

SECTION V.

Methodist "Dictionary"

Let us purpose in our hearts to sow words of life,
encouragement and edification.

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your
mouths, but only what is helpful for building others
up according to their needs, that it may benefit
those who listen."

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

UNITED METHODIST WORD LIST

Like most groups, The United Methodist Church has its own vocabulary. Our goal is to help you understand it and use it correctly--and used it with the enthusiasm for our heritage as United Methodists! Here is a quick reference guide to the language of the United Methodist Church:

Administrative Board

Has general oversight of the administration and program in larger churches in cooperation with the council on ministries. Meets at least quarterly.

Administrative Council

Responsible for planning and implementing the program of nurture and outreach in a local church as well as the administration of the church's life and work. Combines membership and work of an administrative board and a council on ministries.

American Bible Society

Agency recognized and supported by our church to translate, print and distribute the Holy Scriptures worldwide. Headquarters in New York City.

Annual Conference

The basic or fundamental body in our church; composed of ministerial members and an equal number of lay members; identified by a geographical area. There are now 73 annual conferences. Meets in session formally for several days in May or June.

Apostles Creed

Early affirmation of faith traditionally named from the twelve apostles of the earliest church. Used by John Wesley in his Sunday service and sent to American Methodism for its regular use, especially in sacramental services. Major affirmation of faith used today by United Methodists in worship, though not considered an official doctrine or creed of our church. Shared by nearly all Christian groups today though the wording varies slightly.

Appointment

Our word for the annual assignment by a bishop of a pastor to a station or charge or to another task called a "special appointment beyond the local church". Reading the appointments at an annual conference session means the bishop "fixes" or determines the assignments for the next year.

Apportionments

The portion or shared amount of the approved budget assigned each annual conference, district, charge and church as a fair share

of money to be contributed to maintain the work of the church. Each annual conference establishes its own formula for dividing its share among the congregations. Apportioned funds include amounts for ministerial support, administration, World Service and Conference Benevolence, and others as determined by the general and annual conferences.

Articles of Religion

The original statement of faith prepared by John Wesley in 1784 for the early church in America. The twenty-five articles are not to be revoked, altered or changed, nor are any new standards or rules to be set that are contrary to them.

Assurance, Christian

The firm persuasion or conviction of being in a state of salvation. Early Methodist conviction often spoken of today as the witness of the Spirit.

Atonement

The at-one-ment or reconciliation of sinful humans to God through divine action in the life, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism

A sacrament, administered by sprinkling, pouring or immersion in water, as a mark as a follower of Jesus Christ as well as a sign of regeneration or the new birth. Baptism is an initial step in membership in the Christian Church and parents or guardians are "to present their children to the Lord in Baptism at an early age".

Bishop

An elder elected by a jurisdictional or central conference to preside over an assigned episcopal area.

Cabinet

Term to designate the bishop and district superintendents when they meet to consider matters related to an annual conference, including appointments.

Central Conference

A division of our church outside the United States of America comparable to jurisdictional conferences in the United States. Currently 31 in number in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Charge, Pastoral

One or more churches organized together with a charge conference and minister who is pastor in charge.

Charge Conference

The meeting of the leaders of a pastoral charge with the district superintendent presiding. Normally meets at least annually.

Church Conference, Annual

A charge conference opened up to the total membership of the congregation(s).

Circuit

A pastoral charge of two or more churches served by a pastor. Sometimes called a cooperative parish.

Circuit Rider

The early name for a preacher who traveled extensively from clearing to clearing on the frontier, usually by horse over rough terrain in all kinds of weather. Preached in cabins, barns and fields. Might receive as much as \$80 per year salary. Some pastors still serve two or more congregations and ride their circuit by car today.

Class Meeting

Persons, usually about ten to twelve, joined together weekly for mutual support, self-examination, Bible study and prayer in the early Methodist societies in England and America. One of the unique dimensions of early Methodism. Currently being revived as covenant fellowship groups in some congregations today.

Commissioning

The term used for the consecration of deaconesses and missionaries.

Conference

The term used for the many groups and meeting of United Methodism at various levels of our system. Wesley's earliest conferences centered on three basic questions that remain primary in our conferences today:

1. What to teach and preach (the content of the gospel)
2. How to teach and witness (proclaiming the gospel)
3. What to do (the gospel in action)

Confirmation

Term accepted in 1964 among Methodists for the reception of members into the church. Membership training for youth is often identified as "confirmation class". Confirmation has come to mean the assumption of the vows of the Christian faith by the individual, vows that were originally accepted by parents or guardians at the time of baptism.

Connectionalism

The structure of our church that relates all members and congregations together. A distinctive mark of United Methodism.

Conversion or new birth

Essential belief of our biblical faith and Methodist heritage that persons must be born spiritually to enter the kingdom of God, that God in infinite grace reaches out through Jesus Christ to restore us unto God and into life abundant and eternal.

Council of Bishops

All our bishops, meeting at least annually, giving oversight and leadership to the entire church. When the bishops within a jurisdiction meet, they are a College of Bishops.

Council on Ministries

The committee at all levels of our church, including local, district, annual conference, jurisdiction and general church, responsible for considering, developing and coordinating the program for the church's mission.

Covenant Service

A special order of worship developed by John Wesley by which persons enter into or renew their covenant with God. Used today at the beginning of a new year or other appropriate time.

Cross and flame

The official symbol of The United Methodist Church.

Deacon

Clergy person ordained by an annual conference who is still in preparation for ministry or on probation. The words deacon, deaconess, diaconate, diaconal all spring from a common Greek word, diakonia, which means service.

Diaconal minister

Person consecrated by an annual conference who is in ministry such as education and music or who serves the need of persons in other ways.

The Book of Discipline

The book of law, administration, doctrine and organization of The United Methodist Church. Commonly called "The Discipline," it is revised only by quadrennial action of the General Conference.

District

Geographical division of an annual conference, originally presided over by a presiding elder, now called superintendent. The number of churches within a district varies.

District Superintendent

Elder appointed by a bishop to oversee the total ministry of the pastors and the churches in the communities of a district in its mission of witness and service in the world. May serve no more than six years in any consecutive nine years nor more than a total of twelve years.

Doctrine

Our beliefs centering on "scriptural Christianity."

Doxology

Words of praise, often sung to give glory and honor to God. Numerous texts, often with Biblical origin, are in use today.

Ecumenism

Affirming the unity of all Christians in the catholic or universal church and working in and for unity at all levels of church life.

Elder

An ordained minister who has completed the formal preparation for "the ministry of the Word, Sacrament, and Order" and has been elected a member in full connection with an annual conference.

Episcopal

Refers to the leadership of bishops. In United Methodism, a bishop is an elected elder and not a separate or distinctive order or class of ministers.

General Conference

Legislative body of our church, meeting in April or May once in four years, composed of not less than 600 more than 1000 delegates, one half clergy, one half lay member elected by the various annual conferences.

Grace

The power and presence of God's love for us in the Holy Spirit at all times and in all places. Central truth of United Methodist teaching.

Holy Communion

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, using bread, the staff of life and the fruit of the vine, the common drink of Bible times, as symbols of the body and blood of Jesus given for us. We are to remember with thanksgiving the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. We are invited to repent from sin, love our neighbors and lead a new life according to God's will. We experience the presence of Christ with us and the fellowship of other followers of Christ. Today United Methodists are finding renewed appreciation

and meaning in this sacred act and are generally sharing in it more often.

Hymnal

The authorized hymn book of our church through many editions and formats. John Wesley issued our first one in 1737. Second only to the Bible, the hymnal has a special place for the singing Methodists of several generations.

Itineracy

The unusual system our church uses in moving its ministers from charge to charge so that at all times every congregation has a pastor. John Wesley began the system and it continues to be a significant dimension of our church organization.

Jurisdictional Conferences

Five geographical divisions of our church in the United States: North Central, Northeastern, Southeastern, South Central and Western. Each jurisdiction meets every four years, elects new bishops and plans program. An equal number of clergy and lay delegates are elected by the annual conference.

Lay Delegate

Lay representative elected by a local church to annual conference or lay person elected by an annual conference to General Conference, or to a jurisdictional conference.

Lay Leader

Key individual elected by the charge conference to give overall leadership to the local church in close consultation with the pastor. Districts and annual conferences also select lay leaders.

Local Church

A connectional society of persons who have professed faith in Christ, have been baptized, and are members together to hear the Word of God, receive the sacraments, and carry forward the work Christ has committed to his church.

Local Pastor

Person licensed by the district committee on ordained ministry. Performs all the duties of a pastor while serving under appointment but is not ordained.

Methodism

The broad term used to identify persons and churches who trace their origins to John Wesley and the Holy Club at Oxford University. The name originated as a derisive term referring to the methodical way in which the Club members conducted their life of study, prayer and service.

Minister

Our church first identifies a general ministry that is the role of all baptized Christians. Then we affirm two specific ministries, the diaconal ministry of service and the ordained ministry set apart for the ministry of word, sacrament and order, sometimes commonly referred to as preacher or pastor and often identified today as clergy.

Missionary

A person called of God to serve the needs of persons and churches in many different ways in a variety of settings across the nation and world, and who has been recruited, approved, prepared and commissioned by our General Board of Global Ministries to serve in a program or project that is also approved.

Ordination

The name we give to the solemn act of setting persons aside for the office of ordained minister. Always conducted by a bishop and normally a part of an annual conference session, the ordination is finalized by prayers and the laying on of hands.

Pastor-Parish Relations (Staff-Parish Relations)

A group of five to nine lay persons elected as representative of the total charge responsible for the many dimensions of effective relationship between the pastor and the members of the parish. Also responsible for identifying, selecting and supporting persons for candidacy for ministry.

Petition

Request submitted by any organization, minister, or lay member of The United Methodist Church to make changes in the program, structure, administration, or finances of our church, and considered by the General Conference.

Quadrennium

Our church functions in a four-year cycle for program and budget purposes, normally beginning January 1 after a General Conference session. Bishops and other leaders serve on boards and agencies for this period, also.

Quadrilateral

The term used by our church to define the four main sources and guidelines for doing theology and determining faith: Scripture, tradition, experience and reason.

We share with all other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source for our faith and doctrine.

Tradition affirms the significance of the faith and interpretation of the biblical revelation by the universal church throughout its history.

Experience identifies the personal dimension of God's action in our lives, how God makes known love and direction for each person in a particular way.

Reason allows for the critical analysis of our faith and doctrine, and for careful thought to all truth from God.

Sanctification

The perfection of love by God's grace in our lives to make us holy and Christlike persons. A distinctive United Methodist doctrine.

Stewardship

Care of all God has given us, including our environment, our time and talent, our minds and bodies, and our money and resources. Wesley gave this advice to his fellow workers about time: "Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary." About money Wesley said: "Gain all you can...save all you can...give all you can".

Trustees, Board of

Persons elected to hold title to and care for property. May serve the local church, district, annual conference, or the general church. In the local church, trustees must include at least three and not more than nine persons, with at least one third women.

World Methodist Council

Worldwide association of churches belonging to the Methodist tradition, organized in 1881, including now The United Methodist Church and sixty-three other denominations, in ninety different nations, with 25,141,663 members. Has no legal authority over its members, but seeks to strengthen the faith and witness of all the churches.

World Service

The term used for the apportioned fund that supports much of the program work of the general agencies of the church, such as missions and education.

