

COMPARISON OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH & GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

There are some areas where the two denominations are very similar:

- The **connectional conference structure** is very similar with both having General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference (called Regional Conference in the GMC); Annual Conference, District Conference, and Charge/Church Conference in the local church.
- The basic **local church organization** is very similar with both having a Church Council, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees, and Nominations.
- Both groups practice **baptism** of infants, children, youth, and adults with the traditional Wesleyan understanding of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.
- The UMC and the GMC both emphasize the importance of the **confirmation** process for children to make a profession of faith.
- The **appointment system of pastors** is very similar with the bishop making appointments in consultation with the Cabinet and the local church. The GMC seems to give the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee more input on the suitability of a proposed appointment and the opportunity to raise concerns if there are any.
- Both denominations have **District Superintendents** who oversee the pastors and churches within a district, but in the GMC they are called **Presiding Elders** (an historical term used in the Methodist movement in the past).

There are some areas where the two denominations are slightly different:

- The **mission of the church** in the UMC is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” whereas in the GMC it is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.”
- **Bishops** provide leadership in both denominations but there are some differences. In the UMC, bishops are elected for life by the jurisdictional conference. In the GMC, they have term limits and the process for election has not yet been determined. In both denominations, the bishops’ salaries and benefits are set by the general church, but in the UMC they are paid through a general church apportionment while in the GMC they are paid from the annual conference budget. Bishops are considered an employee of the GMC annual conference.
- The **educational requirements for pastors** have some differences in that the GMC does not require a seminary degree to be ordained as an elder or deacon, but there is a lengthy list of required courses that could be fulfilled with a seminary degree.
- The UMC teaching on **human sexuality** affirms the sacred worth of all people and states that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. The GMC says human sexuality is a gift of God to be exercised only between a man and woman with the covenant of marriage and gender is defined at birth.

There are some key areas where the two denominations are very different:

- The biggest difference between the two denominations will be their expectations of local churches and clergy as it relates to **theological beliefs** and what is taught in churches. The UMC espouses a broad tent perspective as it relates to clergy and local church beliefs so that pastors and churches can preach and teach views that fall from one end of the theological spectrum to the other, from very conservative to very progressive. In the GMC, there is a requirement that churches will teach and preach traditional biblical and Wesleyan doctrines as outlined in the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. This is referred to as “congregational fidelity.” If churches fail to teach orthodox, Wesleyan theology they can be removed from the denomination. The same kind of standards apply also to clergy.
- Another major difference is the GMC is a **new movement** while the UMC has been around since 1968. The GMC is currently being birthed so the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* is the starting point, and emphasis should be placed on the word “transitional.” The GMC will hold its first convening conference within 12-18 months of its formation and finish the work on its Discipline. There could be small changes or significant ones. On the other hand, if many conservatives exit the UMC, there likely will be changes on the horizon at its next General Conference.
- **Local church property** is held in trust by the annual conference for the denomination in the UMC. In the GMC, there is no trust clause, and the local church has full ownership and control of their property.
- The **ordination of pastors** looks similar but there are some significant differences. In the UMC someone sensing a call to ministry enters a candidacy process, followed by commissioning, and then ordination as an elder OR they can go through the course of study process to become a local pastor. In the GMC, there is only one process that involves candidacy, ordination as a deacon, and then possible ordination as an elder. If someone is called to be the lead pastor of a church, they will be moving eventually toward ordination as an elder. There are no local pastors in the GMC.
- Both denominations use an **apportionment system**. Apportionments are capped in the GMC at 1.5% for general church ministry and 5% for annual conference ministry. The percentage is calculated off a local church’s operating income from the previous year. In the UMC, there is no cap and a local church’s portion is calculated off operating expenses from a 3-year average of prior years.
- Apportionments will likely be lower for most churches in the GMC, but **apportionment accountability** will be much higher. Apportionments are expected to be paid monthly and a church can be asked to leave the denomination if they have a persistent pattern of not paying their apportionments. The UMC requires apportionment payments but does not have a clear accountability process.
- Both denominations have **social statements** that deal with pertinent social issues in their respective Disciplines. The UMC has Social Principles and the GMC has Social Witness. The major difference lies in the fact that the Social Principles are not binding

on clergy or the local churches in the UMC. But in the GMC, clergy and local churches must agree to support and teach the Social Witness.

- Ordained elders are **guaranteed an appointment** in the UMC but not in the GMC.
- **Clergy retirement** is mandatory at 72 in the UMC. The GMC has no mandatory retirement, but a pastor may choose “senior status” which removes the obligation to be appointed.

There are many other differences outlined in the Disciplines of each denomination, but we have tried to capture some of the key ones in this document.