

Regionalization

This means we will remain united by our shared doctrine and theology. It better reflects our worldwide church and gives the geographic regions equal standing in decision-making and ability to do ministry in its own context.

Smaller Budget and Less Apportionments

The approved 2024-2028 budget is 38%-41% lower than the 2016 budget and reduces the Annual Conference apportionment rate. There's little impact to Asbury as we pay 10% of our tithes and offerings to the North Alabama Conference currently.

Revised Social Principles

The Social Principles are revised during each General Conference. The Social Principles are not church law, but an attempt for the church to speak to issues in the contemporary world from a biblical and theological foundation rooted in our Methodist traditions. The Social Principles span numerous topics including the environment, poverty and income inequality, human trafficking and slavery, marriage and divorce, human sexuality, gambling, alcohol and tobacco usage, war, health care, and other social issues.

Bishop Changes and Reassignments

General Conference eliminated the formula calculating bishops for jurisdictions and established minimum number of 5 per area. They also created a process for additional bishops if needed, but paid for by the jurisdiction. The Southeastern Jurisdiction will lose 2 bishops (one retirement and one reassignment) during this process. Bishops will be appointed to new annual conferences, including North Alabama in July, 2024 that normally takes effect the following September.

Full Communion with the Episcopal Church

This will allow active partnership and consultation between our two denominations. This does not mean we are merging or sharing decision making authority.

Changing Language about Human Sexuality

General Conference neutralized language about weddings and ordination by removing sections of the Book of Discipline that prohibit persons in same-gender relationships from marriage or ordination. This is a return to pre-1972 language in the Book of Discipline. Additional language was added to ensure no clergy or church can be compelled to perform or be prohibited from performing any marriage ceremony. This does not signal we are all suddenly on the same page in our understanding of human sexuality, but does provide space in the UMC for people with differing experiences and theological perspectives.

Disaffiliation Text Not Extended and Reaffiliation Policies Required

General Conference did not renew or provide additional pathways for local congregations to exit the denomination following the expiration of p2553. In North Alabama, the conference Trustees are committed to providing a gracious exit for local churches that wish to disaffiliate following General Conference. General Conference did require all annual conferences to develop a grace-filled policy for re-affiliation of churches that want to rejoin the denomination in the future.

Deacons Granted Sacramental Rights

Deacons, like Pastor Robert can now offer Holy Communion and conduct baptisms beginning January 1, 2025. This allows deacons to better serve in their ministry context.