



An Important Message from the Pastor



Camp Chapel United Methodist Church

Carol L. Pazdersky
Pastor

Gary Lushbaugh
Music Director

Judy Homberg
Office Manager

P.O. Box 15
White Marsh, MD 21162

Office: (410) 256-5561

Email
office@campchapel.org

Acorn Submissions
acorn@campchapel.org

Website
www.campchapel.org



Some of the changes made by General Conference 2024 affect Annual Conferences but other changes affect the local church. This special edition of the Acorn contains a summary of these changes to the *United Methodist Book of Discipline* which took effect May 3, 2024.

We encourage every member to attend the August Church Council meeting to ask questions and to share their thoughts. Although the Church Council has other business to attend to that night, our faithful leadership has set aside time to discuss those topics affecting the local church. Your thoughtful questions and prayerful responses will help shape how Camp Chapel addresses issues of human sexuality in our context.

Camp Chapel UMC leadership and Board of Trustees will create an informal policy regarding whether or not our congregation will allow same-gender weddings on the church property. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee will update the church profile regarding whether or not our congregation will receive the appointment of LGBT+ clergy. Because we are a church family, we want the process to be transparent. Your input is needed at the August meeting.

After the August meeting, if you have further insights to offer, please come to me, Angela Gaskin (Church Council Chair), or Bill Smith (Lay Representative to Annual Conference). We will be able to share your thoughts with at the September Church Council meeting as leadership begins their work.

Please carefully and prayerfully read the documents provided prior to the August 27 meeting. The August meeting will begin at 6:45 pm for regular business and the Q&A is expected to begin at 7:15 pm. Church Council meetings are held virtually, and you will receive a meeting link a few days in advance.

Grace and peace,
Carol

Understanding General Conference 2024: Frequently Asked Questions & Resources

Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform The World

Saturday, May 4, 2024

ON REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIVE LANGUAGE RELATED TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

What changes were made to the *Book of Discipline* that relate to human sexuality?

The General Conference voted by overwhelming majorities to remove from the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* discriminatory language and bans related to ministry by, with and for “self-avowed practicing” gay and lesbian people. Actions included:

- Removal of the language that the “practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- Removal of the ban on the ordination and appointment of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy.
- Removal of language that made the ordination of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy and the performance of same-sex weddings chargeable offenses.
- Removal of mandatory minimum penalties for clergy holding same-sex weddings.
- Removal of a prohibition against using United Methodist funds to support groups, activities and causes that promote the acceptance of homosexuality.
- Removal of the requirement that the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination’s finance agency, enforce the funding ban. Instead, the provision says the agency should ensure that church funds do not go to anything that rejects LGBTQ persons or limits the response to the HIV epidemic.
- Allowance for all clergy in good standing to be appointed across annual conference lines when their bishop can’t locate an appointment in their conference.

These changes bring the *Book of Discipline* back to a neutral place where one group is not singled out for discrimination. It holds space for differing opinions within The United Methodist Church by avoiding broad mandates.

What does this mean for my local church?

It is important to note that nothing passed by the General Conference would compel churches to receive an LGBTQ+ pastor. The legislation approved also explicitly protects the right of clergy and churches not to officiate at or host same-sex weddings. Pastors have the authority to decide when and for whom they will officiate a marriage. Congregations have the right to determine whether such ceremonies will be held on church property.



At the same time, this legislation means candidates for ministry who are LGBTQ+ will continue to be welcomed. Some of our churches, if they feel so led, may have same-gender weddings. There is no prohibition against either.

As Bishop Carter stated in his letter to the Conference earlier this week, “United Methodist churches will have the freedom to respond to God’s call to ministry in ways that are best for their contextual and missional communities. We will do this anchored in the grace of Jesus Christ, in connection with each other, and in our desire to grow in love with God and our neighbor.”

When do these changes take effect?

These changes go into effect at the close of General Conference on Friday, May 3, 2024.

ON REGIONALIZATION:

On Thursday, April 25, a day Bishop Thomas Bickerton called “an historic day,” the General Conference delegates voted 586 to 164 for an amendment to the denomination’s constitution that will now go before annual conference voters for potential ratification.

What is regionalization?

With regionalization, the United States and also each Central Conference outside of the US will become known as Regional Conferences. Each Regional Conference will have the authority and ability to adapt a portion of the *Book of Discipline* to better align with the missions of their context to continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

This change will decentralize the U.S. church, allowing all conferences to have equal partnership in the UMC, while allowing each geographic area the ability to make changes for their local cultural and missional church expressions.

The votes to approve Regional Conference legislation will not make immediate changes to the *Book of Discipline*. Because this legislation includes changes to the Constitution, it must be approved by $\frac{2}{3}$ aggregate vote of all Annual Conferences.

Legislation that requires approval at the Annual Conference level must go through an editorial process so that each annual conference around the world can read the legislation and vote accordingly.

ON THE REVISED SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

What changes were made to the Social Principles that relate to human sexuality?

General Conference delegates eliminated language stating “the practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

In the same vote, delegates affirmed “marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith (adult man and adult woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age) into a union of one another and into deeper relationship with God and the religious community.”

Below [are links to] the adopted Revised Social Principles legislation:

[Part V: Social Principles Preamble](#)

[¶160 The Community of All Creation](#)

[¶163 The Economic Community](#)

[The Political Community](#)

[Part V: Social Principles Preface](#)

[¶161, ¶162 The Social Community](#)

If you are reading a print version of his newsletter, scan the QR code to access these resources in the *Understanding General Conference 2024* article online.



What does this mean for my local church?

The Social Principles, contained in both the *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Resolutions*, are statements that reflect official United Methodist teachings on a wide range of topics. They are not church law, and therefore do not have any direct implications for your church, but are intended to inform United Methodist witness on issues of the day with a biblical foundation.

When do these changes take effect?

These changes take effect January 1, 2025.

ON SACRAMENTAL RIGHTS FOR DEACONS

What does it mean for Deacons to have sacramental rights?

This means deacons can now offer Holy Communion and conduct baptisms where they have been appointed to serve, whether that is a church, outreach ministry or mission. *Bishop Carter anticipates making this change in our practice on a date earlier than the official date of January 1, 2025.*

When does this change take effect?

This takes effect on January 1, 2025.

ON THE BUDGET

Delegates approved a 2025-2028 budget of \$373.4 million. That total is contingent on collection rates being at 90% or more for the next two years. If giving is below that percentage, the budget

bottom line will be \$353.6 million. The total approved is significantly smaller than the budget approved by the 2016 General Conference. Annual conferences will be asked to pay less in apportionments.

A word from Bishop Carter on the budget:

“We will streamline, find efficiencies, and realign redundant models of ministry. But hear the good news – While we do not have an abundance of financial resources at any level of the church, neither do we have a scarcity of resources. The best word is “sufficient”. God’s grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12). God will continue to provide all that we need (Exodus 16). We have sufficient financial resources to be the church. Thanks be to God.”

ON THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

What is the Council of Bishops?

Bishops of The United Methodist Church provide spiritual leadership to almost 12 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. In the United Methodist tradition, bishops are not "ordained" as bishops, but are clergy elected and consecrated to the office of bishop. All bishops are members of the Council of Bishops, which collectively is charged with the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church.

Who is the new Council of Bishops president?

Before nearly 800 delegates and hundreds of observers, Bishop Tracy S. Malone, resident bishop of the East Ohio Conference, on Tuesday afternoon took the mantle as the new president of the Council of Bishops (COB) of The United Methodist Church. In so doing, she became the first Black woman in the history of the global denomination to ascend to the pinnacle of episcopacy leadership.

Bishop Malone was elected as president during the COB meeting at Lake Junaluska in November last year. She will lead the COB for two years.

Another historic first –

Bishop David Wilson, resident bishop of the Great Plains Conference, became the first Native American bishop to preside over the General Conference on April 25, 2024.

ON THE WORK OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE:

General Conference is the top lawmaking assembly of The United Methodist Church and the only entity that speaks for the denomination. It convenes every four years, with delegates from the denomination’s regions around the world.

What is the *Book of Discipline* and why does it matter?

Simply, the *Book of Discipline* is the doctrinal and theological rule book containing information for conferences, churches, laity, and clergy on how to live, teach, and practice faith in the Wesleyan understanding. The General Conference is the only body that is allowed to bring forth changes to the *Discipline*. Those changes come in how the church is to hold itself accountable through church law, doctrine, administration, and organization. The *Discipline* is revised at the General Conference through petitions and legislation that has been submitted by laity, clergy, delegates, churches, and the like. The church (local, annual, jurisdictional, and general) is to look to the *Discipline* for guidance in ordering the life of ministry in their local communities. This is available through the five parts of the *Discipline*: Constitution, General Book of Discipline, Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, The Ministry of All Christians, and Social Principles.

OTHER RESOURCES TO HELP YOU COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CONGREGATION:

Bishop Carter's letter to the Western NC Conference

<https://www.wnccumc.org/newsdetail/18354264>

Bright Hope for Tomorrow: Bishops' message after General Conference

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/bright-hope-for-tomorrow-bishops-message-after-general-conference>

Legislative Recap: Discover Key Outcomes of the Historic 2024 General Conference

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-conference-legislative-recap>

News and Resources from General Conference

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/general-conference-2020>

If you are reading a print version of his newsletter, scan the QR code to access these resources in the *Understanding General Conference 2024* article online.



Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, August 7 – J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth)
11 am
- Saturday, August 10 – Annual Ham & Peach Dinner
4–7 pm
- Saturday, August 17 – Film Seminar: *Modern Times* (Zoom)
6 pm
- TUESDAY, AUGUST 27 – CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING
6:45 PM (ZOOM)**
- Saturday, August 31 – Camp Chapel Children’s Carnival
11 am – 2 pm
- Tuesday, September 3 – Trustees Meeting
7 pm
- Wednesday, September 4 – J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth)
11 am
- Sunday, September 8 – Volunteer Appreciation Brunch
11 am
- Tuesday, September 10 – Finance Committee Meeting (Zoom)
7 pm
- Saturday, September 14 – Camp Chapel Community Yard Sale
8 am – 1 pm
- Saturday, September 14 – Film Seminar: *Elizabethtown* (Zoom)
6 pm
- Sunday, September 15 – Traditional and Contemporary Services
8:30, 9:30, 11 am
Resume
- Thursday, September 19 – Chancel Choir Rehearsal Resumes
7:30 pm
- Saturday, September 21 – Yard Sale Rain Date
8 am – 1 pm
- Monday, September 23 – Bell Choir Rehearsal Resumes
7:30 pm
- Tuesday, September 24 – Church Council Meeting (Zoom)
7 pm
- Tuesday, October 1 – Trustees Meeting
7 pm
- Wednesday, October 2 – J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth)
11 am





A Prayer of Thanks FOR OUR CHURCH

God,
While some might think of doors and windows,
We praise you
For spirits and hearts.
The people whose lives you have intersected
In the work and mission of this church
Are remarkable through your grace.
We cannot praise you enough
For the unique way
You have blended the talents of individuals
Into beautiful masterpieces of joy.
May we continue to love one another to the fullest
And be evidence of your ultimate love
To advance the work of your kingdom.
Amen.