

# United Methodists in the Non-Western World (with Focus on Africa)

## **Topics**

- **United Methodism Around the World**
- **Focus on Africa**
- **Hearing from:**
  - **African United Methodists and**
  - **Those who have worked with African UMC**

## Pop Quiz:

As of 2016 the United Methodist (UM) Church outside the United States had approximately **7.54 million members**.

➤ How many UM members are there in Europe and Russia (not including the United Kingdom)?

- a. 575,000
- b. 121,000
- c. 1.35 million

➤ In Africa?

- a. 7.2 million
- b. 3.6 million
- c. 4.9 million

➤ **In Asia and Australia?**

- a. 864,000**
- b. Too few to count**
- c. 240,000**

➤ **In South America?**

- a. 92,000**
- b. 637,000**
- c. Too few to count**

## United Methodists Around the World

|                          | <b>US</b> | <b>Africa, Asia &amp; Europe</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Lay Members              | 6,951,278 | 5,663,340                        |
| Clergy Members           | 44,080    | 10,394                           |
| Baptized Members         | 571,507   | N/A                              |
| Local/Organized Churches | 31,867    | 12,255                           |
| Districts                | 419       | 451                              |
| Annual Conferences       | 56        | 80                               |
| Bishops/Episcopal Areas  | 46        | 20                               |
| Jurisdictions            | 5         | N/A                              |
| Central Conferences      | N/A       | 7                                |

*\*Above 2016 statistics are the most recent available from General Council on Finance and Administration.*

**The United Methodist Church is in mission in more than 136 countries.**

677 Mission personnel supported through the General Board of Global Ministries

125,000 Volunteers in Mission worldwide (approximate annually)

177 Active Deaconesses and Home Missioners commissioned for service in the United States

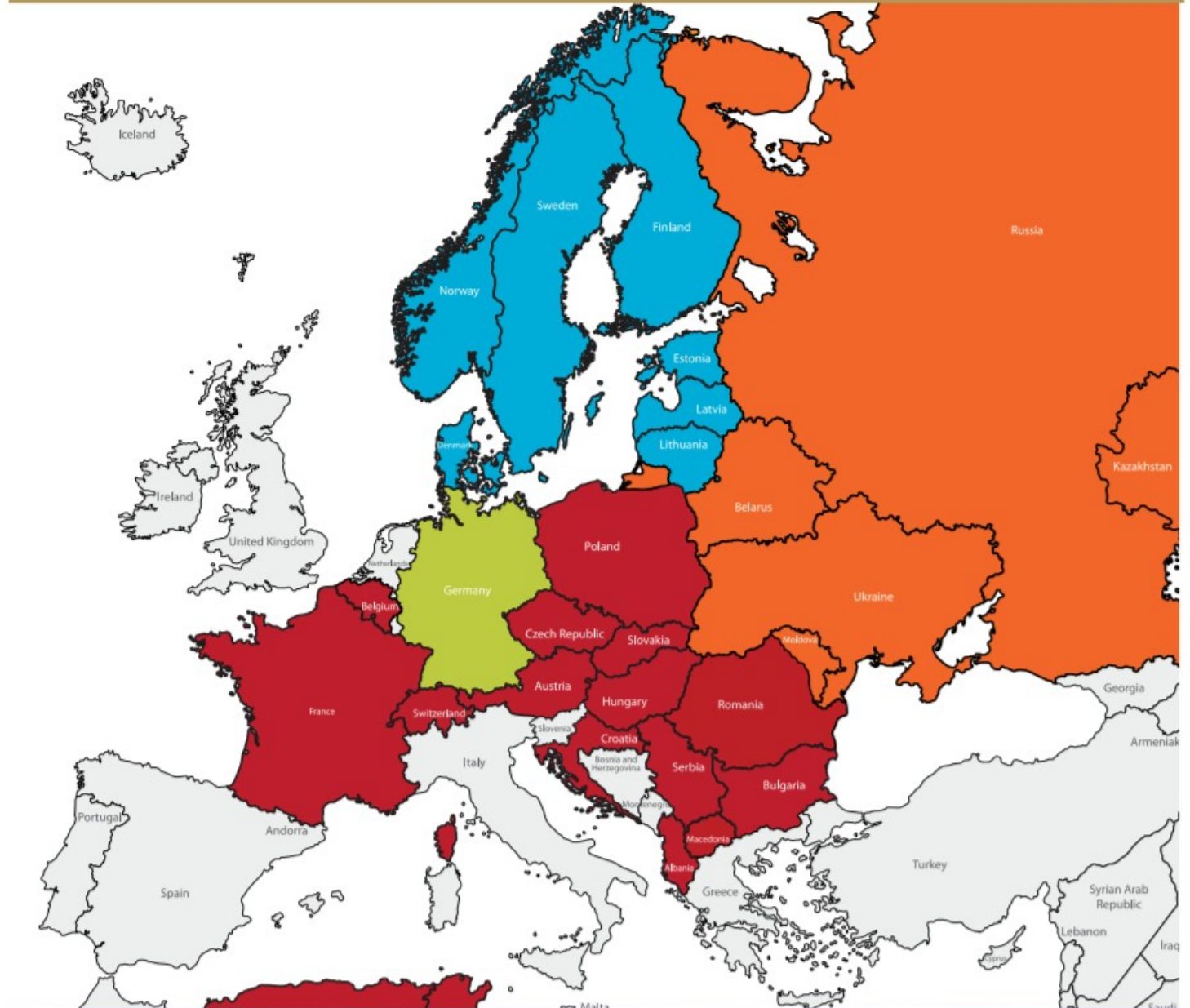
550 Relief and refugee workers

97 United Methodist-related community centers and other national mission institutions in 35 of the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

*Source: 2016 General Board of Global Ministries & United Methodist Women*

# Central Conferences Europe

Europe includes: Central & Southern Europe, Nordic-Baltic, Eurasia and Germany



## **UM Membership in Europe (outside United Kingdom)**

**121,000**

**with 71,000 in Germany**

## **Methodism Historically in Europe**

Europe has been consistently somewhat resistant to “newcomer Protestant groups” (i.e., those that didn’t start from the Reformation on its continent in the West, and of course all sorts of resistances in the East except to the Orthodox or Eastern Rite Churches, resistances often driven by the interests of native Orthodox or Eastern Rite Catholic leadership). This isn’t likely to change anytime soon.



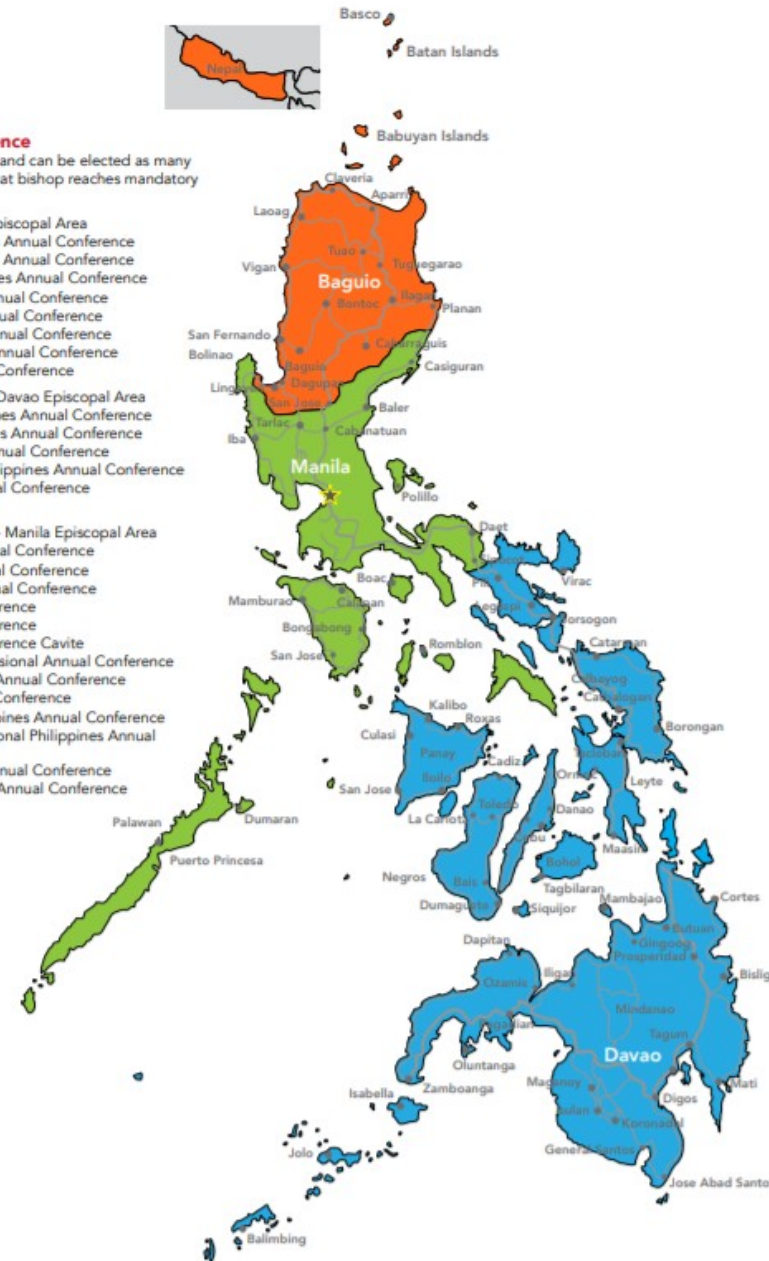
# Central Conferences Philippines

Philippines includes three Episcopal Areas: Baguio, Davao, and Manila

## Philippines Central Conference

Bishops serve a term of four years, and can be elected as many times as the people so vote until that bishop reaches mandatory retirement age.

- Bishop Peter Torio - Baguio Episcopal Area
  - Central Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - North Central Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northern Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pangasinan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Tarlac Philippines Annual Conference
- Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco - Davao Episcopal Area
  - Bicol Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - East Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Visayas Philippines Annual Conference
- Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso Juan - Manila Episcopal Area
  - Bulacan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Middle Philippines Annual Conference
  - Palawan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pampango Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference Cavite
  - Palawan Philippines Provisional Annual Conference
  - Quezon City Philippines Annual Conference
  - Rizal Philippines Annual Conference
  - South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southern Tagalog Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - West Middle Philippines Annual Conference

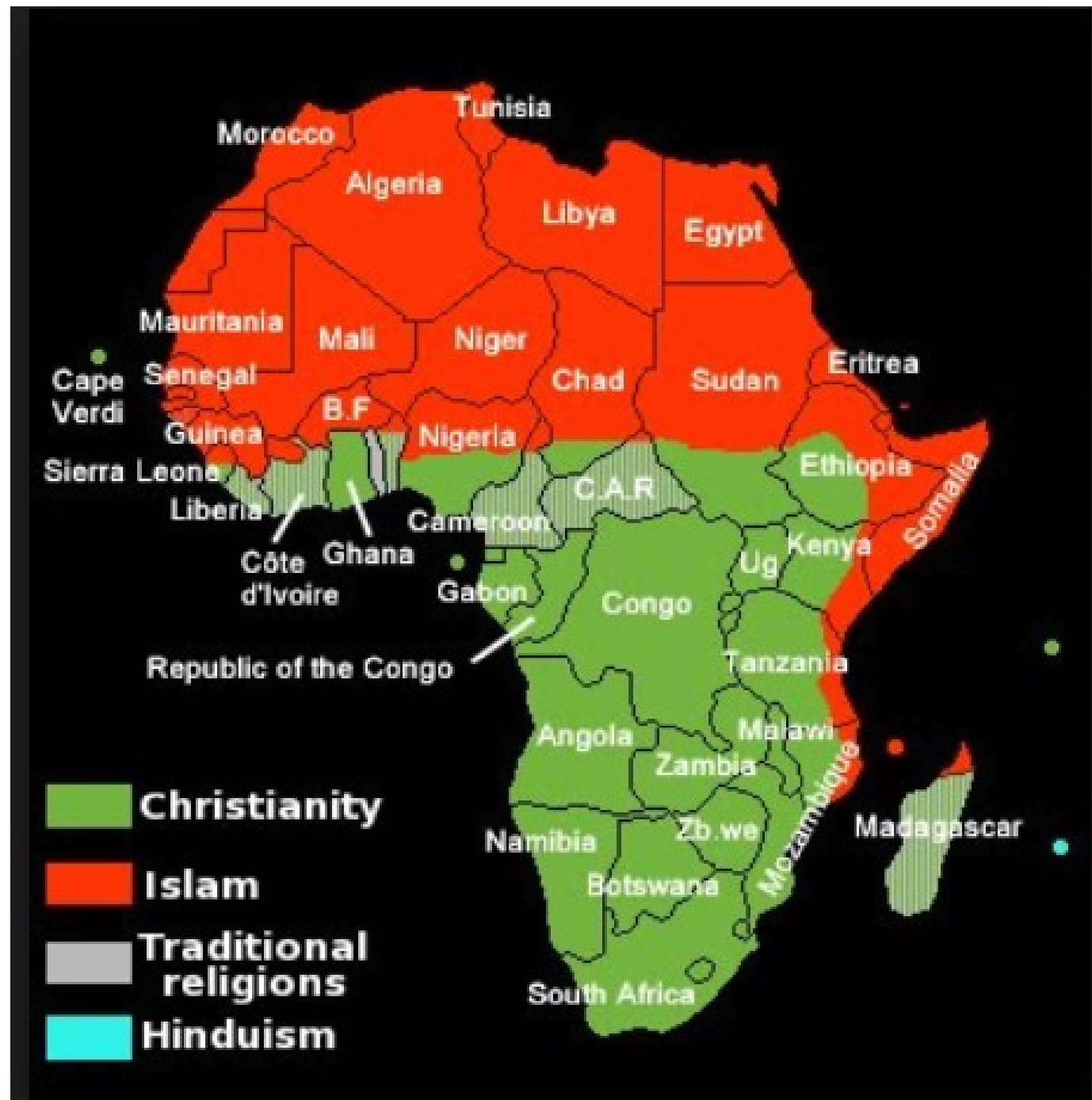


# UM Membership in the Philippines

**240,000**

## Methodism historically in the Philippines

The Philippines is its own case. First we autonomized the Philippines as a separate church, then we ALSO started our own new Central Conference there. So there are two major Methodist bodies there, both with origins in the US churches. I don't know the politics behind why this happened. But it did. So let me suggest that growth in the UMC churches there is somewhat checked locally in a way by growth in other Methodist bodies in the Philippines that we are responsible for to some degree. One of the ways the Philippines Central Conference (UMC) has responded to this has been to increase the number of annual conferences there—even without increasing the total number of churches. This has the effect of increasing the potential base number of General Conference votes, thus, for their size, giving the annual conferences in the Philippines a significantly outsized influence in GC decisions. Central Conference rules allow for this multiplication (by division, in effect) of annual conferences in ways the US cannot do.





## Africa

- **58 countries**
- **Population 1.3 billion (est. as of 2018)**

## United States

- **Population 325 million (est. as of 2018)**

# Central Conferences Africa

Africa includes three central conferences: Africa Central, Congo Central, and West Africa



## Africa Central Conference

Bishops are elected for four years as "term bishops," and with re-election, they are elected for life.

- 1 Bishop Jose Quipungo – Eastern Angola Episcopal Area
  - East Angola Annual Conference
- 2 Bishop Gaspar Domingos – Western Angola Episcopal Area
  - West Angola Annual Conference
  - Namibia District
- 3 Bishop Daniel Wandabula – East Africa Episcopal Area
  - East Africa Annual Conference includes Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda
  - Burundi Annual Conference
- 4 Bishop Joaquina Nhanala – Mozambique Episcopal Area
  - Mozambique North Annual Conference
  - Mozambique South Annual Conference

## UM Membership in Africa

**7,180,000**

**2.25 million** in North Katanga Central Conference (southeast Congo and Tanzania)

## UM Membership in United States

**6,950,000**

### Africa Central Conference

Bishops are elected for four years as "term bishops," and with re-election, they are elected for life.

- 1 Bishop Jose Quipungo – Eastern Angola Episcopal Area
  - East Angola Annual Conference
- 2 Bishop Gaspar Domingos – Western Angola Episcopal Area
  - West Angola Annual Conference
  - Namibia District
- 3 Bishop Daniel Wandabula – East Africa Episcopal Area
  - East Africa Annual Conference includes Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda
  - Burundi Annual Conference
- 4 Bishop Joaquina Nhanala – Mozambique Episcopal Area
  - Mozambique North Annual Conference
  - Mozambique South Annual Conference
  - South Africa Annual Conference
- 5 Bishop Eben Nhwatiwa–Zimbabwe Episcopal Area
  - East Zimbabwe Annual Conference
  - Malawi Provisional Annual Conference
  - West Zimbabwe Annual Conference

### West Africa Central Conference

Bishops are elected for life upon their first election.

- 6 Bishop Benjamin Boni–Côte d'Ivoire Episcopal Area
  - Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference
  - Cameroon Mission Area
  - Senegal Mission Area
- 7 Bishop John Innis–Liberia Episcopal Area
  - Liberia Annual Conference
- 8 Bishop John Wesley Yohanna–Nigeria Episcopal Area
  - Central Nigeria Annual Conference(Gwaten)
  - Northern Nigeria Annual Conference (Pero)
  - Southern Nigeria Annual Conference
- 9 Bishop John Yambasu–Sierra Leone Episcopal Area
  - Sierra Leone Annual Conference



### Congo Central Conference

Bishops are elected for four years as "term bishops," and with re-election, they are elected for life.

- 10 Bishop David Yemba–Central Congo Episcopal Area
    - Central Congo Annual Conference
    - Kasai Annual Conference
    - West Congo Annual Conference
  - 11 Bishop Gabriel Unda–East Congo Episcopal Area
    - East Congo Annual Conference
    - Kivu Annual Conference
    - Oriental and Equator Annual Conference
  - 12 Bishop Nkulu Ntanda Ntambo–North Katanga Episcopal Area
    - North Katanga Annual Conference
    - Tanganyika Annual Conference
    - Tanzania Annual Conference
  - 13 Bishop Kalinda Katembo–South Congo Episcopal Area
    - Lukoshi Annual Conference
    - North-West Katanga Annual Conference
    - South Congo Annual Conference
    - South-West Katanga Annual Conference
    - Zambia Annual Conference
-

# Central Conferences Africa

| Annual Conference                    | Total Members & Participants | Professing Church Members | Active Ordained Clergy | Total Clergy | Districts | Charges/Circuits | Total Congregations | Countries                          |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Eastern Angola Episcopal Area</b> |                              |                           |                        |              |           |                  |                     |                                    |
| <b>Eastern Angola</b>                | 13,236                       | 12,666                    | 91                     | 126          | 6         | 28               | 60                  | Angola                             |
| <b>Western Angola Episcopal Area</b> |                              |                           |                        |              |           |                  |                     |                                    |
| <b>Western Angola</b>                | 200,093                      | 200,093                   | 245                    | 273          | 13        | 277              | 298                 | Angola                             |
| <b>East African Episcopal Area</b>   |                              |                           |                        |              |           |                  |                     |                                    |
| <b>Burundi</b>                       | 211,844                      | 172,725                   | 187                    | 458          | 9         | 247              | 302                 | Burundi                            |
| <b>East Africa</b>                   | -                            | 70,734                    | -                      | 195          | 18        | -                | 191                 | Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda |
| <b>Mozambique Episcopal Area</b>     |                              |                           |                        |              |           |                  |                     |                                    |
| <b>North Mozambique</b>              | 31,421                       | 8,895                     | 39                     | 54           | 8         | 45               | 147                 | Mozambique                         |
| <b>South Africa Provisional</b>      | 9,302                        | 9,102                     | 23                     | 29           | 4         | 30               | 160                 | South Africa                       |
| <b>South Mozambique</b>              | 156,743                      | 127,812                   | 149                    | 199          | 16        | 132              | 692                 | Mozambique                         |
| <b>Zimbabwe Episcopal Area</b>       |                              |                           |                        |              |           |                  |                     |                                    |
| <b>East Zimbabwe</b>                 | 122,421                      | 79,497                    | 115                    | 192          | 7         | 145              | 426                 | Zimbabwe                           |
| <b>Malawi Provisional</b>            | 9,657                        | 8,389                     | 2                      | 2            | 1         | 22               | 119                 | Malawi                             |
| <b>West Zimbabwe</b>                 | 75,708                       | 59,050                    | 118                    | 118          | 6         | 138              | 382                 | Zimbabwe                           |

# Central Conferences Africa

| Annual Conference | Total Members & Participants | Professing Church Members | Active Ordained Clergy | Total Clergy | Districts | Charges/Circuits | Total Congregations | Countries |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----------|
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----------|

## Cote D'Ivoire Episcopal Area

|                      |         |         |     |     |    |     |     |                                  |
|----------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|----------------------------------|
| <b>Cote D'Ivoire</b> | 677,355 | 677,355 | 171 | 123 | 26 | 721 | 752 | Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal |
|----------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|----------------------------------|

## Liberia Episcopal Area

|                |         |         |     |     |    |     |     |         |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| <b>Liberia</b> | 380,808 | 148,382 | 404 | 921 | 21 | 609 | 609 | Liberia |
|----------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|---------|

## Nigeria Episcopal Area

|                                 |         |         |     |     |    |     |     |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|---------|
| <b>Gwaten (Central) Nigeria</b> | 216,125 | 125,783 | 45  | 83  | 26 | 20  | 224 | Nigeria |
| <b>Pero (Northern) Nigeria</b>  | 116,149 | 80,016  | 57  | 100 | 9  | 36  | 103 | Nigeria |
| <b>Southern Nigeria</b>         | 453,872 | 252,160 | 173 | 570 | 31 | 190 | 574 | Nigeria |

## Sierra Leone Episcopal Area

|                     |         |         |     |     |   |    |     |              |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|---|----|-----|--------------|
| <b>Sierra Leone</b> | 232,250 | 225,000 | 132 | 338 | 9 | 35 | 324 | Sierra Leone |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|---|----|-----|--------------|

## Central Congo Episcopal Area

|                      |         |         |     |     |    |     |       |       |
|----------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-------|-------|
| <b>Central Congo</b> | 110,220 | 103,233 | 202 | 532 | 14 | 545 | 1,157 | Congo |
| <b>Kasai</b>         | 19,444  | 16,671  | 114 | 294 | 8  | 151 | 258   | Congo |
| <b>West Congo</b>    | 28,650  | 22,413  | 65  | 103 | 4  | 57  | 191   | Congo |

# Central Conferences Africa

| Annual Conference | Total Members & Participants | Professing Church Members | Active Ordained Clergy | Total Clergy | Districts | Charges/Circuits | Total Congregations | Countries |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----------|
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----------|

## East Congo Episcopal Area

|                             |         |         |    |     |   |     |     |       |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|----|-----|---|-----|-----|-------|
| <b>East Congo</b>           | 310,580 | 253,539 | 89 | 287 | 7 | 191 | 416 | Congo |
| <b>Kivu Provisional</b>     | 8,446   | 8,445   | 18 | 69  | 4 | 48  | 69  | Congo |
| <b>Oriental and Equator</b> | 30,430  | 30,251  | 64 | 146 | 6 | 145 | 253 | Congo |

## North Katanga Episcopal Area

|                      |           |         |       |       |   |       |       |               |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|---------------|
| <b>North Katanga</b> | 2,249,225 | 820,852 | 1,592 | 2,249 | - | 2,574 | 4,271 | Congo, Zambia |
| <b>Tanganyika</b>    | 337,817   | 160,821 | 296   | 488   | - | 59    | 364   | Tanzania      |
| <b>Tanzania</b>      | 123,610   | 74,589  | 67    | 169   | - | -     | -     | Tanzania      |

## South Congo Episcopal Area

|                          |         |         |     |     |    |     |     |        |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|--------|
| <b>Lukoshi</b>           | 293,400 | 293,400 | 149 | 172 | 9  | 123 | 470 | Congo  |
| <b>Northwest Katanga</b> | 200,567 | 200,567 | 166 | 309 | 11 | 87  | 168 | Congo  |
| <b>South Congo</b>       | 290,100 | 290,100 | 187 | 543 | 9  | 80  | 222 | Congo  |
| <b>Southwest Katanga</b> | 138,234 | 138,234 | 122 | 384 | 6  | 110 | 158 | Congo  |
| <b>Zambia Provision</b>  | 133,103 | 133,103 | 94  | 94  | -  | -   | -   | Zambia |

## **Pan-Africa Efforts**

➤ **Africa University**

➤ **Africa Initiative**

# Africa University

- **Approved in 1988 General Conference and building started in 1991 in Zimbabwe as first private UMC university in Africa**
- **Africa University is a "private, [Pan-African](#) and [United Methodist](#)-related institution." It has more than 1,200 students from 36 African countries.<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **The university is Pan-African in design and spirit. Thirty six nations of Africa were represented in the student population for the 2015/2016 academic year. The majority of faculty and administrative staff are Africans. Professors and policy makers comprise permanent and visiting educators from the United States, Europe, and around the world. The official language at the university is English, which is also the official language of Zimbabwe.**







- **There are thirty-two buildings on the campus with four currently under construction. The 32 buildings include 12 dormitories, 12 senior staff housing units, a chapel, and a state-of-the-art library complex. The four buildings under construction include a student clinic, two housing duplexes for senior staff, and the building for the Institute of Peace, Leadership, and Governance (IPLG).**
- **There are currently 3 schools at Africa University, namely the College of Health, Agriculture and Natural Sciences; the College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance; and the College of Social Sciences, Theology, Humanities and Education.<sup>[5]</sup> There is also the Africa University [Information Technology](#) Training Center.<sup>↓</sup>**



- **Funding for Africa University is a two-part \$20 million effort every four years. Ten million is apportioned to the 34,000+ United Methodist churches. The apportioned dollars provide for the day-to-day operating expenses of the university. The second ten million is raised through World Service Special Gifts for a permanent endowment. The interest and earnings on the permanent endowment provide for scholarships and other financial aid for students as well as meet new and emerging programmatic needs of the university.**

## **Africa Initiative**

**Founded in 2008, the Africa Initiative offers training for the annual and provisional United Methodist Church conferences of the continent in a range of areas, including cross-cultural evangelizing and missions, discipleship, leadership development and resource mobilization.**

**The organization also provides a forum for discussion of key issues before The United Methodist Church.**



# AFRICA INITIATIVE PRAYER & LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Theme:

## STANDING ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

Text: Isaiah 41:10

**Venue:** METHODIST RESORT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE  
Lavington Green, Oloitokitok Road, Nairobi, Kenya.

**Date:** Monday, August 6 to Saturday, 11 August 2018

**The Africa Initiative Prayer and Leadership Summit, held Aug. 6-11 2017 in Nairobi, carried the theme “Standing on the Promises of God” (Isaiah 41:10) and brought together more than 80 leaders from the central conferences in Africa, many of them General Conference delegates.**

**Speakers at a gathering of the [Africa Initiative](#) offered support for the Traditional Plan that will be under consideration at the special General Conference in February 23-26, 2019.**

**They also called for African conferences of The United Methodist Church to move toward economic self-sufficiency.**

**“I am not speaking for the College of Bishops in Africa, but come the Special General Conference in 2019, we will support you our brothers and sisters who are advocating for the Traditional Plan,”** he said. Yohanna was one of the 32 members of the Commission on a Way Forward.





The **Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards** is an Elder in the Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church and has served as Director of Worship Resources with Discipleship Ministries (formerly known as The General Board of Discipleship) since 2005. He is a member and currently Secretary of the North American Academy of Liturgy and convener of the seminar “Exploring Contemporary and Alternative Worship” (2010-present). **Rev. Burton-Edwards also “having worked myself fairly extensively in Congo from 2011-2016, and much less so in Tanzania.”**





## Growth of Methodism in Africa – Why?

That leaves sub-Saharan Africa. *What my late friend Bob Walters, longtime missionary there and past DCM for North Katanga, said repeatedly—and I think this may be a significant part of it—is a significant reason for our growth and size there in the last 30 years especially has to do with the fact that when every other denomination was removing its pastors (or they were just up and leaving) during the Civil Wars, our pastors stayed, suffered, died with the people, and then a new pastor would be sent to do the same, if necessary. The witness was “we are with you, no matter what.” Our pastors would go to warlords and say to them, “I am your pastor, sent by Bishop Ntambo. We are going to talk about what is going on here.” (Talk about accepting “the freedom and power Christ gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression!”). Where you see the largest growth (North Katanga and East Congo Episcopal areas) are the places where the Civil Wars had the greatest death tolls and the worst atrocities committed. I have to add, it didn’t hurt that the bishop of the North Katanga Episcopal Area (which included much of what is now the East Congo area at the time) was also a Senator (Nkulu Ntambo) who was a strong advocate and leader in the process of ending the Civil Wars and dealing with the atrocities.*

Does this remind you of the brave circuit riders in America on the frontier who weren’t sure they would see it each other alive again from one year to the next?

## Diversity in Africa

*I can tell you your statement about the fundamental diversity within African expressions of theology, emphasis, and church life is spot on. Even within Congo—itsself a country with over 450 languages on a land mass larger than all of Europe, the degree of diversity is profound, linguistically, culturally, and in many other ways.*

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – “The vast central African country has been hit by waves of violence, rebellions, protests and political turmoil in recent months, leading to worries about a new civil war like that which killed five million people between 1997 and 2003.

The humanitarian situation is dire. More than 13 million Congolese need humanitarian aid, twice as many as last year, and 7.7 million face severe food insecurity, up 30% from a year ago, the United Nations said in March. Many humanitarian officials complain that global attention has been diverted to more heavily reported crises in the Middle East.

More than 4.5 million people are displaced, the highest number in the DRC for more than 20 years, latest figures show. There are outbreaks of cholera. The fighting is, as Kapitu feared, getting worse.



# Internal Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa are Real and Ongoing

**'The wars will never stop' - millions flee bloodshed as Congo falls apart**

The Guardian, April 3, 2018



# The 10 places in crisis the world chooses to ignore – in pictures

The Guardian – July 2018

Many of the world's most complex emergencies rarely hit the headlines. Here, the [Norwegian Refugee Council](#) reveals the disasters that are neglected due to lack of political will, donor fatigue and media indifference

## 1: Democratic Republic of the Congo

DRC has slipped out of the headlines, even though the same number of people are in need as in Syria. Violence, disease and malnutrition are part of daily life in large areas of the country. By the end of 2017, a total of 4.5 million Congolese were internally displaced, and around 700,000 had fled to neighbouring countries. Its conflicts are fuelled by ethnic rivalries, the struggle over natural resources and lack of government control. This image shows the Katanika displacement settlement, home to 70,000 people, most of whom fled violent inter-ethnic clashes

## 2: South Sudan

As civil war here enters its fifth year, the humanitarian crisis is worsening, with more than half the country's population of 12.9 million people relying on aid to survive. Violence has forced one in three people to leave their homes, creating refugee crises in Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia. Those who remain face a deadly famine following poor harvests. Nyejal is the family's only breadwinner as her husband is blind. 'I really hope the cultivation will go better this time,' she says. 'Last year we nearly lost everything due to the bad weather'

Photograph: Albert Gonzalez Farran/NRC







### **3: Central African Republic**

The conflict in CAR has moved down the list only because of the drastic deterioration of the crises in neighbouring DRC and South Sudan. Clashes continue between the mostly Christian anti-Balaka militia and the Seleka, a predominantly Muslim coalition of rebels. The number of internally displaced people rose by 70% last year to 689,000. Despite the conflict's escalation, it continues to receive little media attention and humanitarian needs are chronically neglected. It was one of the least-funded major crises in 2017

### **4: Burundi**

Since 2015 more than 400,000 people have fled Burundi because of political unrest and humanitarian crises, with the number increasing by more than 20% last year. Most have sought refuge in Tanzania, living in overcrowded camps such as [Nyarugusu refugee camp](#)

### **5: Ethiopia**

More than a million Ethiopians fled their homes last year because of conflict and drought. Mounting insecurity around the border areas of Oromia and the Somali regions after September forced out 700,000 people. Just 46% of Ethiopia's \$1.4bn (£1bn) international aid appeal was funded by the end of 2017. Many Ethiopians can expect another year of hardship and hunger, yet the crisis remains largely off the international radar





## **6: Palestine Refugees**

## **7: Myanmar**

## **8: Yemen**

## **9: Venezuela**

## **10: Nigeria**

The conflict between Nigeria's armed forces and Boko Haram fighters has continued to drive people from their homes in the north of the country. Nigeria has intensified its military operations and Boko Haram is retaliating by stepping up attacks on soft targets such as refugees and internally displaced people. Up to 1.7 million Nigerians have been affected. Public services have collapsed and nearly half a million homes and many schools, health posts and water facilities have been destroyed









Mwama Mukenguo, 40, fled from Kiuya village in Tanganyika province, where her husband was killed. 'We have nothing,' she says. 'I gave birth to my baby in May and he's severely malnourished. I have eight kids – six are here with me now and two are with relatives. We need food and we need clothes'



## **Sidebar –**

### **Way Forward Commission**

#### **3 Plans Recommended**

- **Traditionalist**
- **One Church**
- **Connectional**

#### **UMC Council of Bishops Recommendation in May 2018**

**Special General Conference in St. Louis in February 23-26, 2019 to consider “Way Forward” for UMC**



**Way Forward Commission** - The 32-member commission, which last met in January 2018, has suggested three different frameworks for the church's future.

**Traditionalist Plan** - would maintain the church's official stances on homosexuality, which declare the practice of homosexuality incompatible with Christian teaching, preclude clergy from officiating at same-sex unions and prohibit the ordination of self-professed practicing gay clergy. This model also would emphasize accountability and enforcement of relevant church law.

**One Church Plan** - would remove the Book of Discipline's restrictive language, allowing conferences to decide how inclusive to be, while protecting clergy who could not, as a matter of conscience, perform a same-sex union or support ordination of openly gay clergy.

**Connectional Conference Plan** - foresees multiple branches of the denomination sharing a General Conference and certain agency functions. One branch might favor the traditionalist approach, another the centrist, with a third opting for full inclusion of LGBTQ individuals.

## UMC Council of Bishops Press Release (May 4, 2018) After Meeting in Chicago

At the conclusion of the discernment process, the Council of Bishops strongly approved the following motion and rationale:

**Having received and considered the extensive work of the Commission on a Way Forward, the Council of Bishops will submit a report to the Special Session of the General Conference in 2019 that includes:**

**All three plans (The Traditionalist Plan, The One Church Plan and the Connectional Conference Plan) for a way forward considered by the Commission and the Council. The Council's recommendation of the One Church Plan.**

**An historical narrative of the Council's discernment process regarding all three plans.**

**Rationale: In order to invite the church to go deeper into the journey the Council and Commission have been on, the Council will make all the information considered by the Commission and the Council of Bishops available to the delegates of the General Conference and acknowledges there is support for each of the three plans within the Council. The values of our global church are reflected in all three plans. The majority of the Council recommends the One Church Plan as the best way forward for The United Methodist Church.**

## **African UMC Clergy and Bishops strongly support the Traditionalist Plan**

**However –**

**They also speak of other issues of greater relevance to the UM Church in Africa**

- Terrorism and Regional Conflicts**
- Polygamy, Divorce, etc.**
- Reducing Poverty and Gaining Economic Self-Sufficiency**

**African UMC Bishops – Sept. 2015 Positions  
Prior to May 2016 General Conference in  
Portland, Oregon**

# African Bishops' Statements

## ➤ Global Terrorism

In Africa, the Boko Haram insurgents continue to carry out atrocities and mayhem against innocent citizens in towns, villages, cities, and religious facilities (mosques and churches) in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, etc. Young men and women are being manipulated to carry out suicide bombings to destroy innocent lives and property. The Al-Shabab also continues to unleash untold havoc against innocent civilians in Somalia, Kenya, and other parts of Africa.

As a consequence of these crises, thousands of families have been ripped away from their homes and made homeless. Thousands of others have died from starvation, disease, lack of shelter, and crossfire bombing and shooting between warring factions. Women and girls have suffered enslavement and rape, while thousands of children are denied their rights to education and safety as the crisis rages on.



## **African Bishops' Statement – Global Terrorism cont'd**

**We whole-heartedly condemn these atrocities and call upon the United Nations and our political leaders in Africa including the African Union to do all that lies within their power to restore peace and tranquility. We will continue to pray to Almighty God for his divine intervention while we pursue some practical ways to pursue the path of peace and unity, including dialogue with our young people, grassroots, women's movements, and community and political leaders.**

## ➤ Marriage and Sexuality

As leaders of the church in Africa, we call upon all United Methodists, Bishops, clergy and Laity to an unreserved commitment to the Holy Bible as the primary authority for faith and practice in the church. We call upon all members throughout the connection to adopt practices consistent with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. We submit to the teachings of Scripture that God designed marriage to be between man and woman, and the procreation of children is a blessing from God (Gen. 2:24-25; Psalm 127:3-5). Scripture also teaches that all persons are sexual beings, whether or not they are married. **However, sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant bond of a faithful monogamous, heterosexual marriage, and not within same-sex unions or polygamy.** The Christian marriage covenant is holy, sacred, and consecrated by God and is expressed in shared fidelity between one man and one woman for life. In this vein, we denounce all forms of sexual exploitation, including fornication, adultery, sexual commercialization, slavery, abuse, polygamy, etc.

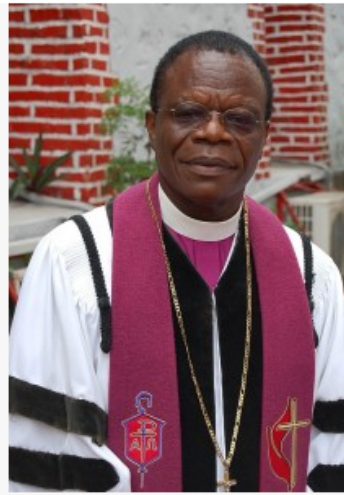
## ➤ **Maintaining the Unity of the Church**

**One of the functions of the Bishops of the church is to “maintain the unity of the church”. As leaders of the church, we believe that there are far more important issues that unite us than issues of sexual orientation. As a church, we are called to be in solidarity with people who suffer as a result of unjust political systems, wars, famine, poverty, natural disasters, diseases, illiteracy etc. etc. We believe that we can be united around these issues rather than allow ourselves to be ripped apart by issues of sexual orientation.**

# United Methodist Bishops from Africa issue statement

November 4, 2015 By [Good News 15 Comments](#)

From the 7-11 September, 2015, we the Bishops of the Central Conferences of Africa gathered at the Elephant Hills Resort, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe as part of our Annual business meeting. Highlights of the meeting included worship, fellowship, and evaluation of ministries and responsibilities God has entrusted to our care as Shepherds of His flock.



Bishop Innis

Our meeting was immensely blessed by the presence of some of our spouses as we celebrated some of the tremendous success stories in all Episcopal Areas on the continent.

We celebrate with gratitude the recent training and commissioning of thirty Nine Global Missionaries on the continent of Africa (Zimbabwe) by the General Board of Global Ministries

We note with deep gratitude the kind hospitality of the Zimbabwean people and their

## Global Terrorism

In recent months, the world has watched with shock and dismay the massive human rights abuses against innocent, helpless and defenseless families, especially women and children, and the horrible refugee crisis that has engulfed and overwhelmed parts of Europe and Africa, with no permanent solution in sight. This crisis, is no doubt the result of the ongoing bloody and brutal civil war in Syria, the ISIS insurgency across parts of Europe, as well as the Boko Haram and Al-Shabab insurgencies in parts of Africa.



Bishop Ntambo Nkulu Ntanda. Photo by Jay Mallin (UMNS)

In Africa, the Boko Haram insurgents continue to carry out atrocities and mayhem against innocent citizens in towns, villages, cities, and religious facilities (mosques and churches) in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, etc. Young men and women are being manipulated to carry out suicide bombings to destroy innocent lives and property. The Al-Shabab also continues to unleash untold havoc against innocent civilians in Somalia, Kenya, and other parts of Africa.

As a consequence of these crises, thousands of families have been ripped away from their homes and made homeless. Thousands of others have died from starvation, disease, lack of shelter, and crossfire bombing and shooting between warring factions. Women and girls have suffered enslavement and rape, while thousands of children are denied their rights to education and safety as the crisis rages on.



We whole-heartedly condemn these atrocities and call upon the United Nations and our political leaders in Africa including the African Union to do all that lies within their power to restore peace and tranquility. We will continue to pray to Almighty God for his divine intervention while we pursue some practical ways to pursue the path of peace and unity, including dialogue with our young people, grassroots, women's movements, and community and political leaders.

In recognition of our role as God's messengers of peace and reconciliation, we present this press release in the hope that we will draw the attention of our denomination to the stark realities of needless suffering and pain in our world as a result of current Global terrorism, unjust political systems and the manipulation of weaker nations by world powers; and to work together as a church to usher in God's reign of peace, justice and freedom to all.

## Marriage and Sexuality

Over the past four decades, from 1972 until the present, we have watched with shock and dismay the rapid drift of our denomination from this Holy call to a warm embrace of practices that have become sources of conflict that now threatens to rip the Church apart and distract her from the mission of leading persons to faith and making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. One of such practices is the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender).



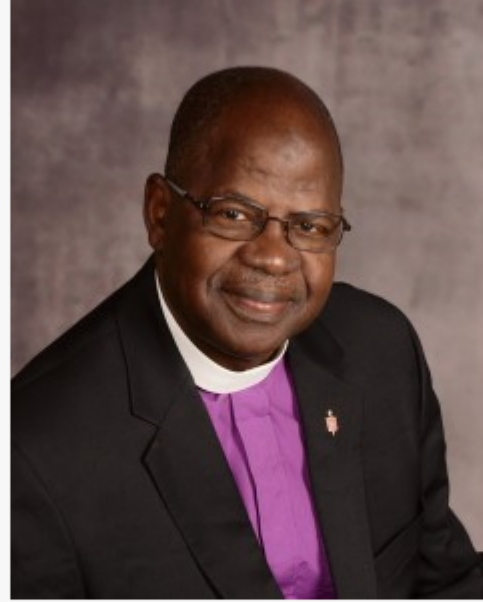
Bishop Joaquina Filipe Nhanala of Mozambique. Photo by Kathleen Barry, UM Communications.

We are deeply saddened that the Holy Bible, our primary authority for faith and the practice of Christian living, and our Book of Discipline are being grossly ignored by some members and leaders of our Church in favor of social and cultural practices that have no scriptural basis for acceptance in Christian worship and conduct. Yet they continue to attempt to persuade members of the Church to incorporate these practices as an accepted code of conduct within global United Methodism.

As leaders of the church in Africa, we call upon all United Methodists, Bishops, clergy and Laity to an unreserved commitment to the Holy Bible as the primary authority for faith and practice in the church. We call upon all members throughout the connection to adopt practices consistent with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. We submit to the teachings of Scripture that God designed marriage to be between man and woman, and the procreation of children is a blessing from God (Gen. 2:24-25; Psalm 127:3-5). Scripture also teaches that all persons are sexual beings, whether or not they are married. However, sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant bond of a faithful monogamous, heterosexual marriage, and not within same-sex unions or polygamy. The Christian marriage covenant is holy, sacred, and consecrated by God and is expressed in shared fidelity between one man and one woman for life. In this vein, we denounce all forms of sexual exploitation, including fornication, adultery, sexual commercialization, slavery, abuse, polygamy, etc.

As shepherds of God's flock, we covenant to be in ministry with those of our members who adopt practices that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures

## MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH



Bishop David Yemba

One of the functions of the Bishops of the church is to “maintain the unity of the church”. As leaders of the church, we believe that there are far more important issues that unite us than issues of sexual orientation. As a church, we are called to be in solidarity with people who suffer as a result of unjust political systems, wars, famine, poverty, natural disasters, diseases, illiteracy etc. etc. We believe that we can be united around these issues rather than allow ourselves to be ripped apart by issues of sexual orientation.

[Therefore, we the College of African Bishops of the United Methodist Church, meeting at Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and convening with 11 of our 12 active member Bishops and one retired Bishop present, do hereby unanimously adopt this Statement on global terrorism, Christian sexuality and marriage and the need for unity in the United Methodist Church and commend it to the whole Church for circulation, reading and study.

#### Recommendation to General Conference

1. That during the entire period of the 2016 General Conference, there should be daily prayer sessions for the return of our denomination to Biblical teachings, the unity of the church, global terrorism (remembering the millions of refugees) and the cessation of wars around the globe.
2. That the Council of Bishops commit to demonstrating their shepherding responsibility (1 Peter 5:2-4) by acting consistently with the Holy Bible for to do otherwise would require that one must recuse himself or herself from the divine call to be Shepherd of all of God's people.

Signed on this 11th day of September in the Conference Room of the Elephant Hills Resort, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, to the glory of God:

1. Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa, Zimbabwe Episcopal Area
2. Bishop John G. Innis, Liberia Episcopal Area
3. Ntambo, Nkulu Ntanda, North Kantaga Episcopal Area
4. Bishop Bishop John Wesley Yohannah, Nigeria Episcopal Area
5. Bishop Gabriel Unda, East Congo Episcopal Area
6. Bishop Domingos, Gaspar Joao, W. Angola Episcopal Area
7. Katembo, Kainda, Southern Congo Episcopal Area
8. Nhanala, Joaquina F., Mozambique Episcopal Area
9. Bishop Jose Quipungo, East Angola Episcopal Area
10. Bishop Daniel Wandabula, East Africa Episcopal Area
11. Bishop John K. Yambasu, Sierra Leone Episcopal Area
12. Bishop David K. Yemba, Central Congo Episcopal Area





# Book of Resolutions: Eradicating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

*Adopted 2016*

*Our Call*

United Methodists have worked to eradicate the many forms of violence that destroy the integrity of individuals, families, communities, and nations. People of faith must work to change attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices at all levels of society that dehumanize and promote the exploitation and abuse of women and girls. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier, and have greater access to land, jobs, and financial resources. Because women and children, along with others, are ignored, abused, and violated, we urge renewed commitment to eradicating violence against women and children in all its forms.

We call on all United Methodists, local churches, campus ministries, colleges, universities, seminaries, annual conferences, general agencies and commissions, and the Council of Bishops to:

1. Teach, preach, and model healthy masculinity and respectful relationships that reflect the sacred worth of women and girls (Principles of Healthy Masculinity, <http://www.maleallies.org/principles-of-healthy-masculinity>);
2. Engage men and boys as allies in the promotion of gender equality;
3. Assess resources used in local ministry settings to ensure the promotion of sacred worth of women and girls and healthy masculinity;

4. Develop theological, educational, and advocacy tools to raise public awareness of sexual and gender-based violence, and to promote a culture of nonviolence;

5. Develop and implement culturally relevant and culturally competent training focused on violence against women;

**6. Advocate for an end to harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage, polygamy, and female genital mutilation;**

7. Advocate for training in local contexts for people on the front lines of disaster and conflict to recognize women's and girls' increased vulnerability to opportunistic rape, sexual exploitation, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence;

8. Advocate for full and legal access to medically safe reproductive health-care services. Violence against women undermines sexual and reproductive health, contributing to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, fistulas, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV, and their recurrence;

9. Ensure that adolescent sexual and reproductive health services address gender-based violence, including access to prompt quality care in cases of rape, emergency contraception and Post Exposure Prophylaxis to prevent HIV infection, and additional referrals (e.g., legal, specialized counseling, and support groups);

10. Provide comprehensive sexuality education so that girls and women in abusive relationships have increased understanding of their bodies and tools to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases and/or unwanted pregnancies;
11. Advocate for girls to have access to higher levels of education to decrease the rates of child marriage and poverty;
12. Ensure that all children have access to registration and documentation, including birth registration, to increase access to basic services. and,
13. Advocate for the reduction of war and conflict in the world to reduce conditions that increase the risk of aggression toward women and girls.

The Church must reexamine the theological messages it communicates in light of the experiences of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. We must treat with extreme care the important, but often-misused, concepts of suffering, forgiveness, and the nature of marriage and the family. Part of our call, as individuals and as a Church, is seeking to address the root causes of violence, working to eradicate it in its multiple forms, and being God's instruments for the wholeness of affected women and children. As people of faith we must become aware of how violence affects our communities, how we can end our participation in it, and what interventions will end its ongoing cycles

# African Methodists worry about the church that brought them Christianity

May 20, 2016

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#), [Religion News Service](#)



Delegates pray after the statement from Bishop Bruce R. [Ough](#) about sexuality and the church from the denomination's Council of Bishops on May 18 at the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland



**"It's mind-boggling, and it baffles the Christian leader from Africa -- I speak for all of Africa -- it baffles the mind of the Christian leader from Africa, who ascribes to the whole Bible as his or her primary authority for faith and practice, to see and to hear that cultural Christianity can take the place of the Bible. United Methodists in America and other parts of the world are far going away from Scripture and giving in to cultural Christianity," Kulah said.**

**Despite this sense of outrage, the African delegations largely maintained a calm, restrained presence amid the vocal demonstrations and arguments over procedure at the conference. But many stood up and sang during the recess in the middle of the most contentious day, as delegates considered whether to defer decisions on LGBT inclusion to a specially created commission. Their singing, asking God for help, brought a joyous moment in the middle of strife.**

**"I think the Americans have something to learn from us," said Betty Katiyo, a delegate from the West Zimbabwe Conference.**

**She reflected the belief among many delegates from growing African conferences that their churches retain something of the spirit of Methodism's founder John Wesley that they can share with the rest of the denomination.**

## Practicing John Wesley's Ideas in Africa

**"I think the Americans have something to learn from us," said Betty Katiyo, a delegate from the West Zimbabwe Conference.**

**She reflected the belief among many delegates from growing African conferences that their churches retain something of the spirit of Methodism's founder John Wesley that they can share with the rest of the denomination.**

And the Rev. Mande Muyombo, executive director of the General Board of Global Ministries' Global Mission Connections and delegate from North Katanga -

**Her church of 1,500 emphasizes the Wesleyan idea of "class meetings," small groups that gather every other week in members' homes to pray and act as family. The church is a "nucleus" of the community, she said, hosting events throughout the week, and the congregation sets the day aside for worship after Sunday school "rather than a one-and-a-half-hour thing every week."**

**The church in North Katanga also offers a holistic, Wesleyan approach to evangelism, according to Muyombo: building schools, hospitals, wells and farming projects around churches and making them relevant to their context.**

**And the denomination's churches are sending missionaries "from everywhere to everywhere," said Thomas Kemper, general secretary for Global Ministries.**

**But, Kemper said: "We need to find a relevant way for the Western culture as they seem to find a way for African or Filipino or whatever culture. It's not that easy."**

**That's not to say churches in Africa are without challenges, Muyombo said.**

**The priorities instead for African churches are on such things as planting churches, ending conflicts and eradicating poverty, he said.**

**The General Conference is scheduled for the first time outside the U.S. in 2024 in Manila, Philippines, followed by 2028 in Harare, Zimbabwe.**

***Meantime, Katiyo said, "I wish either they come or they ask us to come ... be missionaries to America. ... I'm sure if that happens there will be change."***



**PORTLAND, ORE.** — The Rev. Jerry [Kulah](#) has nothing but gratitude for American Methodists.

In 1833, they sent their first missionary to his country, Liberia, which was founded for freed American slaves. Melville B. Cox died four months after he arrived in Africa, but the missionary's legacy lives on in the United Methodist Church's fastest-growing region, and in his words to his own church back in North Carolina: "Let a thousand fall before Africa be given up."

"However," said [Kulah](#), who is dean of the [Gbarnga School of Theology](#) in the capital, Monrovia, "the church has taken on strangely a new direction. People from the country that brought the Gospel to us are now preaching a different Gospel."

The United Methodist Church -- which on May 20 was wrapping up its quadrennial General Conference -- is struggling to maintain the increasingly tenuous bonds that hold together this global denomination of more than 12 million members.

And among the forces tearing at those bonds during 11 days of meetings at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore., were arguments over the ordination of LGBT United Methodists and whether to allow clergy to perform same-sex marriages -- which are now legal in America and accepted by a growing share of its citizens.

**Support independent Catholic journalism.** [Become an NCR Forward member](#) for \$5 a month.

"It's mind-boggling, and it baffles the Christian leader from Africa -- I speak for all of Africa -- it baffles the mind of the Christian leader from Africa, who ascribes to the whole Bible as his or her primary authority for faith and practice, to see and to hear that cultural Christianity can take the place of the Bible. United Methodists in America and other parts of the world are far going away from Scripture and giving in to cultural Christianity," [Kulah](#) said.

Despite this sense of outrage, the African delegations largely maintained a calm, restrained presence amid the vocal demonstrations and arguments over procedure at the conference. But many stood up and sang during the recess in the middle of the most contentious day, as [delegates considered](#) whether to defer decisions on LGBT inclusion to a specially created commission. Their singing, asking God for help, brought a joyous moment in the middle of strife.

"I think the Americans have something to learn from us," said Betty [Katiyo](#), a delegate from the West Zimbabwe Conference.

The United Methodist Church in Africa has grown dramatically over the past 10 years -- jumping 329 percent in the Africa Central Conference, 201 percent in Congo and 154 percent in West Africa -- as membership has dipped in the United States and Europe.

Even with an 11 percent decline in membership, the U.S. branch still is the largest, boasting more than 7 million members. But Africa is not far behind with nearly 4.9 million -- including the single largest delegation at the General Conference: 48 delegates from the North Katanga Conference in Congo.

And this year, after a change in the way delegates are allocated, Africa has a noticeably larger share of delegates: 260 out of 864 delegates, compared with 252 out of 956 delegates four years ago.

"This time around ... you actually see the worldwide nature of the church in terms of delegates," said Katiyo, attending her fourth General Conference.

"You could actually see there were more people from central conferences [those outside the U.S.], and also there were more people taking part even in the legislative committees. People were really taking part."

And the Rev. Mande Muyombo, executive director of the General Board of Global Ministries' Global Mission Connections and delegate from North Katanga, said: "It is also fair to say that Africa -- in the past general conferences, African delegates were not as prepared as they're becoming now. I think African delegates are more empowered, they're more prepared, they're more acquainted with Robert's Rules of Order."

Still, delegates from African countries expressed concerns that their members were underrepresented in the denomination and that the legislation discussed throughout its General Conference was too focused on issues that only pertain to America.

Some warned that a move on ordaining LGBT clergy or allowing clergy to perform same-sex marriages would split the church. Issues regarding the full inclusion of the denomination's LGBT members have surfaced at every conference since 1972 and came to a head earlier in the week when delegates accepted bishops' recommendations to defer any decisions to a commission and possible special session of the General Conference.

Aside from theological disagreement, Katiyo pointed out that homosexuality is not culturally accepted and is even illegal in some African countries. If the United Methodist Church affirmed the inclusion of its LGBT members, she said, it would be banned in her country of Zimbabwe.

African churches haven't placed the same priority on the issue as the U.S. has, Mande said, though he pointed out that Africa is a huge continent, and one African country may not think the same as another.

"I also believe that African voices are diverse and the African notion of ubuntu ['you are because I am'] is inclusive," Mande said.

Examples of conference legislation that was too focused on the U.S., Katiyo said, included a measure advocating health care for all in the U.S. and a proposal to allocate \$20 million to a [new committee on U.S. church growth](#). The latter was later ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council.

When it comes to growth, she said, the American church could learn from Africa, despite the different dynamics in the country.

For one thing, the delegate said, her church of 1,500 emphasizes the Wesleyan idea of "class meetings," small groups that gather every other week in members' homes to pray and act as family. The church is a "nucleus" of the community, she said, hosting events throughout the week, and the congregation sets the day aside for worship after Sunday school "rather than a one-and-a-half-hour thing every week."

The church in North Katanga also offers a holistic, Wesleyan approach to evangelism, according to Muyombo: building schools, hospitals, wells and farming projects around churches and making them relevant to their context.

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But, Kemper said: "We need to find a relevant way for the Western culture as they seem to find a way for African or Filipino or whatever culture. It's not that easy."

That's not to say churches in Africa are without challenges, Muyombo said.

The priorities instead for African churches are on such things as planting churches, ending conflicts and eradicating poverty, he said.

And while there's no doubt the United Methodist Church in Africa is growing, it is not growing as fast as some other denominations, Kemper said. The structure of the churches in Africa also still is dependent on financial support from U.S. churches, he said.

Kulah agreed the African church needs to work toward becoming more self-sufficient because, as the bishops appoint a commission to discuss LGBT inclusion, he said, "what I see the church going to if we cannot reach a compromise -- the end result would be schism, unfortunately."

Earlier in the week, delegates had approved a [comprehensive plan](#) for Africa that would add five bishops after the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, narrowly voting down a push to immediately add two bishops in Nigeria and in Zimbabwe.

"I think the word for me is 'interdependent,'" Kemper said. "We continue to depend on each other, but we also have the ability to walk in our own shoes and our own way of being the church and not depending on financial support from one part of the church even to keep the structure."

The General Conference is scheduled for the first time outside the U.S. in 2024 in Manila, Philippines, followed by 2028 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Meantime, Katiyo said, "I wish either they come or they ask us to come ... be missionaries to America. ... I'm sure if that happens there will be change."

# How United Is African United Methodism?

by [David W. Scott](#)

October 27, 2017

*This post is by UM & Global blogmaster Dr. David W. Scott, Director of Mission Theology at [the General Board of Global Ministries](#). The opinions and analysis expressed here are Dr. Scott's own and do not reflect in any way the official position of Global Ministries.*

## Pan-Africa Initiatives

Currently, in addition to the African College of Bishops, which brings together all United Methodist bishops across the continent, African United Methodists mainly come together around issues of higher education, whether that's for meetings of the African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutes (AAUMTI) and African Association of Methodist Institutes of Higher Education (AAMIHE), or through networks centering around Africa University. **The UMC Africa Initiative has also tried to link Africans across the continent. Central Conferences bring together Africans from portions, but not the entirety, of the continent.**



## **Funding for African UMC Institutions largely from UMC in America**

**All of the meetings mentioned above, however, are largely underwritten by American United Methodist dollars.** Costs for the Africa College of Bishops come from the Episcopal Fund. AAUMTI and AAMIHE are sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The UMC Africa Initiative is funded by American donors. Africa University is also largely supported by American donors.

**This financial situation has its pros and cons, but it is worth pointing out because the continued flow of US dollars to support pan-African initiatives is not guaranteed in the future, especially at current levels. The recommendations the Commission on a Way Forward makes and the subsequent actions of called General Conference in 2019 could significantly alter these economic flows.**

**Hard Questions regarding African Methodism if American funding slows down –**

**If there is less American money available for pan-African initiatives post-2019, the question then will become what value such initiatives have in the eyes of Africans themselves. Will Africans still be willing to pay for some or all of these initiatives, especially in the light of limited resources, overwhelming needs, and the high cost of travel among African countries? Or will Sierra Leonean, Congolese, Zimbabwean, Angolan, and other African United Methodist groups go their own ways and dispense with the fiction of pan-African United Methodism?**

## What if African United Methodists Split Apart

If individual groups do decide to go their own ways, that will not necessarily be a bad thing. First, it's their decision, and they have the right to make that decision. **Second, Africa is not a country. It's a lot of different countries with numerous different contexts between and within those countries. A more local focus could pay dividends with regards to developing successful ministries. Formerly British-affiliated but now separate and autonomous Methodist Churches in Africa do not seek to collaborate in the same ways the UMC does, and they may actually be growing faster.**

## Get Ready for a Controversial View -

**If different groups go their own way and dispense with the notion of pan-African United Methodism, it will demonstrate one thing, though. It will demonstrate just how colonial The United Methodist Church is. A colonial system is dependent on the imperial center to connect the various parts of the periphery. The only reason there were connections between India and Guyana or Fiji, for instance, is because they were both part of the British Empire. If it turns out that the US was keeping pan-African United Methodism together, we will better understand the US's role as imperial center in our own peculiar religious empire.**

**And African United Methodists may yet affirm the value they see in connecting with one another. There are some real and significant bonds of fellowship and support between African United Methodists across the continent. I do not mean to disparage these. Ultimately, though, the question will be for Africans to decide for themselves the value they see in such connections.**

# Commentary: Sexuality debate overshadows real issues in Africa

By the Rev. Lloyd T. Nyarota | January 4, 2017

*Nyarota is a United Methodist elder from Zimbabwe who is now serving a two-point United Church of Canada charge in the province of Alberta. He has served as a consultant for the United Methodist Board of Church and Society.*



I have always felt humbled at being asked to be that voice because I am one of the few United Methodist clergy from Africa who has visited every central conference and almost all of the episcopal areas in Africa. I also have conversed with my friends from across the continent and with delegates to the General Conference.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops has named the Commission on a Way Forward, and Africa got a fair share of the 32 seats. Two African bishops will serve and another will act as one of three moderators. There also are lay people and clergy from across Africa on the commission.

This is a good thing. However, the interesting part is that this commission is going to discuss a way forward for The United Methodist Church primarily on the issue of homosexuality and how we can try to keep our connectional unity.

I have attended two General Conferences as a consultant, which means I have spent more of my time in the halls and corridors with lobbyists. Both times, I was roped into being a voice from Africa at the table, so that I can speak on issues affecting the African churches.

I have noted something interesting: Both the conservatives and the progressives have realized that African numbers are growing by the day and each group is desperate for this vote in hopes of changing things in whichever direction they want the church to go. Africa is now the deal breaker at General Conferences.



The church in Africa is not divided on the sexuality issue. Africans generally agree with current church law that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching

But Africans suffer so many other exclusions and divisions in our churches, such as tribalism, regionalism, and polygamy and, at times, nepotism. These are issues in which we really want to see our coalition partners' support with the same energy and enthusiasm that they want us to show and put forth on the sexuality issue.

At General Conference 2016, it was the conservatives who wanted to cut money from the World Service Fund, even though that fund is the one that provides the most support for ministries in Africa and Asia. And some of those ministries address poverty, which is one of the biggest issues facing African churches.

Meanwhile, those of us from sub-Saharan Africa have to summon a lot of energy to talk about sex in public. It's taboo to talk about how people have sex and with whom. But we have been forced to talk about these issues and, worse still, talk about them in the church with our bishops presiding.

**We feel that U.S delegates have no respect for our bishops. We were shocked at the General Conference 2016 when someone lashed out at our African bishops without a clue of what our bishops go through to provide leadership on the continent. One of the bishops from Africa was in the hospital because of malaria contracted while he was traveling the jungles to provide leadership to the church.**

**Africans are raised to respect our elders and leaders and it appears the U.S. culture has lost that.**

**Our worlds are different and we are likely to have different pressing issues and different sets of values.**

**Polygamy is one of the big issues facing Africa**, and it's often confusing to pastors in the local churches. Children from polygamous marriages sometimes cannot be baptized. Women from polygamous marriages are sometimes denied acceptance into women's fellowships (organizations equivalent to United Methodist Women) because of the stigma associated with polygamy within the church.

**Polygamy is a long time cultural phenomenon and missionaries created a legacy of stigma around this issue that is difficult for The United Methodist Church in Africa, especially since some African churches promote polygamy. This is an issue that we will be discussing for generations to come.**

I can bet that if one visits every United Methodist district in sub-Saharan Africa, you will get as many positions on polygamy as there are districts. There is no consensus.

General Conferences have never attempted to take an inclusive position on this matter. *Africa has been made to believe that homosexuality is more important than polygamy issues.*

I don't think there is any conference in Africa that has faced a challenge of an LGBTQ person seeking confirmation or ordination, but we have always dealt with issues of polygamy at all levels of the church.

In Africa, ministers are likely to face charges if they are found smoking or drinking alcohol— at least this is true in my conference. This is not an issue in the United States, where conservatives or progressives might offer you alcohol if you have dinner at their home.

**Divorce is another area where we see differences.** We notice that with many of our counterparts from the west, when there is a challenge in their marriages, they simply divorce. In our culture, divorce is not taken lightly.

I remember the first time my name was presented to the official board as a candidate for ministry. I did not pass because I am a child from a broken family. My divorced mother remarried and that left people with reservations about whether I could be a mufundisi (pastor).

It took one courageous woman to challenge the official board on the third seating and reason prevailed. I believe I have served my church with grace and provided leadership across the connection.

**How many people in Africa from either divorced families or polygamous families have been excluded from our churches or from leadership in the church?**

**There are other justice issues like rape and the stigma associated with it, human rights abuses and issues like justice, democracy and governance, poverty, child labor and colonialism in Palestine, which all need attention and are more important to Africans.**

**It's time our conservative coalition partners paid attention to the real justice issues in Africa.**



## From **US United Methodists vs African & Asian United Methodists**

March 5, 2016 by UMC

The UMC is governed by the United Methodist Book of Discipline (BoD). The BoD is agreed to every 4 years at the General Conference of the church. The BoD affirms that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God and encourages United Methodists to be in ministry with and for all people. However, the BoD also states that homosexuality is incompatible with scripture and that avowed, practicing homosexuals may not be ordained as ministers. It further states that marriage is only between one man and one woman and further, forbids UMC clergy from officiating at the celebrations of same gender unions or marriages. Over the years a number of UMC clergy have been tried and defrocked for participating in same gender unions/marriages.

At the last General Conference in 2012, there was a showdown between progressive US Methodists and conservative Methodists boosted by folks mainly from Africa and Asia, regarding removing the sections of the BoD forbidding the ordination of LGBT candidates for ministry and officiating at same gender unions/marriages. The conservatives prevailed and those provisions of the BoD remained. In light of the consistent failure of pro-LGBT equality measures at UMC General Conferences, there have been calls for schism. Some progressive Methodists have voiced the opinion that failure to agree on LGBT equality in the UMC are sufficient grounds to divide the church.

## ***Summary of Slides***

- **Extraordinary diversity in sub-Saharan Africa**
- **United Methodist Church continues to expand in Africa**
- **Traditionalist Plan supported strongly in Africa**

## **Issues**

- **Terrorism and Regional Conflicts**
- **Reducing Poverty, etc.**
- **Polygamy has greater impact as an issue to African Methodism than issues related to homosexuality**
- **Dependence on American UMC for funding pan-Africa Initiatives and Institutions**

