

Constitutional Amendments One-Page FAQ

What is the General Conference?

The General Conference is the governing body that sets official policy and speaks for the entire denomination. It is overseen by the Council of Bishops and includes lay and clergy delegates from each annual conference around the world.

What is The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church?

The Book of Discipline serves as The UMC's organizational manual, containing doctrinal standards, the Constitution, foundational theological documents, policies, and procedures governing its mission, ministry, administration, and organization.

What is the UMC Constitution?

Adopted in 1968, the UMC Constitution was approved as part of the Plan of Union for the merger of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church. It is the basic organizational outline of the denomination. It also establishes our doctrine, the office and role of the bishop, the structure of Annual, Central, Jurisdictional, and General Conferences, and the Judicial Council as the body to rule on matters of church law. The United Methodist Constitution is Part I of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

How does the Constitution get amended?

Any congregation, conference, organization, or person, including a delegate at General Conference, may submit a petition to General Conference to change The Book of Discipline, which includes the Constitution. Most legislation requires a simple majority vote to pass. Amendments to the Constitution require a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a two-thirds aggregate vote of the lay and clergy members present and voting of the annual conferences.

What's an aggregate vote?

Eligible voting members of the annual conference, (lay members, elders in full connection, and deacons in full connection) vote on whether to ratify amendments approved by the General Conference. The Yes and No votes are then counted from each annual conference. Amendments must be affirmed by 2/3 of all the eligible voting members who have voted across all annual conferences. Regardless of if most annual conferences vote in favor, an amendment must get 66.67% support of the total number of individual votes to become church law.

How many amendments are we voting on this year?

This year, there are four amendments: Ballot 1 is about Regionalization. Ballot 2 is about adding to the categories that cannot be used to exclude membership in The UMC. Ballot 3 is about strengthening The UMC stance on racial justice. Ballot 4 is about clarifying the language of the education requirements for clergy members who are eligible to vote for clergy delegates to the General Conference. You can learn more about the four ballots at 2025.michiganumc.org/constitutional-amendments.

Can I offer an tiny tweak to an amendment? Can I change a word or two?

Sorry, no. The amendments can be debated at the annual conference and cannot be modified in any way. All annual conferences must vote on identical language.

When will we know the results?

The results of our and other annual conferences' votes will not be shared publicly to protect the integrity of the worldwide voting process. The results will be announced in early November 2025 by the Council of Bishops.