST 
PUBLISHING HOUSE
umph.org and Cokesbury.com
Publishes and distributes resources to support the work, ministry and mission of The United Methodist Church and extended Christian community.

DESIGNATED GIVING

Designated funds give us the opportunity to make gifts to specific ministries that are used in support of general church causes. This fund is sometimes referred to as second-mile giving. There are eight designated giving opportunities.

THE ADVANCE FOR CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

The Advance is an accountable designated giving program for voluntary financial giving that supports tens of thousands of missions around the world for more than 69 years.

Through this program, you are able to support specific, approved mission programs or personnel with financial gifts. Your gifts are used to build relationships with missionaries and projects including global health, water and sanitation needs, disaster response, and sharing the Word of God!

I AM UNITED METHODIST:
“I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED THE 
DIVERSITY OF THEOLOGICAL VIEWS... 
AS A KID AND A TEEN THIS ALLOWED 
ME THE FREEDOM TO QUESTION AND 
DIG DEEP, LEADING TO ME ‘OWNING’ 
MY FAITH, NOT RELYING ON THE 
HAND-OFF FROM MY PARENTS.”
– @BABSONGSSTUDIO
THE WORLD SERVICE FUND
SPECIAL GIFTS
World Service Special Gifts expand the ministries of The Advance, benefits the Africa University Endowment Fund, the Methodist Global Education Fund, the National Anti-Gambling Project and the Lay Missionary Planting Network. United Methodist General Boards and Agencies can apply to use this money to assist ministries not covered elsewhere.

SPECIAL SUNDAYS

HUMAN RELATIONS DAY is celebrated on the Sunday before the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. Offerings collected help ministries improve race relations and recognize the right of all God’s children to realize their potential as human beings in relationship with one another.

UMCOR SUNDAY, formerly “One Great Hour of Sharing,” is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Offerings collected help fund the administrative costs of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which alleviates human suffering around the world by providing disaster relief and supplies, disaster risk reduction, sustainability and humanitarian development.

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY is celebrated on the third Sunday of Easter. Offerings collected help ministries that nurture mission with Native American people and provide scholarships for United Methodist Native American seminarians. Half of the gifts collected stay within each annual conference.

PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY is celebrated on the First Sunday after Pentecost. Offerings collected help continue ministries of reconciliation through each annual conference and help United Methodists proclaim the good news to those longing to experience God’s peace and justice.

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY is celebrated the first Sunday of October by Christians of many denominations around the world. Offerings collected help fund scholarships; half of the gifts received fund World Communion Sunday Scholarships and the remaining half benefits the Ethnic Scholarship Program and Ethnic In-Service Training Program. On this Sunday, we remember and celebrate our diversity as God’s children united by our faith in Jesus.

UNited METHODIST STUDENT DAY is celebrated the last Sunday in November. Offerings collected help fund scholarships and loans for United Methodist students. On this Sunday we are called to support United Methodist students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith.
FAQS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I FIND A UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?
If you live in the United States, the best way is to go to umc.org/FindAChurch and enter your zip code. Outside the U.S., contact your Episcopal (Bishop’s) office. Contact information is available at umc.org/directory/bishops-episcopal-area. Click on Central Conference Episcopal offices and select your area.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON UNITED METHODISM?
The best place to start is our website, UMC.org, where you will find information about who we are, what we believe, how we serve, and more. On the site we also share stories of exciting ministries around the connection, news, resources, prayers, and links to learn even more.

HOW CAN I HELP WITH DISASTER RELIEF?
The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR.org) coordinates our disaster relief efforts. Learn how you can participate in these important ministries through your gifts of time, supplies, and money at UMCOR.org.

WHAT IS SECOND-MILE GIVING?
“Second-mile” references the verse Matthew 5:41. In this verse, Jesus is teaching his disciples to give beyond what the Roman law required. In biblical times, a Roman citizen or soldier could compel a subject to carry his backpack or load for one mile only. Jesus encouraged his disciples to show love and go a second mile and give more than what was expected of them.

United Methodist use the term “second-mile” giving because the “first mile” is for local churches to fulfill their World Service and other apportioned funds and conference benevolence commitments. The second mile would be giving beyond what is expected.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?
Do you have questions about The United Methodist Church? Ask The UMC can help you find answers or the best contact for your question. Visit www.umc.org/contact (bold) to submit a question have a live chat with someone (available 8:30 - 4:30 CST) or email us at asktheumc@umc.org.

I AM UNITED METHODIST:
“That although we may disagree, we will drop everything to come to the aid of someone in need. And we learn it is okay to accept help when it is needed.”
- @SHARNPIX
GLOSSARY OF UNITED METHODIST TERMS

Below are some useful definitions of terms used by The United Methodist Church. For more information, or if you come across a United Methodist term we didn’t include, use our online glossary at UMC.org/Glossary.

APPORTIONMENT
A local church or annual conference’s assigned portion of giving to support international, national and regional missions and ministries.

BISHOP
An elder elected to provide oversight to an annual conference, and as part of the Council of Bishops, to the denomination. Bishops appoint clergy to serve the congregations and ministries of their annual conference.

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE
Our book of law, doctrine, administration, and organizational work and procedures. The Discipline governs our practice as The United Methodist Church.

BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
Official statements and positions of The United Methodist Church on a variety of topics. We do not expect all United Methodists to agree on every subject.

BOOK OF WORSHIP
Our book of the rituals, sacraments and orders of worship. United Methodist pastors use this resource to plan worship, baptisms, weddings, funerals, and more.

I AM UNITED METHODIST:
“I love that while we have everything we need to be church, we don’t claim to have restored things to how they “were supposed to be.”
– @TANNERCARLSON2989

CHARGE OR CHURCH CONFERENCE
The annual—and sometimes specially called—meeting of a United Methodist congregation to elect leaders, set pastors’ salaries, buy and sell property, and more.

DEACON
A clergyperson ordained to ministries of word, service, and witness. Deacons help connect the ministries of the church and the needs of the community. A deacon’s primary employment may be outside of a local congregation.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT (DS)
An elder appointed by a bishop to oversee the work of the local churches and supervise the work of the pastors in his/her district, and to participate with the bishop in the making of appointments.

ELDER
A clergyperson ordained to ministries of word, sacrament, order, service, and witness. Elders preach and teach God’s word, administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, order the life of the church for mission and ministry, serve all people, and are a living witness to the work of Christ in the world.

ITINERANCY/ITINERACY
The system in The United Methodist Church by which pastors are appointed to congregations and extension ministries by the bishops.

LAITY
Those who are not clergy.

LOCAL PASTOR
A licensed pastor whom a district authorizes to perform all the duties of an elder while assigned to a particular congregation.

QUADRENNIUM
I AM UNITED METHODIST BECAUSE

“The connection! The fact we are worldwide and have a long history! I’ve represented at AC several times and to be in one “room,” well a BIG room, nearly 1,000 people all the same faith, same denomination, all under one bishop! And that’s just one Conference—and that’s just two people from each church! Awesome!”
@SHARON BARTTER

“Acceptance, social justice, female pastors. The United Methodist church I attended in my youth was the most open-minded, welcoming, revolutionary, Christlike church I’ve ever been inside. I will always be a Methodist.”
@ANGELA GOMES

“They have open minds and open hearts. They value education. They practice Jesus’s teachings. I love the Methodist church.”
@JUDY JERGENS

“The theology of GRACE. The focus on a loving God as opposed to a vengeful, punishing God.”
@PKBONNER

“I feel like it’s the most ‘non’ judgmental church I’ve been a part of. I also love the message of kindness to others that is shared each week.”
– @RAINYLATTEHK

“I like not being constrained to old ways and that women are allowed to be pastors unlike other denominations who only let men serve. And the fellowship, food, fun.”
@JASONWT765

“The fact that its policies are not set in stone, and that there is an opportunity to evolve every four years. The fact that, despite a history of systemic racism, the denomination is still trying to live into being a global church. The hope that our differences might be considered blessings instead of political wedges.”
@GHEETASMITH

“I love that our denomination focuses so much on the GRACE of Jesus and how inclusive we are of anyone wanting to be part of a faith journey.”
@HAPPY_CAB