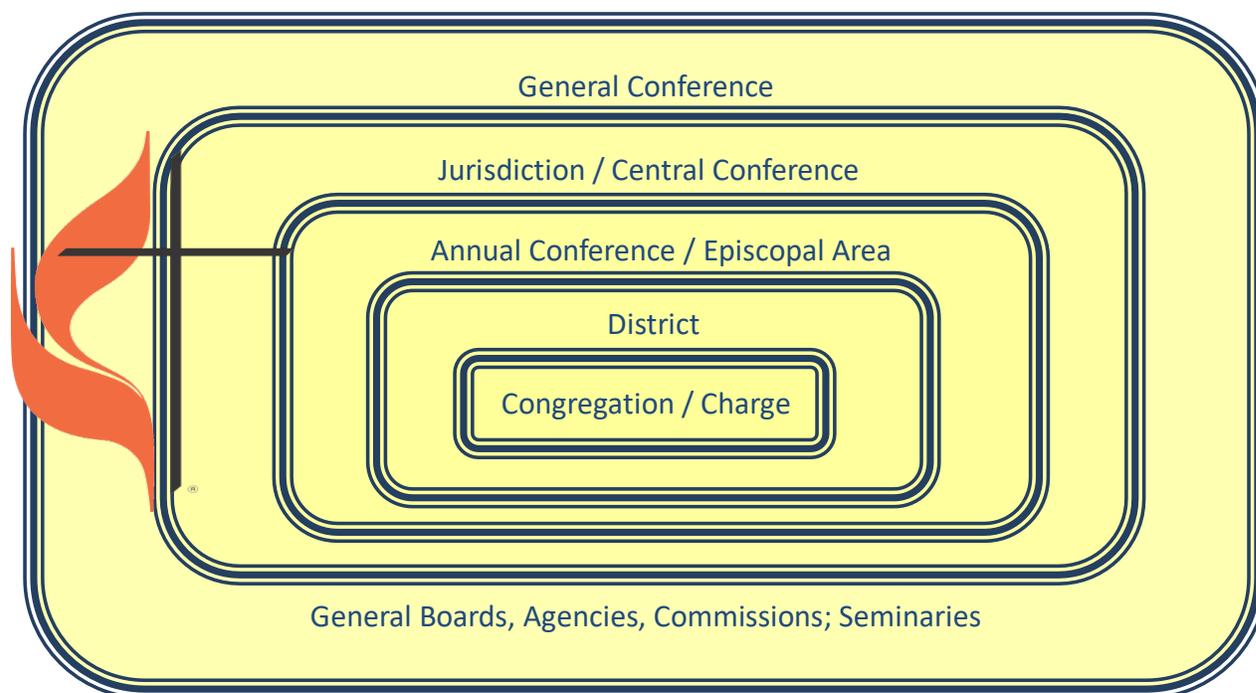


## The United Methodist Church Structure and Organization



Copyright 2011 Barbara Dick. Used by permission.

**Congregation / Charge:** Individual or small group of local congregations served by appointed clergy and elected lay leadership. Opportunities for serving needs of local community through gifted ministry.

**District:** Geographic area with appointed clergy superintendent; opportunities for collaborative leadership and resourcing.

**Annual Conference / Episcopal Area:** An annual conference is both a geographic area of congregations and districts, with elected bishop and resource facilities and staff AND the annual meeting of lay and clergy members of the annual conference, which sets vision, budget, and policy. An episcopal area may be made up of one or more annual conferences (similar to church and charge).

**Central Conference:** Global areas of congregations, with elected bishop and resource facilities and staff (West Germany, Poland, Philippines, etc.).

**Jurisdiction:** Geographic area of annual conferences. Jurisdictional conference, held every four years, elects and appoints bishops and sets annual conference boundaries. There are five jurisdictions in the U.S.

**General Conference:** Global denomination of annual conferences and central conferences, with resource agencies and commissions that serve the entire church AND the meeting of the global church that occurs every four years to set policy and polity for the denomination.

- Structure is similar to U.S. government – General Conference is top legislative body; nine-member Judicial Council is "supreme court"; Council of Bishops is similar to executive branch (from [umc.org](http://umc.org)).
- General Conference legislates, sets policy.
- 600–1000 delegates + agency staff, professors, college of bishops, council of bishops, staff, students, Judicial Council.
- Rewrites *Book of Discipline*. New *Book of Resolutions*. Can update *Book of Worship, Hymnal*.
- General Boards and Agencies serve and take action on behalf of the entire church.
- Seminaries and UM-related colleges are certified by the church to educate elders and deacons for ordination.