

Life Together in the United Methodist Connection

Introduction: To the Course Leader

Thank you for leading this Lay Servant Ministries class! As you know, this class is one of those required of those Lay Servants who wish to become certified Lay Speakers. To earn a certificate for the class, participants are to meet with you for the ten hours of the class, in addition to time spent outside of class in worship at Lay Academy, in reading the book, and in any assignments you ask them to prepare.

Each session has outcome goals listed. The session plans will enhance the desired learning outcomes. The materials for the course, for each session, are:

For each student:

Warner, Lacey C: *The Method of Our Mission* (or a later version, if available).
Abingdon, 2014.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline, in the latest version available.

In addition, for you as leader:

The United Methodist Book of Resolutions, in the latest version available.

If possible, a laptop computer, projector, screen, and internet connection. Many large churches where Lay Academies are held have Wi-Fi; if yours does, you can enhance the course by introducing participants to online UMC websites and resources.

A whiteboard, chalk board or newsprint on an easel, with markers or chalk, for recording class discussion notes

Maps of your jurisdiction or central conference, annual conference and districts (there is a jurisdictional and conference map in this leader guide).

If possible, make arrangements for singing from *The Faith We Sing* or the United Methodist Hymnal.

Session-specific needs:

For Session 1:

- If you choose to use large tent-style name cards so names are easily visible, provide cardstock and markers.
- *The Ministry of All Christians* chart of ordained, licensed and lay ministry in this Leader Guide

For Session 2:

- A picture of UMC bishops' insignia.

- Session 3 assignment slips to pass out, in the Addenda of this leader guide.

For Session 3:

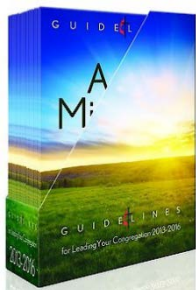
- The Connectional Table diagram on page 167 of the textbook or The diagram on page 16 of the *United Methodist Handbook* available for download at: http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_UMCGiving/resource-files/2014_UM-handbook-LOW-RES_10-08-14.pdf
- This video, *How the Church "Stretches" Your Dollar*, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LknGBEPAiec or The less detailed treatment at *Chuck Knows Church: Apportionments* www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T52PiNZO4w or The apportionment giving graphic on Page 36 of the *United Methodist Handbook* available for download at: http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_UMCGiving/resource-files/2014_UM-handbook-LOW-RES_10-08-14.pdf
- A resource from your conference, if possible, interpreting conference apportionments.

Note: You can download the *United Methodist Handbook* and send it by email to all members of your class, if you wish. It is a free United Methodist Communications resource with a great deal of valuable reference material. It is also available in many languages other than English.

For Session 4:

- The humorous take on elections at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glouvidNcig>
- The jurisdictional map in this leader guide.
- If possible, access to the internet.
- *The Book of Resolutions*, in the latest edition, several copies if possible.

For Session 5:



Small group topic assignments, found in the Addenda of this leader guide. Several copies of the latest *Book of Discipline* of the UMC.

And, of course, this leader guide.

It would be helpful, but not required, to have on hand a set of *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation*. This is a set of short booklets designed to help

new leaders in a congregation understand their duties. It comes in a set of 26 (shown), but the most important ones to have available, to let students know that they exist and to answer questions, are *Pastor-Parish Relations*, *Finance*, *Trustees*, *Church Council*, and *Nominations and Leadership Development*.

The textbooks and the *Discipline* are rather expensive. Students should be able to borrow a copy of the *Book of Discipline* in the latest edition from their pastors. It is published in hard copy and electronic versions, from Cokesbury.

Please note that because United Methodist polity is a moving target, with the potential to change every four years, you will have to help students learn to “get around” in the *Discipline*, understanding how to look things up and find the paragraph mentioned either in the textbook or in this Leader Guide, which will avoid stating paragraph numbers. For this reason you are urged to prepare carefully for the sessions, so you know what is coming.

Finally, if you are not familiar with the landscape of what is variously called “the digital revolution,” or “postmodern society,” or “the Great Emergence,” or “emergence Christianity,” it will be helpful if you as a leader read one of the following, which will help you understand the current forces pulling on the United Methodist connection:

Tickle, Phyllis: *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*
Emergent Christianity: What it is, Where it is Going, and Why it Matters

McLaren, Brian: *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional, evangelical, post/protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, methodist, catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian*

Plus, as the leader, read all of the textbook, *The Method of our Mission*, so that you can answer any questions that may arise if students read beyond the assigned pages. And there will be questions! This book is designed for seminary-level students, so its language is often academic and its concerns are often more theological than practical.

There will be, of necessity, some overlap between this class and *Living Our United Methodist Beliefs*, especially in the textbook, *The Method of Our Mission*. But the effort has been made to minimize this. Students may take these classes in any order, although it will be helpful if participants in this class have at least a general idea of the history of John and Charles Wesley’s movement. Warner’s book covers this history and the historical development of our polity in detail, and you should be familiar with this material even though most of it is not in the students’ assigned reading. The book is quite extensive and there will not be time to cover it all in this class – nor should you, for that would be redundant with *Living Our United Methodist Beliefs*.

This guide is designed for five two-hour sessions. If your Lay Academy format is different, you will adapt the session guides to fit – always maintaining 10 contact hours – and each session offers suggestions for five-day and two-day Lay Academy structures. Each session includes a short devotional opening related to the contents of the session. They are also

printed separately at the end of this guide so you can assign students to lead the devotions. The devotions ground our discussions in scripture and include specific learnings, so be sure to include them in the sessions.

Urge the students to obtain the book and begin reading it before the class begins. The readings correlated with the sessions are:

Session 1, A missionary reform movement becomes a “Connection”

Chapter One, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, pages 13-20

Chapter Four, *Pastoral Roles and Ordained Ministry*, pages 69-91

Session 2, The Connection sends missionaries: itineracy, ministry and annual conference:

Chapter Five, *Superintendency*, pages 93-108

Chapter Seven, *Conferences*, pages 139-145

Chapter Eight, *Councils and Agencies*, page 156 (Council of Bishops)

Session 3, Working Together Locally and Globally

Chapter Six, *The Local Church*, pages 109-127

Chapter Eight, *Councils and Agencies*, pages 157-162 (Connectional Table, General Agencies)

Session 4, Beyond Annual Conference: The General Conference, Judicial Council and International Connections

Chapter Seven, *Conferences*, pages 131-139 (General, Jurisdictional, Central conferences)

Chapter Eight, *Councils and Agencies*, pages 147-156 (Judicial Council)

Session 5, For Such a Time as This:

Chapter Three, *Contemporary Statements: Operational Doctrine*, pages 53-61 (Social Creed, Social Principles, and the *Book of Resolutions*)

Conclusion: Sent to the World, pages 169-174

May God bless your ministry in leading this class!

Session 1: A missionary movement becomes a “Connection”

2 hours

Session Goals: At the end of this session students will the uniqueness, purpose and overall structure of the United Methodist connectional system and its order of missionary preachers.

If you can, ask students to read **Chapter One, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, pages 13-20, and Chapter Four, *Pastoral Roles and Ordained Ministry*, pages 69-91** in the Warner textbook *The Method of Our Mission* before the class. (If your Lay Academy format is two days rather than 5, ask them to read the assigned sections for Sessions 1 through 3.

WARNING: On page 74, Warner quotes the 2012 *Book of Discipline* (§ 339) as defining a pastor as “an ordained elder, provisional deacon, or licensed person...” This is a misquote, and one which will confuse your students. The text actually reads “A pastor is an ordained elder, provisional deacon (according to 1992 *Book of Discipline*) or licensed person...” Be prepared to explain that until 1996, ordination as a deacon was a first step toward ordination as an elder, and as such, of course, deacons served churches as pastors just as commissioned elders, who are provisional members of Annual Conference, do today.

BUT since 1996, when the Order of Deacons was separated as an equal and independent status with the Order of Elders, this kind of deacon has been phasing out. It’s *highly* unlikely that any still exist. Rather, deacons are the church’s *specialist clergy*, a separate order, and serve inside and outside churches in many ways but *not* as pastors-in-charge – at least not according to the *Discipline*.

5 minutes: Welcome: Welcome participants and invite *brief* introductions. Invite participants to use cardstock and markers to create large tent-style name cards so everyone can easily read everyone else’s name.

5 minutes: Opening Devotion:

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he hosted a dinner for his closest friends. They came to the table, and he washed their feet as a servant, saying they should serve one another in the same way. He broke bread and shared wine with them. And then he prayed for them, and this is some of what he said:

And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ... I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they

may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.
(John 17:11-12, 20-23)

Then they left the Table and went out into the world. Jesus knew that if they stayed connected with one another, they would accomplish amazing things for his kingdom. But if they split up, they would accomplish nothing, and be lost themselves from his fellowship.

When we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it is a sacrament of connection, the sacrament of unity with Christ and with one another. We come to the Table bringing offerings of bread and wine to be consecrated. The bread of heaven is broken for us and the fruit of the vine is poured, and then distributed and shared. When we share Christ's body and blood we are united, bound together, connected in Christ's body and blood, and we receive spiritual nourishment for doing Christ's work in our world.

In the same way, in the United Methodist Church, we are united, bound together, *connected*. We call ourselves a *connection*. And we bring offerings of prayers, presence, financial and spiritual gifts, service and witness. These are also gathered at a table – it's called the Administrative Board or Ad Council, Annual Conference or General Conference, or something else – they are consecrated to Christ's service, divided, and shared. And so, connected, united, we accomplish amazing things for Christ's kingdom. Separately, we could accomplish nothing, and would be lost ourselves from Christ's fellowship. Let us pray as we sing...

[Select one of the following songs:]

Bind Us Together, # 2226 in

The Faith We Sing

Blest Be the Tie that Binds, UMH # 557

We Are the Church, UMH # 558

Jesus, United by Thy Grace, UMH # 561

Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love, UMH # 566

25 minutes: The Mission of the United Methodist Church

Summarize *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Chapter One, especially these points:

- The Wesleyan movement began as a *renewal movement*, not a separate church. Wesley's intent was to "reform the Church of England" by making committed disciples and "spread scriptural holiness across the land" – the twin poles of inward, lively faith and social action, love of God and love of neighbor
- The United Methodist Church inherits this movement legacy, and as such its structure has grown to support its mission, to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." (p 18)

Therefore, the Methodist Articles of Religion and the EUB Confession of Faith (p 15-16) define "church" as:

- A community of believers
- Where the word of God is proclaimed
- And the sacraments are celebrated
- So that disciples are made and grow, loving God and neighbor

- For the transformation of the world.

Point out that while the local church is “the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs” (p 18, quoting the *Book of Discipline*), no local congregation, individually, can carry out these missions *consistently, well, and over time*. Accountability and support are needed in all human structures for *consistency, quality and longevity*.

Ask the class: What does the United Methodist Church do to fulfill its mission and help local congregations fulfill its mission?

Record the answers. They could include ideas implied in Chapter Four, such as:

- > training and ordaining clergy, and holding them accountable for their theology and their behavior (*that is, church discipline*)
- > deploying (or providing a framework for deploying) clergy
- > organizing and sending missions to evangelize and plant new congregations
- > providing accountability for and efficient use of funds raised (*church discipline*)
- > creating church institutions (hospitals, schools, charities)
- > providing training and resources for members’ ministries (such as Lay Academy)
- > handling pension funds for clergy and lay employees
- > continuing the theology and culture of the denomination, through resources for practicing the faith: books, hymnals, liturgy, Sunday School materials, web resources, publications, etc. (*church discipline*)
- > providing a sense of unity around shared mission, theology and culture
- > marketing – at least a beginning expectation, as people move into a new community, that a church will be similar to others of its denomination in theology, practice and culture
- > presenting an identity, a face to the wider culture, with hoped-for influence
- > opportunities for assembly, inspiration and fellowship (conferences)

30 Minutes: The Connection principle

Share with participants:

- Now that we know what we expect our denomination to do, the next question is, how does it do all that – which is the subject of this course. The UMC is organized differently from other large voluntary organizations.
- The United Methodist Church has a constitution and a big Book of Discipline with a *lot* of organizational details. But does it surprise folks to know that ***the United Methodist Church as a whole does not exist***, as a legal entity? *Invite folks to open the Discipline, and briefly run down the contents. Turn to the Constitution and ¶141 (BOD 2012), which specifies that the UMC has no legal existence as a sue-able entity.*
- Then what is the United Methodist Church? What “constitutes” the church?

“The UMC is a connectional mission, not a single corporation... the church is a living cultural tradition that endures because people are loyal to it, not because it has a precise Constitution.” (Thomas E. Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church*, Abingdon 2006, p. 140)

The church **is a connection**, but a connection of what? People, generally, don't get together and incorporate a congregation and then come asking to join the annual conference. And annual conferences didn't get together and decide to create General Conference, or the United Methodist Church.

- “Mr. Wesley’s Connexion” consisted of all the preachers and societies who were “in connexion” with him. He gathered the preachers annually in conference, for accountability, for teaching, and for assigning them to the circuits to which they were sent. They were, generally, celibate, serving until they married and “settled.” They agreed to go where they were sent, and Wesley agreed to send them.

After the revolution, in America, the preachers of the connection met together in conference in Baltimore at Christmas, 1784, ordained Francis Asbury an elder in the church, and elected him to the office to which John Wesley had appointed him: superintendent (though he quickly began to be called bishop).

And so it was the order of missionary preachers, meeting in conference, that constituted the Methodist Episcopal Church, and still does. (2012 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 370) The principle was the same in the Evangelical and United Brethren traditions.

- Still today, **ordained clergy** (elders and deacons) **hold their membership only in their annual conference**. Bishops’ membership is in the Council of Bishops.

The history of the 300 years after Wesley is not part of this course, but is taken up in *Living Our United Methodist Beliefs*. Although a lot has happened in those years—laypeople are now half of all members of annual conference, and can almost always out-vote clergy if they wish, since many retired clergy don’t attend – our church is still in a basic sense **an order of missionary preachers covenanting together in conference**.

- **Wesley’s principle of “holy conferencing” pervades the church** at every level:
 - small groups – the Wesleyan “classes” and “bands” making up the local society (now experiencing a renaissance)
 - charge conference, the congregation or congregations assigned to the “charge” of a preacher, at the local level
 - districts – which don’t meet in conference but have important committee functions in screening candidates for ministry, encouraging and training laypeople, etc. – District Committee on Ministry (DCOM), Lay Academy
 - annual conference at the geographic area level: the locus of the preachers’ covenant
 - jurisdictional and central conferences at the regional or national level (the function of jurisdictional conferences in electing and assigning bishops; they may do programming but only Southeastern Jurisdiction does)

(the function of central conferences in making culturally appropriate changes to the *Discipline* for their context)

- General Conference of the whole worldwide church

10 minutes: Small group discussion.

Break into groups and discuss: Why do we do this? What are the benefits of this kind of layered organization and connection? What are the drawbacks?

15 minutes: Reporting from the groups.

In the whole group, **receive reports from the groups**. Be sure these points are covered under “benefits”:

The clergy appointment system, *itineracy* or *itinerancy*, avoids the expense in time and money that “call” systems impose on local churches. (Also, if an appointment doesn’t work out, the people can blame the cabinet instead of each other!) And it enables *sending* preachers to plant new churches.

Clergy are thoroughly vetted before being ordained, and if they become untrustworthy, they are accountable - there is someone to complain to, who will take action if warranted.

Even small membership congregations can have pastoral leadership.

Even small membership congregations can be part of a worldwide mission and ministry, and accomplish great things together that none could do separately.

The conference provides services to local churches, including: _____
(Be sure you know your conference’s services!)

20 minutes: Bringing it home

Spend some time discussing the organization your specific annual conference: its districts, district superintendents, the function of the superintendents, the bishop’s cabinet, your conference boundaries and headquarters offices, your bishop (does your bishop preside over an “area” – more than one conference?), your jurisdiction or central conference. Have maps!

Ask students to share what they know about each of these conferences. Do any of them serve on district or conference committees? Do they hold offices that must report at charge conference?

For a 5-day Lay Academy structure <u>10 minutes: Closing</u>	For a 2-day Lay Academy Structure <u>10 minutes:</u>
<p><u>The United Methodist connection is an amalgam, a practical synthesis, of democratic conferences and the episcopal principle of sending missionaries, which we'll take up next.</u></p> <p>Ask students to read Chapter 5, <i>Superintendency</i>, pages 93-108 Chapter 7, <i>Conferences</i>, pages 139-145 Chapter 8, <i>Councils and Agencies</i>, page 156 (Council of Bishops section) for next time. Ask for prayer concerns, and close with prayer. Collect the name cards.</p>	<p>Allow more time for discussion of your conference's details and your people's service on local, district or conference committees. Then: <u>The United Methodist connection is an amalgam, a practical synthesis, of democratic conferences and the episcopal principle of sending missionaries, which we'll take up next.</u></p>

Session 2: The Connection Sends

Missionaries:

itineracy, ministry and annual conference

2 hours

Session Goals: At the end of this session students will understand the uniqueness and purpose of the episcopacy, the itineracy and appointment process, ordering of ministry, and annual conference.

(Ask the students to read [Chapter 5, *Superintendency*, pages 93-108](#); [Chapter 7, *Conferences*, pages 139-145](#); [Chapter 8, *Councils and Agencies*, page 156 \(Council of Bishops\)](#) of the textbook by Warner before the class.)

5 minutes: Gathering; welcome folks back. If this is a 5-day format Lay Academy, set out the name cards either where folks were sitting before, or mix them up so they sit next to new folks. If it is a 2-day format, you have 5 extra minutes for discussion.

5 minutes: Opening Devotion: (If possible, have a picture of the bishop's insignia to show.)

The Apostle Paul, on his last journey to Jerusalem, wanted to meet with the leaders of the church at Ephesus, but he was in a hurry. So he stopped at the harbor of Miletus. Luke reports, in Acts 20: 17-32:

From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them:

'You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears... as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.'

'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again... Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.'

The church appoints shepherds – which is what “pastor” means – and chief shepherds, who are named bishops – for the work of overseeing the spiritual well-being and the ministries of

God's people. Paul calls such leaders "overseers," and though the names and processes may have changed, his warning to "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock" still expresses the duty of bishops and their assistants, the district superintendents.



The symbol of the bishop is the *crozier*, (KROH-zih-er), a staff shaped like a shepherd's crook, symbolizing the responsibility of the bishop as chief shepherd of the flock of Christ's church. In the United Methodist Church, bishops are not a separate order of clergy. They are simply *consecrated* as bishops, not ordained, for the work of superintendency.

They remain ordained elders among other elders, set aside, not as the *only* shepherds, but *leading* shepherds. The logo of the episcopacy in the United Methodist Church is shaped like a shield with a crozier running through it, and the symbols of Christ – the Chi Rho in the shape of the cross – and of the Father, the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8) – on a background of red, a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Let us close by praying the prayer contained in one of these ordination hymns:

God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian, UM Hymnal #648.

Lord, You Give the Great Commission, vs. 1, 2, 4, UM Hymnal #584.

20 minutes:

Ask participants: What do we know about the episcopacy?

In the discussion, be sure to cover these points – OR,

Summarize these points about the United Methodist episcopacy:

- United Methodist bishops in the United States have life tenure (but are elected for terms in other countries) – but remain elders. Their membership is in the **Council of Bishops**.
- Bishops' main power is that of appointing preachers. In appointing authority, John Wesley (who was never called a bishop) and Francis Asbury had absolute power, and that authority, while assisted by the district superintendents, still remains today.
- Bishops ordain clergy, but not alone – always with other bishops, district superintendents and elders also laying hands on the ordinands. Bishops from other denominations such as other Wesleyan churches or those with close ties, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, are also often involved. There's quite a stack of hands on an ordinand!
- Bishops are not administrative CEO's of annual conferences, although they preside at conference sessions and exercise their appointive powers within annual conferences.
- Bishops are elected by jurisdictional conferences and assigned to their "areas" (one or more conferences) by the jurisdictional committee on episcopacy.
- Bishops have tremendous spiritual influence as preachers and teachers. The Council of Bishops has issued pastoral letters which do not speak for the church (only General Conference can do that) but urge consideration as an expression of their wisdom.
- The episcopacy is one of the principles that constitutes the church – after all, its original name was "Methodist Episcopal Church."

10 minutes: Discussion: Bishops' spiritual leadership

Ask participants: When has a bishop's leadership touched you spiritually? What is going on in your conference that is empowered or enlivened by the bishop?

10 minutes: The Appointment Process

Outline the appointment process. If your conference's traditions – or your bishop's procedures – are a little (or a lot) different from what's outlined here, explain your procedures instead. If you are a layperson teaching this course, you may wish to check with your pastor about how your conference does appointments.

- Each year the church fills out, at Charge Conference, its church profile form. This is where the church gets the chance to say what is very important to them in pastoral leadership. The Cabinet and bishop take these forms seriously.
- Each year each clergy person also fills out a form indicating his or her availability for a move (this doesn't mean the pastor - or the church - will necessarily get what they ask for).
- The district superintendents, who know the clergy better than the bishop, form the bishop's Cabinet. (Bishops may also meet at times with an "extended cabinet" that includes other conference officers, but is not about appointments.) Together, the bishop and the Cabinet work on appointments.
- Appointment changes may be initiated when:
 - a pastor retires or goes on sabbatical or other leave
 - a pastor requests a move
 - a church requests a change
 - the cabinet feels a particular pastor is needed in a different appointment
- The Cabinet and bishop work prayerfully and seriously, trying to match the needs of churches, clergy, and their families. Eventually they agree to a particular move – and usually, they plan a whole string of moves at the same extended meeting.
- The pastor's DS calls him and (if the proposed move is to a different district) tells the pastor to wait for a call from the DS of the other district.
- The DS of the church where there is a vacancy calls the pastor and says something like "We would like you to prayerfully consider a move to ____." This generally means "You're moving." A pastor can raise *very serious* objections at this point, but they must be very serious indeed.
- The DS calls the staff-parish chair of the new church and sets a time to meet with the staff-parish relations committee, but without saying who the new pastor is.
- Meanwhile, the pastor and spouse are probably feverishly studying the new church's statistics in the conference *Journal*, maybe even driving past the church and parsonage – all in great secrecy.
- Then the DS meets with the pastor and spouse to discuss the new appointment, followed the same evening with the staff-parish committee. The DS brings the pastor

and spouse to the committee to “*introduce your new pastor.*” (The pastor is not a “candidate” or a “proposed” pastor.)

- If there are *very serious* reasons that arise in the staff-parish meeting against the appointment, it *may* be reconsidered, but they must be very serious indeed.
- If the pastor is going on sabbatical or retiring, his or her current church already knows about the change. Otherwise, the DS calls the staff-parish chair of the pastor’s current church with news of the move, which is not announced until worship the next Sunday. The grieving process begins.
- Simultaneously, the staff-parish chair of the new church announces the name of their new pastor, also not until that same Sunday.
- The DS calls the next staff-parish chair and pastor in the chain...and so on.
- **Exceptions:** founding pastors of megachurches may serve their entire ministries in the same charge. (Their successors will have quite a challenge, and will probably serve very short tenures.)
- If a pastor is moving from one conference to another, the bishop of the receiving conference must ask the bishop of the current conference to make the transfer, and the current conference bishop must agree.)
- The concept of “interim” appointments of specially trained clergy, to help a church through a grieving process is not generally a feature of United Methodist appointments, but in some conferences such appointments are beginning to appear.

10 minutes – discussion of the appointment process

What are folks’ general experience with the appointment process?

There is no way to *keep* folks from discussing this at this point. Don’t allow people to discuss personalities or specific appointments in recognizable terms. Guide the conversation to recognize the benefits of the process, including:

- That few churches go for long periods without pastors, a common problem in a congregational call system.
- That smaller churches receive pastoral leadership one way or another.
- That if a particular appointment turns out to be a bad match, the people can blame the Cabinet rather than one another, which shortens the healing process.
- That if a pastor leaves for another church, it’s usually not because the pastor was asked to leave, but because he or she was needed elsewhere. Again, there is no need to cast blame, and this shortens the natural grieving process which is always part of a move.
- That, at its best, pastors with specific gifts and passion are matched with churches which need those particular gifts and passion for their mission at that time.
- That the itineracy helps to develop strong lay leadership.
- That the itineracy provides opportunities for women and people of color and different ethnicities to answer God’s call, blessing the church with diversity and many gifts that otherwise would be lost.

Do emphasize that Lay Servants can help to interpret the itineracy system to their congregations, to help avoid the shock and anger that can occur when persons from other denominational backgrounds are suddenly faced with a pastoral change.

20 minutes: Ministry

Summarize the main categories of our ordering of ministry. Our terminology and structure of ministry is very confusing. **Invite and answer questions!** Your folks will be especially interested in certified lay speakers, certifications and certified lay ministers.

This leader guide contains a chart, *The Ministry of All Christians*, which you can display or print on legal size paper.

Ordained clergy:

Elders – “traveling elders in full connection,” ordained to ministries of word, service, order and sacrament. Elders are pastors in charge, DS’s, bishops, military chaplains, and in “extension ministries.” Appointed by the bishop with (so far) security of appointment.

Deacons – also members of conference in full connection, ordained to ministries of word, service, compassion and justice. Deacons are the UMC’s *specialist* clergy: ministers of music, education, administrators, counselors, and a huge array of “appointments beyond the local church” (ABLC): social workers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, principals, hospital administrators, community organizers, chaplains... Deacons must find their own positions, and have no security of appointment but, once the job is found, it must be approved, and the deacon appointed to it, by the bishop. Deacons who work outside the church also have “secondary appointment” to a local church, but exactly what that means is worked out at the local level. Deacons do not have sacramental responsibility (except in certain extraordinary missional situations approved by the bishop).

Provisional members: Both elders and deacons are first elected as “provisional members” of Annual Conference, and are *commissioned* (not ordained) as “commissioned ministers.” People may also *informally* call them “provisional elders” or “provisional deacons.” Commissioned ministers exercise their ministry only within their appointments, like LLP’s, though what that means can be open to interpretation by the minister’s DS.

Licensed clergy:

Licensed Local Pastors: are *not* members of conference in full connection, but LLP’s are counted as clergy and participate in the clergy session of annual conference. They are appointed by the bishop, but do not have security of appointment. They have sacramental responsibility in their own charge only, an extension of the DS’s sacramental responsibility.

Lay ministry:

Baptism is the only ordination anyone needs for serving others in Christ’s name. All baptized persons are called to use their spiritual gifts in ministry. Ordained and licensed ministry is rooted in baptism.

Certified personnel: both laypeople and clergy can take classes in one of many specialized ministry areas and become certified. As of 2015, certifications were available in camp/retreat ministry, children's ministry, Christian education, collegiate ministry, evangelism, ministry with the poor, ministry with people with disabilities, music ministry, older adult ministry, spiritual formation, urban ministry, youth ministry. They are available in undergraduate, paraprofessional and professional categories.

Deaconesses and Home Missioners: Commissioned to lifelong full-time ministry of love, service and justice. These are primarily social workers or in other helping professions. In some central conferences, deaconesses are primarily church musicians and educators.

Certified Lay Speakers: are Certified Lay Servants who have taken seven core classes: Basic, Preaching, Living Our United Methodist Beliefs, Life in the United Methodist Connection, Leading Worship, Leading Prayer, and Spiritual Gifts. They serve in many different ways. **Pause for a question: How do class members use their Lay Servant training in ministry? How do they feel called to use it?**

Class Leaders: The United Methodist Church is recovering the tradition of classes (small groups). Certification as a class leader is available.

Lay Missioner: Bi-vocational ("tentmaking") hispanic persons, who are appointed to start and lead new Hispanic congregations as part of the U.S. National Hispanic Plan.

Certified Lay Minister: A relatively new category of bi-vocational laypersons who serve as part of a ministry team in a congregation, or lead a small congregation. Certified lay ministers are Certified Lay Speakers with advanced training, who also undergo screening through the District Committee on Ministry (DCOM), including all background and psychological checks, and are recommended and approved by the DS and DCOM.

Offer opportunity for questions!

30 minutes: Annual Conference: the center of a set of conferences

Summarize: The United Methodist connection works through a set conferences. It includes:

General Conference – the worldwide body that meets every four years, and is the only body that can "speak for" the church.

Jurisdictional Conferences and Central Conferences. The primary function of jurisdictional conferences is to elect, appoint and supervise bishops. They also set conference boundaries and have a few other functions. Only Southeast Jurisdiction also runs programming, such as programs at Lake Junaluska conference center in North Carolina. Central Conferences are national or regional conferences outside the United States; they elect bishops and do much more. We'll return to these later.

Annual Conferences – the regional body your church belongs to. The *Book of Discipline* says “annual conference is the basic body of the United Methodist Church (§ 370, 2012). Remind folks what was covered last time, if this class is a week later: the name of your conference, the number of churches, its districts, its bishop, its offices, and where and when annual conference meets. The membership of annual conference is all clergy, and laypeople elected from each pastoral “charge.”

The number of lay members of conference usually needs to be increased to balance the numbers of retired clergy (even though many retirees no longer attend). How does your conference do this?

The annual conference as a body does not exist between conferences, but it must provide for services to churches and clergy, so it is incorporated and has staff and offices.

Be prepared to share:

- Who is in charge of arranging for clergy moves – so each church doesn't have to?
- Who cares for clergy pension and health benefits?
- Who does the print or electronic communications?
- Who receives church's apportionments and Rainbow Covenant (Advance Special) donations?
- Is there a conference media library that churches can use?

And there are hundreds of volunteers as well.

- What sort of committees, councils and task groups are there in your conference?
- Who helps organize new congregations, site churches, care for property and help local churches with building upgrades?
- Who mentors and recommends candidates for ordination, on the district and conference level?
- What other conference functions and committees are there? Mission trips? Conference mission agencies? Equitable Salary support?

Charge conference – the local congregation is called a “charge” because the pastor is responsible for, or “charged with,” its care. Once a year it will have a charge conference presided over by the district superintendent or another elder appointed by the DS. Special charge conferences may be called with the permission of the DS to approve real estate matters such as capital campaigns, purchases and building projects.

Ask: What district or conference committees or task groups do students serve on?

Each congregation' *legally required* committees (in the United States) are: Trustees, Staff-Parish and Nominations. Beyond that, the local church can choose how to organize itself, and what to name its teams or committees or task groups, but every church will need a central “Administrative board” or “Administrative council” to which the committees report, and which cares for keeping the wheels turning between Charge Conferences.

If there is time, or in small groups, ask: How are the students' churches organized?

5 minutes: Assignments

Prepare ahead of time a set of slips of paper listing general church boards and agencies, unofficial caucuses, and their special Sundays (see Addendum for pages to copy and cut up). Choose the most important ones for your class, so that each person will have no more than two slips. **Either fold them once and put them in a basket or fan them out on the table (face down) for folks to pick from. Ask them to research their assigned groups and agencies to be able to share them BRIEFLY next time.** Research can begin with the reading in Warner, *Chapter 8, Councils and Agencies*, and should include the assigned agency's website.

Reading assignment for Session 3: Chapter 6, *The Local Church*, pages 109-127
Chapter 8, *Councils and Agencies*, pages 157-162 (Connectional Table, General Agencies)

If your Lay Academy is a two-day format, and Session 3 will be this same first day, adjust the sessions so that this sharing will happen the next day you meet.

10 minutes: Closing

Share prayer requests and close in prayer. By the time participants reach this class, they probably have had classes in leading worship, leading in prayer, and lay speaking – so ask one of them to close with prayer.

Session 3: Working Together Locally and Globally

2 hours

Session Goals: At the end of this session, students will have a wider understanding of the many ways our connection works together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world - from the local church to the global general agencies.

(Ask the students to read [Chapter 6, *The Local Church*, pages 109-127](#), and [Chapter 8, *Councils and Agencies*, pages 157-162 \(Connectional Table, General Agencies\)](#) in the textbook by Warner before this session.)

5 minutes: Gathering; welcome folks back. If this is a 5-day format Lay Academy, or if this is the first session on Day 2 of a two-day format, set out the name cards either where folks were sitting before, or mix them up so they sit next to new folks. If it is a 2-day format, you have 5 extra minutes for discussion.

5 minutes: Opening Devotion:

Money is part of life and money is part of the church. From the very first moments of Jesus' ministry, he and his disciples had a common purse, largely funded by women, as Luke and Mark tell us. Sadly, without written records, they couldn't be sure money coming in matched money going out, and John tells us that Judas, their treasurer, found it too tempting, and easy, to skim.

In the first heady days of the Jerusalem connection after Pentecost, Luke tells us this in Acts 2:41-45:

So those who welcomed [Peter's] message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Even when we don't live communally as the Jerusalem church did, *money connects*. Collecting and distributing money for the church's needs and for mission and ministry enable us to accomplish much more than we can do alone – and that in itself knits us together in connection. Paul tells the Corinthians, and us, in 1 Cor. 16:1-5:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come. And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

For Paul, this collection for the struggling mother church at Jerusalem was more than just money, or a good cause. It was more than “apportionments.” He knew that the *collection was connection*. In the giving, it solidified his churches’ desire to be part of the connection. And in the receiving, the Jerusalem church would confirm its acceptance of these Gentile brothers and sisters as equally part of the connection of Christ’s Church. Paul did not take the collection alone. He brought with him emissaries of the churches, to be sure that their offerings were given and received in full, and the message of connecting fellowship taken home. Collection is connection. And money is mission and ministry.

Let’s close by lifting our prayer through singing [select one of the following hymns]:

Rise Up, O Men [or “ye saints”] of God, UM Hymnal #576

Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service, UM Hymnal #581

10 Minutes: The Connectional Table

Introduce the students’ sharing of information about the agencies and ethnic caucuses that they researched with a brief overview of the Connectional Table (or whatever structure replaces it in 2016. As of 2012, the efforts of General Conference to reorganize and streamline our general church structure had been ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council).

Share the good and simple diagram of the Connectional Table on page 167 of the textbook, or the diagram of the Connectional Table on page 16 of the *United Methodist Handbook* available for download at: http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_UMCGiving/resource-files/2014_UM-handbook-LOW-RES_10-08-14.pdf

The purpose of the Connectional Table is to coordinate efforts among the many UMC general agencies. Leadership of the Connectional Table includes an Advisory Team with rotating membership which coordinates work between its twice-a-year gatherings. Task groups are responsible for specific areas of the Connectional Table’s work. Each one works to ensure that its related objectives from *The Book of Discipline* actually happen. The task groups also report the work in their particular areas with the entire Connectional Table at its meetings. This distributes the work among the members and encourages dialogue about vision and mission.

45 Minutes: Student reports on their boards and agencies:

With this overview and diagram in front of people, **ask the students to share two to three minutes of information about their assigned agencies, special Sundays or ethnic caucuses**. You may need more time for this, or less, depending on students’ brevity – use an egg timer if needed! Suggestion: Call for the reports in this order, which lists those most important to local churches – more or less, and by one very subjective accounting - first:

UMCOR
GBGM
Discipleship Ministries
UMPH and Cokesbury
GCFA
UMCOM
UMW

UMM
GBHEM
GBOPHB
GBCS
GCORR
GCSRW
Office of Christian Unity and
Interreligious Relationships
GCAH
Special Sundays
Ethnic Caucuses

15 minutes: Apportionments

Point out that all that we have been studying is supported by the voluntary giving of United Methodists. Explore the power of our connectional giving with one or more of these resources:

This video, *How the Church “Stretches” Your Dollar*, at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LknGBEPAiec

The less detailed treatment at *Chuck Knows Church: Apportionments*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-T52PjNZO4w

The apportionment giving graphic on Page 36 of the *United Methodist Handbook* available for download at:

http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_UMCGiving/resource-files/2014_UM-handbook-LOW-RES_10-08-14.pdf

Or a resource from your conference interpreting apportionments.

As of 2012 – and it hasn’t changed a great deal, as the above resources show:

- About 85 cents of every dollar (\$.845) in the collection plate *stays in the local church*.
- Another 12 cents (\$.124) goes to the annual conference and districts to support services to the local church and ministries of the district and conference.
- Just over two cents (\$.022) goes to general church apportionments.
- Almost one penny (\$.009) goes to other general funds and special offerings, including United Methodist Women

Just over two cents! What an amazing amount of ministry happens through the connection, with only three cents of every dollar.

- The general church budget which is passed at General Conference is divided, or *apportioned*, to the annual conferences.
- The annual conference budget which is passed at its annual conference is divided, *apportioned*, among its churches. (Some conferences still use the district Board of Stewards, in which apportionments first go to districts to be divided among churches. Find out and share how your conference does it.)

- The formulas for these apportionments attempt to take into account both membership numbers and economic strength of churches.
- There are seven funds in the general church apportionments:
 - World Service Fund – missionaries, overhead, and dozens of specific ministries in the U.S. and worldwide
 - Ministerial Education Fund – for recruitment and education of pastors and bishops
 - Black College Fund – supporting the historically African-American Methodist colleges
 - Africa University Fund
 - Episcopal Fund – paying the salaries, office expenses, and benefits for bishops
 - General Administration Fund – overhead support for financial controls, General Conference legislation, Judicial Council, records and history
 - Interdenominational Cooperation Fund – supports involvement of the church in ecumenical organizations
- Annual conference apportionments (the 12 cents), of course, support items in the Annual Conference budget. If possible, have a resource for the students about your conference's apportioned giving.

Apportionments are each church's share of the cost of being part of a worldwide connection, and the glory of sharing in this worldwide ministry and mission.

Please point out: The six special Sunday offerings support agencies and projects that are *not supported through apportionments* – such as UMCOR.

In addition to what's given through apportionments, the six special Sunday offerings, the hundreds of Advance projects around the world, and dozens of partnership projects between conferences or individual churches offer unlimited opportunities for specific, targeted mission giving and involvement.

40 minutes (or somewhat less, if student reports took longer than 45 minutes):

The Charge Conference and local church structure

From the worldwide connection, we turn to the local church and its charge conference.

Review, if needed, the point that the local church has wide latitude in how it organizes itself into committees and ministry teams. There will be a church council which may be named in various ways, to which the committees report. In the United States, the committees required by the Discipline are Lay Leadership (previously known as Nominations), Finance, Staff-Parish Relations (also known as Pastor-Parish Relations) and Trustees. Certain officers and members of certain committees are elected by the charge conference.

Invite students to turn to the paragraphs in the current *Discipline* that detail the charge conference, church council, Lay Leadership, Finance, Staff-Parish and Trustees. The point is to find them, not to go over them in detail.

Discuss these principles. For each point, allow students to ask questions, and try to keep the discussion to the point and in a positive tone. What are the reasons behind each principle, and its benefits? (Paragraph numbers are from the *Book of Discipline*, 2012. Adjust them if they have changed.)

- The local charge conference is **part of the connection**. ¶¶ 246-247 (2012). A United Methodist church is not “congregation” in the sense that, say, Presbyterian or Lutheran or Baptist churches are independent corporations – because of these facts:
- **The Trust Clause:** first and foremost, the church property itself is held “in trust” for the United Methodist connection. Property cannot be bought, sold, or substantially changed without the involvement of the district superintendent and the district site committee, representing the conference. ¶¶2501-2505 (2012)

A local church cannot decide it would rather be Baptist or independent. The people can so decide, and leave the church, but they cannot take their property with them. This principle dates back to John Wesley, and ensures that property bought and paid for by Methodists remains Methodist.

- The local church **does not employ their pastors** (even though the IRS insists on churches providing W-2's for them, while also insisting that they are “self-employed” for self-employment tax (FICA) purposes). Rather, the pastor is a missionary appointed to this “preaching outpost” by the annual conference, and his or her “boss” is not the Pastor-Parish Committee but the DS. The pastor certainly pays attention to the annual evaluations filled out by the committee, but only the cabinet and bishop can move pastors. Only the clergy meeting at annual conference, after due process, can “fire” them from the connection. The differing expectations of pastor and people result, of course, not in “rules” but in a continuing dance of working together. ¶258.2, ¶¶427-428 (2012)
- **The finance committee cannot direct how the church spends its money.** The finance committee's job is to help the church raise the money to cover its ministry, which is determined by the church council. ¶258.4 (2012)
- One important rule for financial accountability is that the **church treasurer** (who signs the checks) and the **financial secretary** (who receives and records people's donations) are **not the same person**, nor members of the same family. ¶258.4 (2012)
- **The trustees do not direct how the church building can be used.** They care for the building and property of the church. The church council obviously has great influence on what ministries will be housed in the building, but ultimately, in fact, it is

actually the pastor's responsibility who gets to meet there. ¶2533 (2012)

10 minutes: Closing

Reading assignment for Session 4: Warner Chapter 7, *Conferences*, pages 131-139 (General, Jurisdictional, Central conferences), and Chapter 8, *Councils and Agencies*, pages 147-156 (Judicial Council)

Share prayer requests and close in prayer. By the time participants reach this class, they probably have had classes in leading worship, leading in prayer, and lay speaking – so ask one of them to close with prayer.

Session 4: Beyond Annual Conference

2 hours

Session Goals: By the end of this session, students will have a better understanding of the connection beyond the borders of their annual conference: Jurisdictions, General Conference, Judicial Council, and central conferences, as well as other international affiliated churches.

(Ask the students to read **Chapter 7, Conferences, pages 131-139 (General, Jurisdictional, Central conferences), and Chapter 8, Councils and Agencies, pages 147-156 (Judicial Council)**, in Warner's *The Method of Our Mission* before this session.)

5 minutes: Gathering; welcome folks back. If this is a 5-day format Lay Academy, or if this is the first session on Day 2 of a two-day format, set out the name cards either where folks were sitting before, or mix them up so they sit next to new folks. If it is a 2-day format and this session is the second on Day 2, you have 5 extra minutes for discussion.

5 minutes: Opening Devotion:

Is church structure even necessary? It's tempting to ask - Wouldn't it be great just to go back to the days of the early church and forget conferences and structures and councils and rules and laws? Well, let's return to those early days, and to the very first "General Conference" – what the universal Church calls the first "Ecumenical Council" – the "Jerusalem Council" which Luke relates in Acts 15:1-29:

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. ...

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'

... After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. ... I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.'

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, ... sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, ... with the following letter: 'The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.... For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.'

Conferences, and the election of delegates, and the sending of missionary preachers, and yes, even the passing of resolutions and the writing of minutes, have been part of the church from the beginning.

Let's lift our prayer for unity by singing that grand hymn by Charles Wesley which opens every Methodist conference: *And Are We Yet Alive?* # 553 in the United Methodist Hymnal. [Sing at least verses 1-4.]

10 minutes: General Conference elections

Whenever we think about General Conference, stomachs churn. If you are able to use projection, lighten the moment by playing this two-minute commentary from Western North Carolina Conference on election of delegates for general and jurisdictional conferences: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glouvidNcjq> . (If your meeting place does not have internet access, you can download it with one of several free downloaders offered at www.cnet.com .)

After the video, do point out that what seems to be an error heightens the humor. With two valid ballots, the number required to elect is two – unless both were voting for Ken Carter! This humorous take does highlight the confusion and frustration that members of annual conferences – and their bishops – often experience during the voting process.

Highlight and invite questions:

- The amazing thing about General Conference is that it works at all, with 600 to 1,000 delegates speaking multiple languages.
- The General Conference secretary works out how many delegates each annual conference, missionary annual conference or provisional annual conference may send, by a formula based on the number of clergy and lay members *of the conference*.
- Once the number of clergy and lay delegates each conference will send is established, separate ballots by clergy and laity are taken during the previous annual conference until the delegations, including several alternates, are elected.

- Then the balloting continues until an equal number of delegates is elected for jurisdictional conference only. All General Conference delegates are also jurisdictional conference delegates.
- General Conference worship can be richly inspiring and unifying; deliberations can be depressing and divisive. We'll talk about some of the tensions next session.

20 minutes: Jurisdictional Conferences (Warner, pp 134-37)

Show the map of United States jurisdictions from the 2014 United Methodist Handbook, which is included in this Leader Guide.

Identify your annual conference and jurisdictional conference. Point out that jurisdictional conferences have the power to set conference boundaries, and that conferences have been consolidating over the last 50 years in order to save money. Is your conference the result of such a merger? Are there reasons why a merger might be in your future? **If so, ask students: What are the arguments for and against?**

Review the historical reasons why we have jurisdictions, briefly, but as fully as necessary for your students. Point out that:

- The price of the 1939 reunification of the northern Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South (roughly what now comprises the Southeastern Jurisdiction) was the segregation of African-American churches in a "Central Jurisdiction." The jurisdiction system ensured that no black bishop (or northern bishop) could ever be appointed to a southern annual conference.
- This deal was rejected in the Western Jurisdiction, which always has included all its black churches and clergy in its regular geographical conferences. The Western Jurisdiction is the most diverse of all our jurisdictions.
- Although the Central Jurisdiction churches were incorporated into the geographical jurisdictions and annual conferences in 1968, there still are two ethnic conferences: Rio Grande (Hispanic) and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. There is another missionary conference in the U.S., Red Bird, serving parts of Kentucky.
- All powers of jurisdictional conferences are conferred by General Conference, as are the central conferences' powers.

25 minutes: Central Conferences and Affiliated Churches (Warner, pp 272-275)

- There are seven **central conferences** of the United Methodist Church: Africa, West Africa, Congo, Central and Southern Europe, Northern Europe, Germany, and Philippines.

Folks may have heard of the Central Conference Pension Initiative, an effort to provide minimal pensions to pastors and surviving spouses in Africa and eastern Europe.

If you have **internet**, give the students a taste of the diversity of the UMC by displaying the episcopal offices, with their lists of conferences, from umc.org/directory/central-conferences

OR, if some students have **cell phone-based internet**, they can check these out and share in a small group, then report what they found to the whole group. Have them go to umc.org/directory.

Notice the “provisional” annual conference designation. These are conferences which aren’t numerous enough to stand on their own as annual conferences.

In all these areas of the world, the United Methodist Church is growing fast – and is now sending “missionaries” back to bless churches in the United States.

Ask – what immigrant pastors – or bishops – in your own conference do your students know?

➤ **Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches** and **Affiliated United Churches**

Summarize: Some churches planted by U.S. Methodists or others:

- have chosen to be *independent* from the United Methodist Church but still retain a covenant affiliation with the UMC. Some planted by British Methodists also are affiliates.

- or have *merged* with other denominations in their own lands, and the union churches still maintain an affiliate relationship.

These churches may send non-voting delegates to General Conference, depending on the agreement, and of course their bishops are not members of the Council of Bishops.

If your conference has a relationship with one or more of these churches, point that out. The “International Churches” page at umc.org also has links to these kinds of churches. If you have time and technology, check out some of these, either together or in **small groups** as before. Point out any partnerships with your conference. **Ask the students – their churches may also have such partnerships.**

➤ **Nonaffiliated autonomous and united churches**

Conferences and churches, and the General Board of Global Ministries, may also have partnerships with Methodist-tradition churches that do not have formal agreements or relationship with the United Methodist Church, such as the Church of South India (a union church) and the Methodist Church of Haiti, which are not listed as affiliated.

Invite students to check out the “Members A to Z” list at the World Methodist Council site some time, to see how diverse are the descendents of Wesley!
worldmethodistcouncil.org/about/member-churches/

20 minutes: Judicial Council

Summarize:

- The Judicial Council has nine members, five laity and four clergy in one quadrennium and five clergy and four laity in the next. They serve eight year terms and may be re-elected. The Council elects its own officers and sets its own rules.
- Members are nominated by the Council of Bishops, who name three times the number needed to fill vacancies. General Conference elects the council from this slate.
- Judicial Council decisions include:
 - Declaratory judgments about the constitutionality or legality of actions taken by any body in the connection
 - Automatic review of legal decisions by bishops presiding over conferences
 - Appeals of bishops' decisions of law which are submitted by a fifth of the annual conference's members
 - Appeals of legal questions that arise from church trials and similar actions.

Although we won't go into details in this class, the 2012 General Conference struggled mightily with efforts to rearrange the church's administrative structure, only to have all efforts either fail or be declared unconstitutional by the Judicial Council.

10 minutes: Book of Resolutions

Since only General Conference can speak for the United Methodist Church, General Conference deals with thousands of resolutions. If you have one or more copies of the *Book of Resolutions*, share them with students to see the wide variety of subjects addressed.

Stress that these resolutions are the best efforts of the delegates to faithfully address issues of concern to the world; that sometimes they may even contradict each other (sometimes in the same paragraph), and that they are **not church law**.

Warner notes: Central conference powers "allow the interpretation, adaptation, and even changes to the *Discipline* 'as the special conditions and the mission of the church in the area require.'" However, the 2012 General Conference ruled that only General Conference may change the Constitution, doctrinal standards, theological task, "The Ministry of All Christians," and the Social Principles. (Warner, p. 139)
Of these "Global Discipline" inclusions, the most controversial is the Social Principles.

20 minutes: Discussion

What does all this mean so far? What has been new or surprising to the students? What inspires them? What fills them with pride? What is a miracle that it works at all?
If the students were in charge, how would they change things?

OR – if you have time, discuss the quote that follows. If not, read it as we move to closing prayer, asking students to think about it as they read the assignment and consider the tensions in the UMC structure, which we'll take up next session.

Rev. Christy Thomas of Krum First UMC in Krum, Texas, wrote in a blog, also published in the United Methodist Reporter, in Nov. 2012,

"The United Methodist Church cannot be re-formed. It's over for us with our current structure...It's easy to get frustrated with the Judicial Council for the rulings of the last few months. Their work has thoroughly reversed decisions made by General and Jurisdictional Conferences....Because the members of the Council were faithful to the letter of the law, which is exactly what they are supposed to do, we now know for sure that this emperor has no clothes...[substantial and necessary change under the current rules] can't work. Period.

"We are going to have to engender our own revolution/reformation or die slowly of strangulation by methods that no longer support the heart of Methodism...."

"We have the most powerful theology of grace that has ever infused the human race....Can grace-infused theology hold us together in the revolution that is now necessary? Can we plant ourselves firmly on opposite sides of huge issues, pray, argue and fight our way through this, and see a healthy and actually united Methodist church born yet once more? Can we free ourselves from the death strangle of our current methods and still be Methodists?" (no longer available at her blog)

Do you agree or disagree, and why? Think about all this for next time.

10 minutes: Closing

Reading assignment for Session 5: Chapter Three, *Contemporary Statements: Operational Doctrine*, pages 53-60 (Social Creed, Social Principles, and the *Book of Resolutions*)
Conclusion: Sent to the World, pages 169-174

Note: You may want to assign the next session's opening devotion to two or more students, who may share the reading. Also, in your own planning for next session, consider what issues and concerns seem to be important to your students. Share prayer concerns, and let one of the students close with prayer.

Session 5: For Such a Time as This

2 hours

Session Goals: In this session students will grapple with two of a number of issues of United Methodist Life Together, using various formats for discussion and conferencing. Through this process, students will be equipped with new insight and tools for discernment in making decisions in their local church and, perhaps, their conference.

(Ask the students to read *Session 5: Chapter Three, Contemporary Statements: Operational Doctrine, pages 53-60 (Social Creed, Social Principles, and the Book of Resolutions) Conclusion: Sent to the World, pages 169-174*) before this session.)

5 minutes: Gathering; welcome folks back. If this is a 5-day format Lay Academy, set out the name cards either where folks were sitting before, or mix them up so they sit next to new folks. If it is a 2-day format, this session is the last on Day 2, you have 5 extra minutes for discussion.

5 minutes: Opening Devotion:

In the book of Esther, Mordecai asks his ward, Queen Esther, to risk her life to challenge the decree of destruction that has been issued against the Jews in Persia. He says:

‘Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ... Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.’

We are living at a time of deep turmoil and huge challenges and changes. Perhaps we Lay Servants have been called to this ministry in our beloved United Methodist Church for just such a time as this. It’s a time very much like another time of deep turmoil and huge challenges and changes, in which our Lord Jesus Christ taught:

[Pause after each, or assign one beatitude to each of 8 readers, for emphasis.]

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

... 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

Sometimes the wrangling in our churches and conferences dims God's light, and fails to give glory to God. Sometimes we finite human beings must admit, in all humility, that we can't be sure *what* gives glory to God in any given situation. And as St. Paul noted, there *have* to be disagreements in the church if the church is to work its way through them to the truth of God's call in such a time as this.

But can we learn to disagree with love and grace, with humility, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity, and peacemaking? Can it be that even in our conflicts, God is glorified? Let us pray so, as we sing:

[Select one of these:]

Christ Has Risen (The Faith We Sing # 2115) Lord, be Glorified (TFWS #2150) I'm Gonna Live so Christ Can Use Me (TFWS #2153) Let There Be Peace on Earth (UM Hymnal #431)

15 Minutes: Such a Time as This

Summarize briefly some of the general characteristics of the change in world culture in the early 21st Century, from your own observations or from your reading of Phyllis Tickle or Brian McLaren. Don't dwell on negative statistics, and resist getting sidetracked into discussion, but Include:

- The change in communication system from *primarily* print-based to *primarily* digital, which has wrenching implications for every culture in the world, including how we work, our attention span, how we worship, and even how we think - now primarily in *story* rather than logical explanation
- The demographic shift of "the center of Christianity" to the southern hemisphere, and the demographic shift of the center of the United Methodist Church to Africa and Asia
- The consumer attitude in those in the U.S. who do attend church, in which shopping for a church that meets my and my family's needs is much more important than denominational loyalty or theology
- The deep suspicion of (or is it disappointment in?) "organized religion," and the rise of secular and para-church organizations doing much of the mission and ministry that used to be the province of the denominations: Oxfam, CARE, Heifer Project, Habitat for Humanity, Church World Service, Doctors Without Borders, the Gates Foundation, and thousands of local specific-purpose charities and government programs: Food pantries, homeless shelters, free clinics, park district programs, etc.
- The rising challenge to authority of all sorts, especially religious authority and hierarchy, as knowledge and authority become democratized – "crowd-sourced."
- The rising interest in the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the church, giving rise to charismatic and Pentecostal movements worldwide as well as renewed efforts in

spiritual formation in mainline denominations (*Upper Room, Walk to Emmaus, Academy for Spiritual Formation*, spiritual direction, covenant groups, Taize music and worship)

- “Ancient-future” church, meaning renewed interest in deeply meaningful celebration of the sacraments of Communion and Baptism, and other physical acts and sensory elements in worship such as candles, incense, fountains, footwashing, reaffirmation of baptism, labyrinths, etc.
- The challenge of the digital age: What of worship is appropriate to put online? Where churches stream their worship services, or congregations exist only online such as several now in Second Life, or megachurches rescue struggling nearby churches by streaming the sermon, and people learn online, how can the full dimensions of discipleship be cared for: sacraments, small group interaction, service?
- The challenge of increasing diversity of all kinds, in every city, rural village, and often, even in our families as our children marry across racial and religious lines, change denominations or even faiths, or are more open about sexual orientation.

What does all this mean for the church? This is simply the reality of our time, and the background against which our church’s polity must work, or must change.

30 minutes: Small Group Discussion 1

For the rest of the session, divide into small groups of three or four persons. Each group will receive a challenge assignment to discuss **using the information about the church’s polity which they have learned in this course.**

Assign a facilitator for each group to read the assignment. Each group will choose a recorder to report.

The topic assignments are in the addenda to this leader’s guide.

15 minutes: groups report to whole class

Let the group recorders share: What was the issue? What, if anything, did the *Discipline* have to say about it? Did everyone get a chance to share? Was Christian love in evidence?

Hand out new assignments. If you wish, you can scramble the groups for the second small group session, but the change of topic will probably be enough variety.

30 minutes: Small Group Discussion 2

15 minutes: groups report to whole class

If the groups did their work extra quickly so there is time, you can always assign a third discussion.

10 minutes: closing

At the end of the session you will be going to closing worship. Use this time to “de-tox” if necessary from the intensity of the discussions, with a closing devotion. Ask several students to share in reading this, from John Wesley:

In John Wesley’s sermon 39, Catholic Spirit, he lifts up many Scriptural comments on the Great Commandment. He writes:

[Jesus said,] “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” ... This is that love on which the Apostle John so frequently and strongly insists... “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”

...All men approve of this; but do all men practise it? Daily experience shows the contrary. Where are even the Christians who “love one another as he hath given us commandment?” How many hindrances lie in the way! The two grand, general hindrances are, first, that they cannot all think alike and, in consequence of this, secondly, they cannot all walk alike; but in several smaller points their practice must differ in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

...But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works. www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/sermons.pdf

As Methodists in the 21st Century, we need, somehow, to renew our connection in ways that will, as our founder put it, “forward one another in love and in good works” even though we cannot all think alike or worship alike or walk alike. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to renew our life together.

[Spend some time in silent prayer, and close with prayer, or in singing *They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*, The Faith We Sing, 2223.]

Addenda

For each participant: Introduction letter

For assignment to participants:

Devotions, one for each session

Assignment slips for Session 3

Discussion topics for Session 5

Life Together in the United Methodist Connection

Introduction: To the Course Participant

Welcome to this Lay Servant Ministries class on United Methodist Church polity, based on the excellent and engaging book *The Method of Our Mission* by Lacey E. Warner.

Polity – a scary and boring-sounding word if ever there was one! Scary, because it sounds like *politics*, and heaven knows we don't want nastiness and negative campaign ads in the church! And boring because – well, just because it's associated with words like *meeting*, and *Book of Discipline*, and *law*, and *legality*.

But the word *polity* just means “how we organize ourselves to live and work together.”

And in the Church, we have a deeper understanding of the *purpose* of *why* we organize ourselves – an understanding of the *holiness* of living together to build one another up, and working together to do the work of the Body of Christ, the Reign of God.

In this course we'll explore some biblical roots of the church, and how United Methodists organize ourselves to live together and get things done. We'll begin to see how we understand even administrative meetings as channels for God's grace and for using God's spiritual gifts! And we'll prepare ourselves a bit for the challenging, exciting times that lie ahead for the people called United Methodist in the 21st Century.

In your local Lay Academy, you will be meeting with the study leader in the class itself for 10 hours. Lay Academy events also include opening and closing worship, lunch etc. You will enjoy the class more if you can obtain the textbook ahead of time and at least begin reading in it.

For this class you will need:

The Method of Our Mission by Lacey C. Warner, published by Abingdon, in the latest edition.

The current ***United Methodist Discipline***. Find a copy of the most recent version you can locate. Ask your pastor.

Welcome to *Life Together in the United Methodist Connection*!

Rev. Beth Galbreath

Opening Devotion for Session 1, the Connectional Principle:

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he hosted a dinner for his closest friends. They came to the table, and he washed their feet as a servant, saying they should serve one another in the same way. He broke bread and shared wine with them. And then he prayed for them, and this is some of what he said:

And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ...

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

(John 17:11-12, 20-23)

Then they left the Table and went out into the world. Jesus knew that if they stayed connected with one another, they would accomplish amazing things for his kingdom. But if they split up, they would accomplish nothing, and be lost themselves from his fellowship.

When we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it is a sacrament of connection, the sacrament of unity with Christ and with one another. We come to the Table bringing offerings of bread and wine to be consecrated. The bread of heaven is broken for us and the fruit of the vine is poured, and then distributed and shared. When we share Christ's body and blood we are united, bound together, connected in Christ's body and blood, and we receive spiritual nourishment for doing Christ's work in our world.

In the same way, in the United Methodist Church, we are united, bound together, *connected*. We call ourselves a *connection*. And we bring offerings of prayers, presence, financial and spiritual gifts, service and witness. These are also gathered at a table – it's called the Administrative Board or Ad Council, Annual Conference or General Conference, or something else – they are consecrated to Christ's service, divided, and shared. And so, connected, united, we accomplish amazing things for Christ's kingdom. Separately, we could accomplish nothing, and would be lost ourselves from Christ's fellowship. Let us pray as we sing...

[Select one of the following songs:]

Bind Us Together, # 2226 in
The Faith We Sing
Blest Be the Tie that Binds, UMH # 557

We Are the Church, UMH # 558
Jesus, United by Thy Grace, UMH # 561
Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love, UMH # 566

Opening Devotion for Session 2, the Episcopal Principle

(If possible, have a picture of the bishop's insignia to show.)

The Apostle Paul, on his last journey to Jerusalem, wanted to meet with the leaders of the church at Ephesus, but he was in a hurry. So he stopped at the harbor of Miletus. Luke reports, in Acts 20:17-32:

From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them:

'You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears... as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again... Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.'

The church appoints shepherds – which is what “pastor” means – and chief shepherds, who are named bishops – for the work of overseeing the spiritual well-being and the ministries of God's people. Paul calls such leaders “overseers,” and though the names and processes may have changed, his warning to “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock” still expresses the duty of bishops and their assistants, the district superintendents.



The symbol of the bishop is the *crozier*, (KROH-zhy-er), a staff shaped like a shepherd's crook, symbolizing the responsibility of the bishop as chief shepherd of the flock of Christ's church. In the United Methodist Church, bishops are not a separate order of clergy. They are simply *consecrated* as bishops, not ordained. They remain ordained elders among other elders, set aside, not as the only shepherds, but as leading shepherds, for the work of superintendency.

The insignia of the episcopacy in the United Methodist Church is shaped like a shield with a crozier running through it, and the symbols of Christ – the Chi Rho in the shape of the cross – and of the Father, the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8) – on a background of red, a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Let us close by singing the prayer contained in this ordination hymn: [Select one of these.]
God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian, UM Hymnal #648.
Lord, You Give the Great Commission, vs. 1, 2, 4, UM Hymnal #584.

Opening Devotion for Session 3, Working Together

Money is part of life and money is part of the church. From the very first moments of Jesus' ministry, he and his disciples had a common purse. Sadly, without written records, they couldn't be sure money coming in matched money going out, and John tells us that Judas, their treasurer, found it too tempting, and easy, to skim.

In the first heady days of the Jerusalem connection after Pentecost, Luke tells us this in Acts 2:41-45:

So those who welcomed [Peter's] message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Even when we don't live communally as the Jerusalem church did, *money connects*. Collecting and distributing money for the church's needs and for mission and ministry enable us to accomplish much more than we can do alone – and that in itself knits us together in connection. Paul tells the Corinthians, and us, in 1 Cor. 16:1-5:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come. And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

For Paul, this collection for the struggling mother church at Jerusalem was more than just money, or a good cause. It was more than “apportionments.” He knew that the *collection was connection*. In the giving, it solidified his churches' desire to be part of the connection. And in the receiving, the Jerusalem church would confirm its acceptance of these Gentile brothers and sisters as equally part of the connection of Christ's Church. Paul did not take the collection alone. He brought with him emissaries of the churches, to be sure that their offerings were given and received in full, and the message of connecting fellowship taken home. Collection is connection. And money is mission and ministry.

Let's close by lifting our prayer through singing [select one of the following hymns]:

Rise Up, O Men [or “ye saints”] of God, UM Hymnal #576

Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service, UM Hymnal #581

Opening Devotion for Session 4, Beyond Annual Conference

Is church structure even necessary? It's tempting to ask - Wouldn't it be great just to go back to the days of the early church and forget conferences and structures and councils and rules and laws? Well, let's return to those early days, and to the very first "General Conference" – what the universal Church calls the first "Ecumenical Council" – which Luke relates in Acts 15:1-29:

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. ...

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, 'My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.'

... After they finished speaking, James replied, 'My brothers, listen to me. ... I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.'

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, ... sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, ... with the following letter: 'The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.... For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.'

Conferences, and the election of delegates, and the sending of missionary preachers, and yes, even the passing of resolutions and the writing of minutes, have been part of the church from the beginning.

Let's lift our prayer for unity by singing that grand hymn by Charles Wesley which opens every Methodist conference: *And Are We Yet Alive?* # 553 in the United Methodist Hymnal. [Sing at least verses 1-4.]

Opening Devotion for Session 5: For Such a Time as This

In the book of Esther, Mordecai asks his ward, Queen Esther, to risk her life to challenge the decree of destruction that has been issued against the Jews in Persia. He says:

‘Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ... Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.’

We are living at a time of deep turmoil and huge challenges and changes. Perhaps we Lay Servants have been called to this ministry in our beloved United Methodist Church for just such a time as this. It’s a time very much like another time of deep turmoil and huge challenges and changes, in which our Lord Jesus Christ taught:

[Pause after each, or assign one beatitude to each of 8 readers, for emphasis.]

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‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

... ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.’

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But can we learn to disagree with love and grace, with humility, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity, and peacemaking? Can it be that even in our conflicts, God is glorified? Let us pray so, as we sing: *[Select one of these:]*

Christ Has Risen (The Faith We Sing # 2115) Lord, be Glorified (TFWS #2150) I’m Gonna Live so Christ Can Use Me (TFWS #2153) Let There Be Peace on Earth (UM Hymnal #431)

Session 3 Assignment slips (Pass out in Session 2)



General Commission on Archives & History
The United Methodist Church

www.gcah.org



General Commission on
Communication www.umcom.org

Be sure to let folks know about their shop,
including discounted software and hardware for
churches (search for “technology”). Is your church’s FindAChurch profile up to date?



Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships
The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

www.ocuir.org

What do you learn at the website about ecumenical work among Christians? About relations with the ELCA? About interfaith work with Islam and Judaism? About the worldwide Methodist/Wesleyan family?



The United Methodist Publishing House. www.umph.com
And Cokesbury, which is no longer a local retailer, but quite alive
at www.cokesbury.com.

What other denominations does Cokesbury serve? Are there challenges in
that fact – that is, potential confusion about what resources are really United Methodist?



General Commission on Religion and Race.
www.gcorr.org



General Council on Finance and Administration www.gcfa.org

An extremely important and powerful agency. What does it do?
How does it relate to your conference CFA and your church?



General Board of Higher Education and Ministry www.gbhem.org

A very important agency – how does it relate to your conference Board of Ordained Ministry, District Committees on Ministry, and United Methodist seminaries?

What's your nearest seminary? What does it offer for the ministry of the laity?



Discipleship Ministries www.umcdiscipleship.org
(General Board of Discipleship)

The very important agency which provides the Lay Servant program and materials! Plus, share about: the Upper Room publications (are there devotionals for youth and children as well as adults?), the ecumenical Walk to Emmaus program, the Academy for Spiritual Formation – what else do you find at the GBOD website that can help individuals and your local church?



General Commission on United Methodist Men www.gcumm.org

What does UMM do to support youth programs and men's ministries? What else do UMM groups do? What resources are available for your church?



General Board of Global Ministries www.umcmmission.org
The main missionary-sending agency of the UMC. What does it do? Where can you find information about missionaries and missions?

Today most churches and church organizations have their own websites, but the gbgm website was a pioneer in hosting church websites, and still offers that free service.



GENERAL BOARD OF PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

www.gbophb.org

A very important agency to your pastor! What does it do? How are its activities connected to UMC concern for peace and justice in the world?



GCSRW

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

www.gcsrw.org

What does this agency do?
Are your Annual Conference sessions monitored by a COSROW representative?



General Board of
CHURCH & SOCIETY
of The United Methodist Church

www.umbcs.org

What does this agency do?
How does it relate to your conference board of

Church and Society? What resources are available for your church?



www.unitedmethodistwomen.org

No longer a division of GBGM but an independent organization, UMW continues its long tradition as a major supporter of missions focused on serving women and children around the world, and as a major educator of United Methodists on world issues. Local units

are now free to organize in new ways in support of this mission. What resources are available for your church? Does your conference UMW offer Schools of Mission?



United Methodist Committee On Relief

www.umcor.org

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is the source of great pride to United Methodists. How is it funded?

What is the Advance, and how much of Advance donations go to direct aid? Where does UMCOR operate? What are relief-supply kits? What is your nearest UMCOR supply warehouse? How can churches participate directly in responding to disasters, with money, supplies and trained volunteers? What disaster response training is available in your conference?

Human Relations Day Offering

umcsgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

One Great Hour of Sharing (UMCOR)

umcsgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

Native American Ministries Sunday

umcsgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

Peace with Justice Sunday

umcgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

World Communion Sunday

umcgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

United Methodist Student Day

umcgiving.org/how-we-give#sundays

If your class is large enough, ask participants also to pick one of these caucus group slips to highlight the diversity of the United Methodist Church. (Note: the Marcha website is in Spanish.) These slips relate only to United States participants.



Black Methodists for Church Renewal

www.bmcrumc.org

What resources does BMCR offer for your church?
Is there a BMCR unit in your conference?



Native American International Caucus

www.naicumc.org

What resources does NAIC offer for your church? Is there an NAIC unit in your conference?



National Federation of Asian American United Methodists

www.nfaaum.org

What resources does NFAAUM offer for your church? Is there an NFAAUM unit in your conference?

(There is also a Pacific Islander National Caucus of United Methodists, but at this printing it has no website.)



Methodists Associated Representing the
Cause of Hispanic
Americans www.marchaumc.org

Is there a MARCHA unit in your conference? What resources does MARCHA offer for Hispanic churches and others?

Note to leader: Some of your class members may be related to one or more of a number of issue-oriented caucus groups related to the UMC. While there is no reason to bring these up in this class, you should be familiar with them so that you can briefly answer questions – hopefully, outside of the class sessions.

Session 5 Discussion Topics

Select the topics you wish to use based on the number of people in your class and the interests they have shown during the class. Print three or four copies of each topic you will use, so that each person in the small group can have one. Before you print them, identify the current *Discipline* paragraphs that apply and change them if necessary.

OR

Have everyone (or more than one group) study the same topic, still in small groups.

OR

Create your own topics based on other interests students have shown – for example:

- How are apportionments determined? What expenses (health insurance?) are direct billed to churches? Is there a better way of financing?
- How does the conference Board of Ordained Ministry process ministry candidates?
- What commissions, committees and task groups in your annual conference need lay members – specifically, the missional gifts of your students?
- How do candidates move through the “Process” toward ordination? What is the local church’s role in evaluating and assisting candidates?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks, to the clergyperson and the local church, of Licensed Local Pastor status? Elder? Deacon?
- If your conference has just merged or may merge, what structural issues must be addressed? What practical issues? As conferences become geographically larger, how can technology help to keep them connected?

In addition, groups should have access to and refer to the latest version of the *Book of Discipline*.

Encourage students to use their tablets or smartphones, if available, to access and search general church resources at www.umc.org, the Council of Bishops site and Judicial Council site.

If a live internet connection is not possible, you may want to copy key parts of such online resources, which are shown in URL’s in each topic, into documents which you can provide to students in hard copy. But if smartphones are available, that should not be necessary.

In any case, please be familiar with the issues you choose so that you can answer questions and, if necessary, correct misconceptions.

Encourage students to speak to one another in Christian love during the conversations.

Guaranteed Appointment and Itinerary

2012 *Book of Discipline* References: Restrictive Rules, ¶19 and ¶20, and ¶334, *Ministry, Authority and Responsibilities of an Elder in Full Connection*. ¶361, *Complaint Procedures*.

The 2012 General Conference saw an effort, which came from the Study of Ministry Commission, to end “security of appointment,” more generally known as “guaranteed appointment.” General Conference approved the proposal on the consent calendar, without debate, and an effort to reconsider failed handily.

The legislation would have permitted bishops to appoint elders to less than full time positions on their own initiative and also, with the approval of the annual conference clergy session, to place elders on unpaid “transitional leave” for up to 24 months.

General Conference also asked the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision about that move, and in Decision 1226 the council ruled it unconstitutional, saying,

Security of appointment has long been a part of the tradition of The United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies. Abolishing security of appointment would destroy our historic plan for our itinerant superintendency. Fair process procedures, trials and appeals are integral parts of the privilege of our clergy of right to trial by a committee and of appeal and is an absolute right which cannot be eradicated by legislation....

We have found no instance in which there have been provisions for not appointing clergy involuntarily to ministerial settings other than chargeable offenses or some form of unacceptability for appointment.

http://archives.umc.org/interior_judicial.asp?mid=263&JDID=1340&JDMOD=VWD

The legislation was ruled to violate the third and fourth Restrictive Rules, ¶ 19 and ¶ 20. The security of appointment principle was first written in the 1956 Discipline of The Methodist Church and was maintained in the 1968 merger.

However, the Judicial Council ruling did not address new legislation that gave the bishop and cabinet the right to initiate a part-time appointment. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry points out that such a move should not be used for punishment or remedial action against a clergyperson. For information about the part-time legislation and the existing process to deal with ineffective clergy, see www.pnwumc.org/news/gbhem-recommends-care-with-use-of-part-time-appointment/

The procedures for dealing with “ineffectiveness” are outlined in ¶334 Sections 3-4, and ¶363, *Complaint Procedures* (2012).

Discuss: *What is your take on this issue? What are the benefits of guaranteed appointment? What are the drawbacks? What are the measures of “effectiveness” in clergy in the 21st Century? Given this Judicial Council ruling, how could the procedures for dealing with “ineffectiveness” be streamlined? Or should they?*

Issues of Sexual Orientation

2012 *Book of Discipline* References: ¶341.6 (*same-sex marriage*), ¶304.2-3 and ¶311.2d (*candidates*), ¶2702, Social Principles ¶161B, F, 162J
Judicial Council decision 702, 722, 725, 984

In the same issue of the *United Methodist Reporter* which published Rev. Christy Krum's blog that the UMC polity is broken beyond redemption, retired Bishop Woodie White told of the time when he, as a young pastor, and two other African-American clergy met with the pastor of a white church in the South to let him know that they intended to visit his church the next day, even though the church had voted not to permit any black persons to worship there. Then-Rev. White pointed out the paragraphs in the 1960 *Discipline*, in "The Methodist Social Creed," that

"the right to ... join a church should not be limited by a person's race..." [The pastor] quietly but emphatically said, "None of that is the law of the Church." He stated that neither the Social Creed nor Resolutions are the law of the Methodist Church and he did not have to follow either. ...I recovered, and said, "You mean if it were the law of the church, you would follow it?" ...He responded, "Of course, I'm a Methodist!"

...United Methodism has a self-correcting polity. Every four years we open the *Book of Discipline* and seek to express in it what we believe is the best and clearest expression of Christ in contemporary society. Sometimes we get it right. And sometimes, many believe, we get it wrong...." - *United Methodist Reporter*, Nov. 30, 2012

As this class has – we hope – made clear, sexual orientation is not the only issue causing strains within the United Methodist Church in the 21st Century, but it is one of the most emotional. To some, the church has "gotten it right" about sexual orientation and practice. To others, this remains an example of "getting it wrong."

A historical overview of the church's struggle with the issue and increasingly tighter restrictions has unfortunately been taken down in the recent umc.org site reorganization. The issue was first inserted into the Social Principles in 1972. (The "Social Creed" is now a short statement which does not mention race.) Like the Social Creed, Social Principles were not considered "church law," although adherence to "a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life" as set forth in the Social Principles is now required for clergy candidates – though of all the Social Principles, only the homosexuality clause is generally used now to disqualify candidates.

(American society was also struggling with the issue. At the same period, in 1973, the board of the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.)

Ever since, United Methodists on opposite sides of the issue, backed by unofficial caucuses, have been coming to General Conference and arguing with increasing bitterness. Meanwhile, societal attitudes in the U.S. are also changing, as states and courts vote to legalize same-sex marriage. Although African conferences and those in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and the Philippines, are seen as primarily opposed to changes in this "incompatibility" language, and

United Methodists in Northeastern, North Central and Western Jurisdictions as in favor, the fact is that opinion is not uniform in any of these geographical areas. We do not agree.

In response to all of this, Western Jurisdiction has adopted a “Statement of Gospel Obedience” calling for bishops and clergy to “operate as if the statement in Para. 161F does not exist, creating a church in which all people are truly welcome.”

www.pnwumc.org/news/what-does-a-statement-of-gospel-obedience-mean-for-the-church/

Others have noted that in various conferences, the United Methodist Church does in fact include gay and lesbian clergy, and even partnered gay and lesbian clergy. The unofficial Reconciling Ministries Network now includes hundreds of churches which are “open and affirming” of gay and lesbian members (a stance which is not, technically, illegal under the *Discipline*), and hundreds of clergy who have signed a pledge that they are available to officiate at same-sex marriages (which is). But many younger members – or former members – of the UMC are no longer willing to live under what amounts to “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

Discuss: Study the Disciplinary paragraphs involved. If you’re interested in learning more and have time, check out Judicial Council decisions on the issue. What does this controversy mean for your churches in your conference, and your own local church?

What might happen to the church – if anything – if bishops and churches in Western Jurisdiction obey their “Statement of Gospel Obedience”?

Is there any way that you can see for the church to make room to “agree to disagree” on this issue? How could that work? Or will the church break up over it? How could that work?

General Conference in a Global Church

2012 *Book of Discipline* references: ¶¶8 and 13-16, *General Conference*; ¶¶540-548, *Central Conferences*

General Conference is 11 days of non-stop, sleep-deprived stress – and great expense - for the nearly 1000 delegates who are “lucky” enough to be elected.

Some of the stress relates to the fact that General Conference spends large amounts of time on details of administration that pertain only to the United States, such as clergy pensions. Delegates from Central Conferences (outside the United States) have little interest in such matters, but have to wade through them anyway, and vote on all matters in the *Book of Discipline*.

Meanwhile, Central Conferences have the authority to change the *Book of Discipline* to meet local cultural needs (2012 ¶¶543.7-21). Clergy and laypeople in the United States, especially those concerned with the church’s stand on homosexuality, question why American United Methodists cannot do the same.

The issue of recent decades has been and will probably continue to be: How can the United Methodist Church be a global church and still connect with local cultures, including those in the U.S.? The global connection has clearly done great and amazing work in spreading the Gospel and building the Kingdom.

But, in an age of growing decentralization of power, what does it mean to try to be a global church centered in the U.S.? On the other hand, in an age which is also seeing globalization of communication, information and commerce across the Internet, what does it mean to try to be a global church that only meets once every four years? Is there a better way?

Discuss: How useful is General Conference and the global connection as it is currently structured? Do you see General Conference ever meeting outside the U.S.; for example, in Africa? Why or why not?

What responsibility does the U.S. have for clergy salaries and pensions outside the U.S.? To what extent does the economic inequality among areas of the church contribute to stresses in the church?

How do you think the global church should be structured for the 21st Century?

The Cost of Doing Business with the General Agencies

2012 *Book of Discipline* references: ¶16.9 and ¶47. Also ¶701-710 (skim!)
Judicial Council Decision No. 1210

At General Conference 2012, three reorganization plans for the United Methodist church were voted down. A fourth was ultimately passed – “Plan UMC” – and it was immediately declared unconstitutional by the Judicial Council. The decision is here:

http://archives.umc.org/interior_judicial.asp?mid=263&JDID=1331&JDMOD=VWD&SN=1201&EN=1230

So there's no need to go into detail about Plan UMC or its predecessors. The point is that all of them were efforts to save money by streamlining the general church boards and agencies: making them smaller and more nimble, with more budgeting power. Plan UMC provided for a “General Council for Strategy and Oversight,” which would oversee all program agencies and centralize administrative services.

While efficient, small size and nimbleness are values in any organization, opponents did note that making boards smaller would also unfortunately reduce the diversity of their membership.

Judicial Council ruled that the Constitution places general oversight in the Council of Bishops, and thus Plan UMC violated ¶47 and ¶705.5d.

The plan also violated the Constitution, in ¶16.9, which authorizes only General Conference to “determine and provide for raising and distributing funds necessary to carry on the work of the Church.”

Discuss: Does the structure of the general church agencies even need to be changed? If so, in view of the constitutional strictures about oversight and finance, how could that happen? If not, what are the values that our current structure supports? Is there any way to make them more efficient (that is, less costly), constitutionally?

The Trust Clause and local church property issues

2012 *Discipline* references: *Trust Clause*, ¶2501-2503; *Local Church property*, ¶2524-2550

The Trust Clause has been upheld by the American court system many times. Note that the trust clause language does not need to be present in a deed for it to have effect. A church is deemed to be a United Methodist Church covered by the trust clause if it has looked United Methodist, acted United Methodist, called itself United Methodist, or received a United Methodist pastor. ¶2503.6.

Church real property from discontinued congregations is cared for by the annual conference Board of Trustees until the property can be sold or conveyed to a new congregation, either United Methodist or from a denomination represented in the Commission on Pan-Methodist Cooperation and Union. ¶2548. If property is sold, it is used as the annual conference directs; in many conferences, proceeds from sales of closed churches are held specifically for the purpose of planting new churches.

The Conference Board of Trustees also manages intangible property from closed churches, such as endowment assets.

On the other end of the church life cycle, congregations do not move or spin off daughter congregations on their own, either, but only in cooperation with the DS and District Board of Church Location and Building (also known as the district site committee). ¶2519. The goal is to ensure that churches have good sites with adequate land, in places where there is likely to be enough population to sustain them. Sometimes congregations look at such requirements as “another hoop we have to get through,” but they are also helpful resources in the process of planting and expanding churches.

There are often resource persons available who can consult with a church to offer suggestions for using existing space better. See what help is available from your district and conference.

Discuss: *Do you think property will be an issue in the 21st Century church? As house churches become more common, and congregations even begin meeting exclusively online, will church buildings become things of the past? What are the benefits of a local church owning property? What are the drawbacks?*

It is sometimes said, with more or less seriousness, that the clergy pension plan and the trust clause are the glue holding the United Methodist Church together in the face of the stresses and strains of the changing world, simply because it would be too expensive for clergy and congregations to leave. What do you think? How are United Methodists learning to be diverse congregations within the connection? What are the benefits of the trust clause? Drawbacks?

Bivocational Clergy

2012 *Book of Discipline* references: ¶304.1d, ¶338

The itineracy system has traditionally depended on elders and full-time local pastors being appointed to full-time charges, with compensation according to the conference equitable salary structure for full-time work. In fact, devoting full time to the work is part of elder and deacon candidates' own covenant vows.

The full-time rule means a smaller membership church may share a pastor with one or more churches which may be quite distant. It can be a recipe for stress and resentment. Sometimes churches can't pay even a quarter-time salary.

But because of the connection, conferences find ways to provide pastoral leadership to small membership churches and to church plants. Sometimes this is by a part-time local pastor or student local pastor. Sometimes a student, local pastor, deacon, certified lay minister or lay speaker on staff (as paid or volunteer) in a stronger church is "lent" to the smaller church. Especially in the Hispanic community, "lay missionaries," who make their living outside the church, are being trained and appointed to start new Spanish-language congregations.

Deacons whose primary appointment is beyond the local church must have a secondary appointment in a charge conference. This requirement has led to some churches expecting such deacons to be unpaid part or full-time staff members, even if they work at their main job full time. And sometimes, since deacons don't *have* to be paid, they *do* serve as volunteer staff while looking for work or working part time.

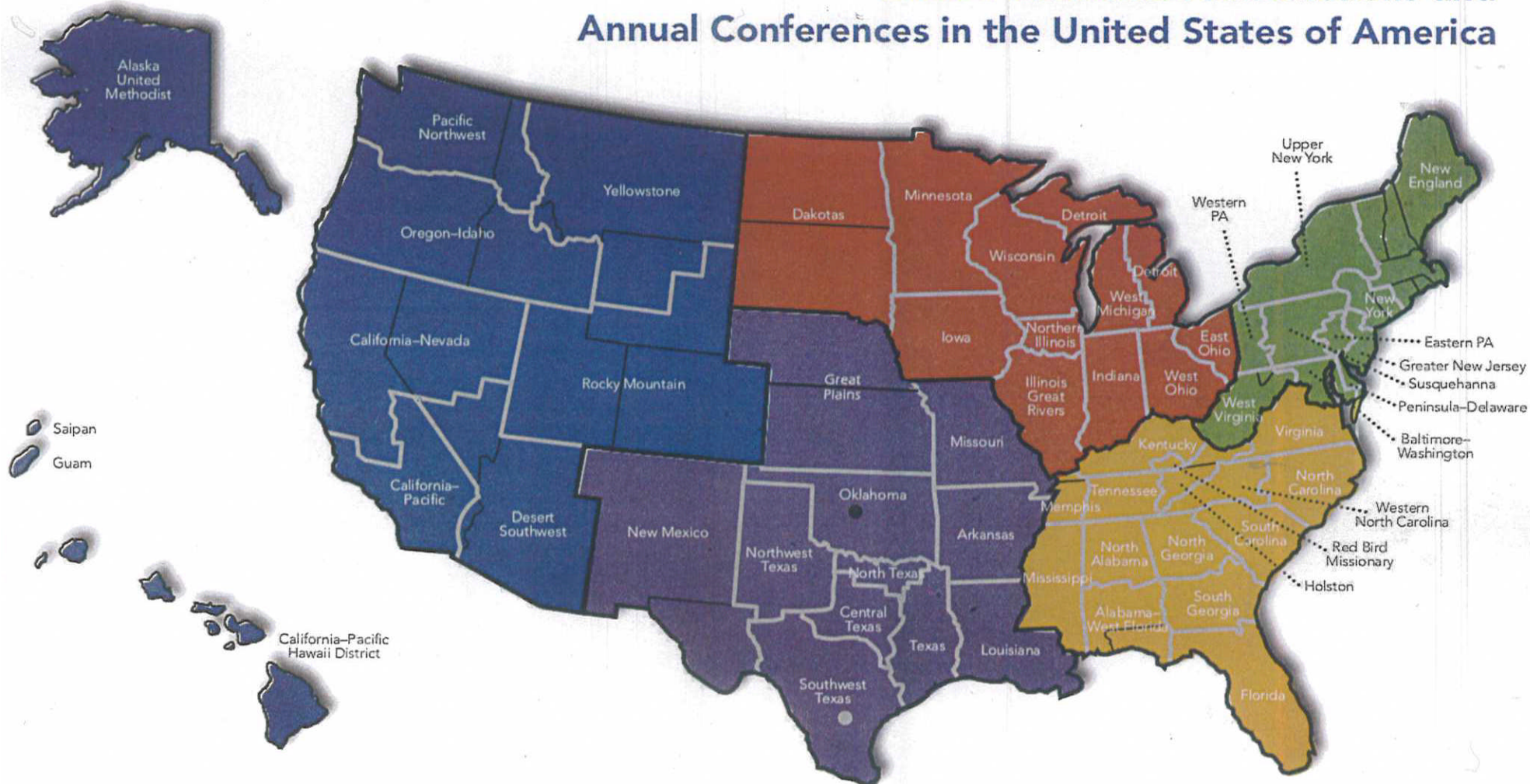
Before General Conference 2012, ¶338 made it clear that elders could be appointed to less than full-time service, but only *at the request* of the elder (and the approval of the clergy session). The 2012 legislation on the itineracy authorized bishops and their cabinets to appoint an elder to less than full-time service *without* the elder's request. Although the Judicial Council struck down the "end of guaranteed appointment" features of the legislation, the part-time appointment feature was left intact.

In all of these ways, pastoral leadership for smaller and medium membership churches is moving to include what are traditionally called "tent-making" ministries, named after the Apostle Paul's practice of earning his living at his trade while founding a church.

Discuss: What are the benefits to "tent-making" (bivocational) ministries, for the church and for the clergyperson? What are the drawbacks? Are there missional benefits besides church finances? How has your conference worked to ensure that every local church has pastoral leadership? Do you expect bivocational clergy to be more common in the future?

<div>The Ministry of All Christians</div> <div>Baptism is the only ordination needed to serve God in the world. <i>All</i> Christians (including children) are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit to enable them to serve as God calls. All service is rooted in our baptism, in God's call and our response, and affirmed by the Church. (See 1 Corinthians 12:4-13)</div>						
<div>Lay Ministry</div> <div>Fulfilling God's call through your daily life and work.</div>				<div>Licensed Ministry</div> <div>Fulfilling God's call in full or part-time leadership in your congregation.</div>	<div>Ordained Ministry</div> <div>Fulfilling God's call through your ministry vocation and equipping the church for service in the congregation and in the world.</div>	
Lay	Lay	Both		Clergy	Clergy	Clergy
<div>Certified Lay Minister</div> <div><i>Congregational Ministry as part of a ministry team.</i></div> <div>Certified lay ministers serve part-time under the direction of a clergyperson. CLM's are assigned to leadership in a smaller church or faith community, or to another role in ministry in a local church.</div> <div>Screened through charge conference and DCOM. Equipped through prescribed coursework.</div>	<div>Deaconess / Home Missioner</div> <div><i>Church and Community ministry</i></div> <div>Women and men commissioned for a lifelong full-time vocation in ministries of love, justice and service with those who are marginalized and in need. Deaconesses and Home Missioners (men) serve in a church-related or helping profession.</div> <div>Equipped through prescribed coursework.</div>	<div>Certified personnel</div> <div><i>Specialized ministries open to clergy and laypersons.</i></div> <div>Three levels of certification are available: Professional Undergraduate Paraprofessional</div> <div>Current available topics are: Camp/Retreat ministry Children's ministry Christian Education Collegiate ministry Evangelism Ministry with people with disabilities</div>		<div>Licensed local pastors</div> <div><i>Serve by performing the duties of a pastor in a particular charge.</i></div> <div>Non-ordained clergy serving in a particular church or charge with the authority of a pastor only within the setting and during the time of appointment, to be approved and renewed each year by the bishop. Serve with an elder as mentor.</div>	<div>Order of Elders</div> <div><i>Serve in a Pastoral Charge or Extension Ministries</i></div> <div>Ordained to lifelong ministries of Word, Sacrament, Service, and Order (including DS's and bishops). Full clergy members of Annual Conference.</div> <div>Ordained itinerant clergy, serving where sent by the bishop, with continuing guaranteed appointment while in good standing.</div>	<div>Order of Deacons</div> <div><i>Serve on a local church staff or Appointment Beyond the Local Church</i></div> <div>Ordained to lifelong ministries of Word, Service, Justice and Compassion. Full clergy members of Annual Conference.</div> <div>Ordained non-itinerant clergy who seek their own appointment with bishop's approval.</div>
<div>Lay Servants and Lay Speakers</div> <div>Laypersons serving as volunteers in various ministry roles within a local church. Lay Speakers are further-trained lay servants. Screened through Charge Conference and district committees on Lay Servant Ministry. Equipped through Lay Servant Ministry courses.</div>	<div><i>Not to be confused with Lay Missioners,</i></div> <div>Hispanic laypersons serving part-time in Hispanic ministries and as planters of Hispanic congregations.</div> <div>Lay Missioners are equipped through training programs created under the National Hispanic Plan.</div>	<div>Ministry with the poor Music ministry Older adult ministry Spiritual Formation Urban ministry Youth ministry</div> <div>Screened through charge conference, DCOM and Board of Ordained Ministry.</div> <div>Equipped through prescribed coursework.</div>		<div>Screened through charge conference and District Committee on Ministry.</div> <div>Equipped through Course of Study for local pastors.</div>	<div>Screened through charge conference, District Committee on Ministry and Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.</div> <div>Equipped through seminary degree.</div>	<div>Screened through charge conference, District Committee on Ministry and Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.</div> <div>Equipped through graduate degree and/or seminary training.</div>

United Methodist Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences in the United States of America



- Jurisdiction Boundaries
- - - Conference Boundaries
- State Boundaries

- North Central Jurisdiction
- Northeastern Jurisdiction
- South Central Jurisdiction
- Southeastern Jurisdiction
- Western Jurisdiction

● Rio Grande Annual Conference is comprised of Spanish-language United Methodist congregations in the states of Texas and New Mexico.

● Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference is comprised of Native American congregations of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.