

CHAPTER 7



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Just as the people in your local church are connected in the spirit and love of Jesus Christ, so are the people called United Methodist connected across the world.

- Your local church is connected with your **district**.
- Your district is connected with our **Annual Conference**.
- Our Oklahoma Annual Conference is connected to the **South Central Jurisdiction**, which is a part of four other Jurisdictions.
- The Jurisdictions connects every four years with a **General Conference** where Methodists from around the world join to worship and make decisions affecting the entire Methodist Church.

At each level, we join together for Holy Conferencing beginning with your local church's charge conference. At each level both clergy and laity are present with voting privileges, having been elected by their peers to represent them in the decision making process.

The **College of Bishops**, which is made up Bishops of all Annual Conferences, meets in order to challenge, interpret decisions, and inspire the clergy and laity. They are connected to their District Superintendents through their cabinet, and to the clergy persons in each district who shepherd the local church.

The **Book of Discipline** states in Part 3 – Ministry of All Christians, Section II, Paragraph 130:

“The Journey of a Connectional People – Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.

We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith, including our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (P. 103); by sharing together a constitutional polity, including a leadership of general superintendency; by sharing a common mission, which we seek to carry out by working together and through conferences that reflect the inclusive and missional character of our fellowship; by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.”

The “interactive relationships” referred to above, through holy conferencing, are what sets United Methodists apart. We are challenged in scripture as stated in:

Matthew 25:40, “When you did it to these my brothers you were doing it to me!”

Matthew 28:19, “Go and make disciples in all nations...”

Book of Discipline, Paragraph 123 “The Global Nature of Our Mission”,

Book of Discipline, Paragraph 124 “Our Mission in the World”.

To meet these challenges, we join together at every level... local, district, annual conference, and general church, to make decisions about our mission and ministry through a democratic methodical process.

God calls each of us to be His hands and feet in our daily lives in mission, and we are called as a local church to do even more with our gifts, time and energy together that we could not do alone.

Just as we believe God calls us to be in mission beyond the walls of our local church in our community, we believe God calls us into Mission in the world.

- Through our connection, we join as *local churches* in the district for mission that the local churches could not accomplish alone. We buy land to build new churches in growing areas, we adopt area Campus Ministries, we organize district VIM teams, and we train our people to be in mission.
- The *districts* join together to support conference missions that the districts could not accomplish alone. We support at risk children in the Circle of Care. We support the aging at Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Clinton and Enid. We support the Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries all across Oklahoma. We assist the poor and marginalized at Cookson Hills in northeast Oklahoma, Restore Hope in Tulsa, NSO and Skyline Ministries in Oklahoma City. In addition we support Camping Ministry and Campus Ministries, and build new churches in growing areas.
- Conferences connect together in *Jurisdictions* to elect bishops and provide opportunities for ministry. The South Central Jurisdiction helps fund Lydia Patterson Institute whose mission is to educate poor Hispanics students and send them into the world in ministry. Together we educate youth at Southern Methodist University, provide for the SMU Campus Ministries, as well as Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center for Jurisdictional training and retreats, and nurture a growing number of Korean Pastors and congregations.
- Jurisdictions connect through the *General Church* to send God's word and love around the world through our efforts together. We give opportunities for a growing church in Africa to have leadership through the African University. We give agricultural and spiritual assistance in Bolivia. We provide for street children in the Philippines. We commission missionaries to go and touch people in God's name for us around the world. The list goes on for God's people called United Methodist at work on every continent made possible by our connection beginning with your local people.

At every level, decisions are made, through holy conferencing, by representatives chosen by their peers, which include every member of the local congregation as the foundation. Such is the gift of being a United Methodist. Your ministry, through the United Methodist Connection, inspired by God's Spirit, extends around the world and we can answer God's call of truly "going into the world."

SPECIFIC ACTIONS:

- Sponsor someone from your church on a VIM experience.
- Take a VIM team from your church to a state, regional or world mission.
- Encourage & make available for people to read the Contact or United Methodist

websites.

- Utilize DVD resources available through the media center that talk about Oklahoma Conference ministries at your church council and other events.
- Invite someone to speak at your church for an event from any ministry you want to encourage. (See the conference directory for telephone numbers and email addresses.)
- Take a group from your church to visit one of our conference ministries.
- Take a new person to District Conference or Annual Conference.
- Share the “heart stories” of God’s work through United Methodist.

DISCUSSION:

- What specific ministries does your church do that you could accomplish alone?
- What involvement has your church had in conference ministries?
- What conference ministries speak to your heart?
- How can you help your people understand the importance of the United Methodist Connection?