

Meets every four years

General Conference, which convenes every four years, is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church. Church law states that no person or organization except the General Conference has authority to speak officially for the denomination.

Delegation half clergy, half lay

Church law provides for a maximum of 1,000 delegates – half clergy, half lay. It mandates that each annual conference must have at least one delegate from each order. Beyond that, a conference's representation is based the number of lay members and clergy members in the conference.

Conference revises Book of Discipline

The conference revises The Book of Discipline (book of church law) and "Social Principles" and adopts resolutions on various current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for churchwide programs for the next four years. General Conference also elects members of the Judicial Council, the church's "supreme court," and some members of churchwide agencies.

Primary sources of legislation are petitions and proposals from church agencies and organizations. Petition deadlines vary, depending on the source, but none may be submitted less than 150 days prior to the opening of the conference. Any organization, ordained minister or lay member of the church may petition the General Conference.

As in the U.S. Congress, the bulk of General Conference business is conducted in legislative committees which receive petitions and proposals; debate them; and determine whether to approve, amend, combine, or disapprove them for recommendation to the full body of General Conference.

General (churchwide) agencies propose resolutions or changes in legislation affecting their respective policies and operations. These, along with petitions from annual conferences, are printed in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate.

Bishops don't vote

Members of the Council of Bishops attend General Conference, but do not vote and cannot speak without permission from the delegates. A bishop presides at each plenary session. Each bishop usually serves during one morning, afternoon, or evening session. All bishops, active and retired, attend the entire conference.

Watch the websites:
www.NCNYUMC.org
www.UMC.org



General Conference 2004

Last week some 1,000 delegates from throughout the world gathered in Pittsburgh, Pa., to begin the United Methodist Church General Conference. It will end sometime late in the evening of May 7.

For those who wish to be a part of General Conference without travelling to Pennsylvania, there are two websites to check on a regular basis.

The first is NCNYUMC.org. Sharon Fulmer will be in attendance throughout the two week conference and will be sending stories and photos about our delegates each day which will then be posted to the website.

The second is UMC.org. Go to the General Conference page where you will find photos, stories, articles explaining the procedures, and, at times especially during the second week, live streaming video which will allow you to watch the actual events.

In addition, our conference is producing a video about General Conference, and later one about Jurisdictional Conference, which will be shown at Annual Conference. After it is shown, a copy will be given to each pastor.

During the first week of General Conference, NCNY delegates spent long days and well into the evening attending committee meetings, dealing with 6,000 resolutions, many of which will be voted on during this week.

Our delegates and their committees are:

Suda Devadhar - General Administration

Deborah O'Connor-Slater - Local Church

Thom White Wolf Fassett - Church and Society

Bill Gottschalk-Fielding - Finance

Sharon Bassett - Faith and Order

Ron Bretsch - Conferences

Greg Forrester - Global Ministries

Jason Moore - Higher Education