

## 1. Welcome, Introductions, Syllabus, General Overview

### 2. Details of General Conference 2008

- 990 delegates (3 clergy and 3 laity from Kansas East Conference)
- April 23<sup>rd</sup> through May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Fort Worth Convention Center in Fort Worth, TX
- Meets every 4 years (quadrennial)
- Online link: [gc2008.umc.org](http://gc2008.umc.org) – to gain news and video feeds



### 3. United Methodist Polity (way of being ordered and governed)

#### a. Basic descriptions/characteristics of our way of organizing ourselves:

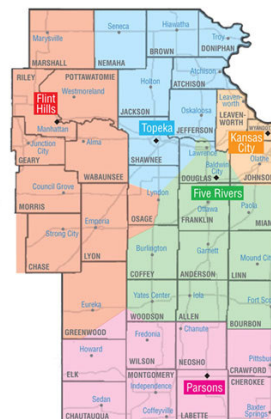
- Local** - basic structure is local churches
- Connectional** - at many levels
- Missional & Global** - focused on serving the world
- Episcopal** - having Bishops
- Itinerate** - moving of clergy persons

b. **“Polity”** (having a similar root as politics) is related to how the United Methodist Church is structured, and relates to its many members, local churches, conferences, and various boards and agencies in the worldwide church. It is related to how we govern and order ourselves.

c. The basic structure is somewhat related to our democratic system of the USA, in that we can make changes, elect leaders and advocates, write legislation and resolutions so as to reform the mission and ministry of the church. We even have Judicial, Executive, and Legislative areas.

#### d. The Basic Organization of the United Methodist Church (p.12-19 of UM booklet)

- Local Church** - This is the most basic connection within our polity, and the locale where disciple-making is the most effective. It is also from the local churches where we call persons into ministry both in lay and clergy forms. All candidates for ordination come from a local church.
- Annual Conference (and Central Conference)** - Annually the clergy of the conference and lay representatives of the local churches of the conference gather to fulfill multiple roles within the connection. The annual conferences normally last between two and four days, a time made up of worship, celebration of ministries, setting the budget, formulating legalization, ordaining clergy, celebrating retirements and persons' lives, and finding ways to become the God's people in ministry and mission in our local areas. The Kansas East Annual Conference is normally held at Baker University at the beginning of June. We have 6 clergy and 6 lay representatives from Olathe: Grace UMC.



- III. **Districts (and District Superintendents)** - These are subdivisions of the Conference, which serve to help link local churches together more effectively. The persons who report to the Bishop and offer a vital link between the local churches and the larger conference are the District Superintendents. They are ordained elders giving connectional and supportive ministries. Our district is the Kansas City District, and Michael Chamberlain is our DS.
- IV. **Bishops** - These are ordained elders who are elected by the Jurisdictional Conferences to a ministry of teaching, leadership, oversight, and general supervision of an Episcopal Area. Bishop Scott Jones is the Bishop of the Kansas Area - for Kansas East and West Conferences and his main office is located in Wichita, with space in Topeka.
- V. **General Conference** - Every four years for 11 days between 600 and 1,000 delegates made up of ½ clergy and ½ laity from every conference in the worldwide church gather to legislate about the whole structure and scope of the United Methodist Church. This is the highest legislative body of the UMC. It sets policy, approves legislation, sets regulations that find their way into our *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Resolutions*. Any clergy or laity of the UMC can submit legislation.
- VI. **Jurisdictional Conference** - This conference also occurs every four years, but a little later than the General Conference. The delegation to this conference are all those who attended the General Conference, plus an additional exact number of representatives from each AC (thus 200% of the GC goes to the JC, still ½ clergy and ½ laity). The function of this conference is five-fold: a) elect bishops to episcopacy; b) elect members and directors of the general boards and agencies of the UMC; c) support of mission agencies within the jurisdiction; d) set the boundaries of annual conferences; and e) hear appeal process for trials of clergy persons within the annual conferences. We are within the South Central Jurisdiction.
- VII. **Central Conference** - There are seven geographic areas outside the territorial United States, each composed of annual conferences as determined by the General Conference. Central Conferences have responsibilities similar to those of Jurisdictional Conferences. The seven central conferences are in Europe, Africa and the Philippines. (We also have missional conferences that have similar functions as annual conferences.)
- VIII. **General Agencies** - There are thirteen agencies that provide much support to the diverse ministries of our worldwide church. This includes our ministries of education, evangelism, worship, discipleship, and the like (see p. 13, 19, 25-27 of the UM booklet).
- e. Work through example structure for Olathe: Grace. See also below the map with the various Districts of Kansas East Conference outlined. Note the Journal of the 2006 Annual Conference gathering of the Kansas East Conference.
- f. Note the statistics on page 19 of the UM booklet to help understand the need for such a system. Are there other systems (Congregational Polity, Papal and Episcopal Polity, etc.)?

#### **4. What to look for in these next two weeks from GC 2008?**

- a. Consideration of a **new Hymnal** – to be published maybe in 2013. Our current hymnal was published in 1989.
- b. Consideration of adjusting the General Church's **budget** to focus more on the areas of **leadership development, congregational growth, global health, and poverty.**
- c. How do change the **tone of GC** – away from hot debates related to homosexuality, abortion, and divestment, and towards the above four issues. Rev. Tom Berlin writes that we ought to allot specific amount of time (at the end) to these issues, so as not to let them take over the whole conference.
- d. Consideration of a **new Social Creed** – one able to be sung.
- e. As the UMC grows more and **more world-wide**, how do we take into account our fellow disciples around the world? Legislation to change language from “central conference” to “regional conference” and then at a later GC make the US a “regional conference.”
- f. **Over 1,500 legislative petitions** having to do with *The Book of Discipline* or *The Book of Resolutions*.

#### **5. How to stay connected?**

- a. General Conference 2008 Official website: [www.gc2008.umc.org](http://www.gc2008.umc.org); this will include live video of the conference. You can also read regular news from the UMC.
- b. Kansas East Conference will have an update that can be sent out via email, go here to sign up: [www.kansaseast.org/stay\\_connected.asp](http://www.kansaseast.org/stay_connected.asp)
- c. General Conference 101: short form (on [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)), long session (take multiple modules of learning via [www.umcom.org](http://www.umcom.org) – it is called Exploring General Conference.
- d. Blogs: a local clergy will be writing on GC every day – Rev. Mark Holland – <http://trinityunitedmethodist.wordpress.com/> (you can get regular feeds from this blog).

#### **6. What do you hope to learn from this class?**

#### **7. Questions, Looking Ahead, and Prayer**

- Please try to find out what it is being discussed in the coming days – so that you can ask Frank questions next week!
- Read over the materials that were handed out this first session!