

Gulf Breezes

Monthly Newsletter of Gulf Cove United Methodist Church

Helping Everyone

EXPERIENCE EMBRACE ENGAGE

Jesus & Community

From the Pastor:

Hello Church, as we start the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, I want to give a short primer on what exactly General Conference is. I hope you find this fruitful and informative. – Mike Weaver

The United Methodist Church has no pope. But it does have a General Conference — the only body that can set official policy and speak for the international denomination. General Conference brings together lay and clergy delegates from four continents whose decisions will affect how millions of United Methodists do church for years to come. Think of the two-week gathering as a combination of a United Nations General Assembly, a U.S. congressional session and a time of rousing Christian worship. The coming General Conference, now scheduled for April 23-May 3 in Charlotte, North Carolina, comes at a particularly momentous time.

General Conference typically gathers every four years. But because of the COVID pandemic, the assembly could not meet in 2020. That means the last regular session was in May 2016 — nearly eight years ago. In the interim, the denomination has seen a quarter of its U.S. churches depart under a disaffiliation policy that began in 2019 and expired at the end of 2023. What comes next for the international denomination will be largely

up to General Conference itself. Here are answers to frequently asked questions about the big event.

What does General Conference do? General Conference is the denomination's highest legislative body. As such, it has the authority to make revisions to the denomination's Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions. The Discipline is the denomination's governing document that contains its doctrine, constitution, church law, rules of organization and procedures. The Book of Resolutions contains the denomination's positions on current social issues. Resolutions expire after eight years unless General Conference readopts them.

General Conference approves the four-year budget allocating apportionments — shares of church giving — for denomination-wide ministries around the globe. General Conference also sets the formula used for apportioning the budget to annual conferences, the denomination's regional bodies, which in turn ask for apportionments from local churches.

In addition, the assembly approves theological statements on subjects such as baptism and communion. General Conference also elects members of the Judicial Council, the denomination's top court; members of the commission that plans General Conference; and

some members of other denominational leadership bodies. The Judicial Council will be on hand throughout General Conference to weigh in on questions about General Conference actions including whether legislation is in line with the denomination's constitution.

Who can propose legislation to General Conference? The Book of Discipline states that any United Methodist organization, clergy member or lay member may submit a General Conference petition — basically the United Methodist equivalent of a bill before a legislature. All told, the coming General Conference has received 1,099 total valid petitions — including 352 new petitions submitted since General Conference's delay in 2020. Some of those petitions were submitted by people who have since left The United Methodist Church. The Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary, plans to provide a report at the start of General Conference identifying those petitions.

Who votes at General Conference? The coming General Conference plans to have 862 voting delegates — half clergy and half lay. Of the elected delegates, 55.9% are from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe (including Russia) and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church. General Conference organizers are working to help delegates obtain the needed visas to attend. Interpreters will support this multinational and multicultural body in nine languages including American Sign Language. Written materials will be available in the four official General Conference languages: English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese.

How are the delegates chosen? Annual conferences — the denomination's regional bodies consisting of lay and clergy voters from multiple churches — each elect an allotment of delegates. The United Methodist Church's constitution requires that laity elect the lay delegates, and clergy elect their fellow clergy.

The United Methodist Church's constitution also mandates that each annual conference gets at least two General Conference delegates — one lay and one clergy. Beyond this mandatory minimum, conferences are allotted their delegate slates using a formula based on their lay and clergy membership numbers. The delegation allocations for the coming General Conference in Charlotte are based on the membership data available in 2017, well before the COVID pandemic upended so much of church life.

Most annual conferences also elect reserves who participate in General Conference as needed to assure that each annual conference is fully represented throughout the session. The denomination currently has 53 annual conferences in the U.S., and 80 annual conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. But at the time of delegate elections in 2018 and 2019, two U.S. conference mergers had yet to take effect. That means the four legacy conferences involved in those mergers will each seat a delegation in Charlotte.

What is the role of bishops at General Conference? United Methodist bishops have a limited role during the assembly. They preside at General Conference sessions but do not have voice or vote. This means they cannot make motions or advocate for positions from the floor. Bishops do preach during worship. South Carolina Conference Bishop L. Jonathan Holston also will deliver the episcopal address on behalf of the Council of Bishops. However, bishops usually know well the delegate experience. Many previously served as delegates themselves before their election to the episcopacy.

How often do those attending join in worship? General Conference opens and closes with Christian worship. Worship services also open each day's proceedings, often with bishops preaching. On April 28 — the Sunday of General Conference — delegates and others at the gathering are encouraged to attend services at local United Methodist churches. Charlotte is home to multiple United Methodist congregations.

How does legislation become church law? The first stop for legislation under consideration at the coming General Conference is one of 14 legislative committees or the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. The standing committee is a permanent General Conference committee that deals with matters pertaining to church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

Petitions approved by committee then move on to the full body of delegates for possible further revision and a vote. The Book of Discipline requires that all petitions must receive a vote in their assigned committee and all legislation approved by a committee must receive a vote by the full General Conference plenary. It is possible for legislative committees and the plenary to vote down multiple petitions in bulk. Likewise, the General Conference plenary can approve multiple petitions in bulk if they qualify for the consent calendar. Delegates routinely pray over their decision-making. They are to vote based on their own conscience as moved by the Holy Spirit.

What percentage of votes does legislation need to pass? Most legislation requires only a simple majority of General Conference delegates to pass. Amendments to the denomination’s 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 in the annual conferences.

Changes to the denomination’s doctrinal standards, which includes basic Christian tenets such as belief in Christ’s resurrection and the Trinity, require at least a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by three-fourths aggregate vote of the lay and clergy members present and voting in the annual conferences. The United Methodist Church has never altered its doctrinal standards before, and no proposals before the coming General Conference seek to alter them.

When does newly passed legislation take effect? Legislation approved by the coming General Conference will become effective Jan. 1 next

year, unless otherwise specified. However, amendments to the denomination’s constitution only take effect after the Council of Bishops certifies their ratification. In practice, that means any new amendment will not take effect until the bishops meet in spring 2026.



Congratulations to our graduating senior this year Joslyn Coleman. Joslyn graduates from The Academy in Port Charlotte on May 14.



Our Leadership Board has committed to providing gifts, snacks, and notes of encouragement for one day during this week. We will take up an offering, and have a card for people to sign. We will have our young people decorate gift bags, and fill them with small items. We will provide drinks and snacks for the day as well. Please let our police know that we support them by giving to this project any amount you feel called to give, so we may purchase these gifts. Thank you!

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

What CAN you do?

Greeters/Ushers -sign-up at the back of the sanctuary or contact the office.

Hospitality -Help when you can- one week or one month. It's up to you! Host in our serving room by keeping drinks and treats filled and cleaning up along the way or after the last service. Sign-up in the back of the sanctuary or call the church office at 941-697-1747.

Barn Boys -Mowing and trimming-contact John Furtado at 941-830-0121.

First Impressions -Weeding and pruning -contact Ken Priest at 941-769-0581.





EHH PANTRY NEEDS -As of 4/16/2024, Englewood Helping Hand is in need of the following: instant potatoes, pancake mix,

condiments, canned beans (black, baked, refried, pinto, etc.), canned pasta, canned chili, ramen, shelf stable milk, canned tuna, canned chicken, pancake syrup, bars of soap, toilet paper. Donations can be placed in the EHH bin in the Narthex entry. Thank you for helping your neighbors in need.

Please make sure food is not expired, as EHH cannot hand these out.



LATEST FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

	MARCH	YTD
Total Spendable Income Received *	\$69,898	\$140,827
Operating Expenses	40,828	127,602
Surplus/Deficit	29,070	13,225
Reserve Money Used	0	0
Designated Funds Received	4,855	24,987

*March income includes \$25,000 received from the sale of the easement to FPL.

COMMUNION OFFERING ENVELOPES

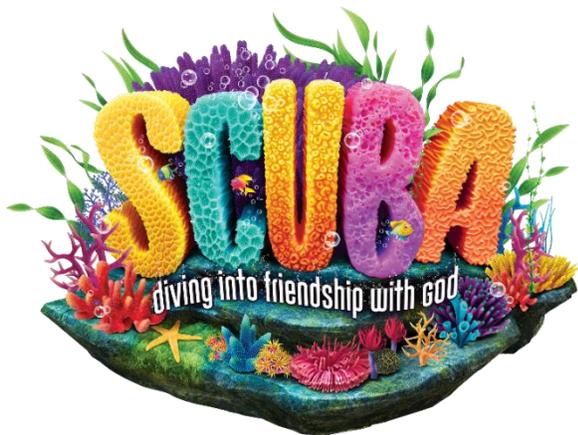
Each month a different fund is chosen by our church leadership to receive these extra funds. If you wish to give above and beyond your usual tithe for May, the Communion Offering is designated for **Vacation Bible School**.

SECOND SUNDAY ~ SECOND MILE GIVING is

another opportunity to go above and beyond your normal giving to support the church. This collection always goes to our reserve fund, so that we may pay our bills when gifts and tithes will not cover our regular monthly expenses.



Our church leadership has committed to providing a minimum of \$225 per year for three years to support this mission. Please pray about what you can do to help. For more information check out their website: <https://zoeempowers.org> Zoe Empowers - Helping Vulnerable Children & Youth-Led Families



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL ~ This year's program is SCUBA and will be held on Monday-Friday, June 10-14, from 5:30-8:30pm. If you're interested in helping in any way (we usually need around 40 volunteers), please contact Holly Tozer or Dana Hanson.



The Barn Boys and the Crafty Ladies would like to thank everyone for a successful spring sale!

Sue Haring has volunteered to maintain our church website along with Kathy Mortensen, our website designer. Thank you both for using your talents in service to our church.

CAN WE REACH YOU? ARE YOU NEW TO THE CHURCH? If you are new to GCUMC, or if any of your contact information (email, phone number, address, etc.) has changed, please pick up a Contact sheet in the back of the sanctuary. Your completed form can either be placed in the offering plate or delivered to the church office.



Please welcome Sue Betz as our Interim Music Director. We are glad to have her in this role.



The Closet of Hope at Gulf Cove United Methodist Church offers free clothing for children and adults of all ages.

The Closet is open the first and third Saturdays of the month (except holidays), from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Individuals must present a photo ID at the door which reflects their residence in Charlotte County or in Englewood, North Port, or Venice in Sarasota County. Families are limited to one bag of clothing each month. Donations can be brought to the Closet on Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m. or when they are open on Saturdays. Gulf Cove UMC (941.697.1747) is located at 1100 S. McCall Road in the Gulf Cove area of Port Charlotte, 3/4 mile south of the Myakka River on SR 776.

NEW SCHEDULE ~ (subject to change)



May 19*, 12:15pm at church – we will be having a potato bar potluck.



*May 19 is the 3rd Sunday

June 9, 12:30pm, North Port Perkins.

The schedule was adjusted because the 2nd Sunday in May is Mother's Day, and the 2nd Sunday in June is the day before VBS and we didn't want to be in the way at the church.

The plan is to continue to alternate between church potlucks and lunch at Perkins for the remainder of the year.

Please call **Nancy Spaulding at 386.868.8604** to RSVP and to sign up for your potato bar potluck offering.



Betsy Mac Donald	5/05
Leah Wilson	5/05
Ray Roy	5/06
Morgan Katsarelas	5/06
Susan Matthews	5/06
BJ Saville	5/08
Elaye Wong	5/08
Don Teague	5/10
Barbara Garafolo	5/10
Jim Marshall	5/10
Jim Brown	5/12
Debbie Jamison	5/12
Zander Alvarez	5/15
Marian Brumley	5/19
Rebecca Eyer	5/20
Terry Hixson	5/21
Debi Teune	5/21
Joan Priest	5/21
Alice Horecki	5/22
Paige Kuhns	5/24
Carol McGuire	5/24
Beth Clarke	5/25
John Dorotics	5/27
Barb Carlson	5/28
Grace Gray	5/28
Lily Crandall	5/29
Chris Andrews	5/30
Janet Rowe	5/31



Jerry & Judy Spurgeon	5/15
Jim & Lisa Brown	5/26



MAY SERMON SERIES	
5/5	What Difference Does It Make? John 14:15-21
5/12	Where the Church Gets its Power John 17:6-19
5/19	Here it Comes! Acts 2:1-13
5/26	Truly Born Again? John 3: 1-21