



Charge Conference Directions

The Purpose of Charge Conference

A Charge Conference is more than an annual business meeting. It is a time for the congregation to gather in the presence of God, celebrate what God has done, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and prepare faithfully for the ministry ahead.

Methodists have long practiced Christian conferencing as a means of grace. From the earliest Methodist societies, believers gathered to worship, pray, examine their common life, encourage one another, and renew their commitment to Christ. John Wesley described this shared responsibility as “watching over one another in love.” A charge conference continues that tradition by bringing worship, accountability, discernment, and decision-making together in one gathering.

The goal is not simply to complete forms, elect leaders, and approve compensation. Those responsibilities are important, but they serve a greater purpose: helping the church make disciples of Jesus Christ, strengthen its ministry, care for its people, and participate in the mission of the Global Methodist Church.

A well-planned charge conference should be uplifting, worshipful, and forward-looking. Those present should leave encouraged by God’s faithfulness and prepared to follow where the Holy Spirit leads.

What Is a Charge Conference?

The charge conference is the basic connectional body within each pastoral charge of the Global Methodist Church. A pastoral charge may consist of one local church or multiple churches served together.

The charge conference meets at least annually to:

- Celebrate the ministry and mission of the congregation.
- Receive reports and evaluate the church’s spiritual and organizational health.
- Elect leaders for the coming year.
- Set pastoral compensation and make other required administrative decisions.
- Recommend candidates for ordained or certified lay ministry.
- Approve changes to the church’s ministry structure when needed.

- Strengthen the congregation's relationship with the district, Conference, and wider Global Methodist Church.

The Presiding Elder establishes the time and place of the conference and normally presides over it. The Presiding Elder may designate another Elder to preside. While the Presiding Elder presides over the Charge Conference, the pastor and local church leaders are responsible for planning and preparing the gathering in coordination with the Presiding Elder.

Charge Conference or Church Conference?

A regular Charge Conference is composed primarily of the professing members of the church council or its equivalent. Retired ordained and diaconal ministers who hold their membership in that charge conference are also members, together with any others designated by the Book of Doctrines and Discipline.

A Charge Conference may instead be convened as a **Church Conference (this is recommended)**. A Church Conference allows every professing member of the local church who is present to participate and vote. This may be especially helpful when:

- The church is considering a significant decision.
- Broader congregational participation would strengthen the church.
- The congregation is establishing or renewing its vision.
- The church desires greater transparency and shared ownership.
- The gathering includes an important season of transition or discernment.

A Church Conference may be called by the Presiding Elder or requested in writing by the pastor, the church council, or at least ten percent of the professing members of the congregation. A copy of any request must be provided to the pastor. The same notice and meeting requirements that apply to a Charge Conference also apply to a church conference.

Preparing for the Conference

The pastor and church leaders should work with the Presiding Elder to establish the date, format, agenda, and required reports. Notice of the time and place must be given at least ten days in advance through at least three of the following methods, unless local law requires something different:

- An announcement during worship.
- The church bulletin.
- A church newsletter or other publication.
- Email and/or regular mail

The notice should clearly state whether the gathering will be a charge conference or a church conference.

The members present and voting at any properly announced charge conference or church conference constitute a quorum. There is no minimum attendance requirement beyond those who are present at the duly announced gathering.

The conference should be conducted in the language spoken by the majority of those present, with adequate translation provided when needed.

Before the meeting, the pastor and church leaders should:

- Complete and review all required reports and forms.
- Confirm the list of leaders being nominated.
- Prepare pastoral compensation recommendations.
- Identify any candidates requiring approval or recommendation.
- Determine whether changes to the ministry structure are being proposed.
- Prepare a concise report celebrating the church's ministry during the past year.
- Identify important ministry goals and challenges for the coming year.
- Complete all required Charge Conference forms.
- Plan the worship, Scripture, prayers, and other spiritual elements of the gathering.

A Sample Order for the Gathering

The charge conference should be organized as an act of worship rather than as a business meeting with a brief devotional added to the beginning. The following order may be adapted to the needs of the congregation.

1. Welcome and Call to Worship

The presiding elder or pastor welcomes those present and reminds the congregation that the purpose of the gathering is to seek God's will and strengthen the church's ministry.

2. Prayer, Confession, and Reconciliation

Allow time for prayer and honest reflection. The congregation may confess where it has fallen short, seek reconciliation where relationships have been strained, and ask that nothing obstruct its openness to God or its cooperation with one another.

3. Scripture and Proclamation

Read Scripture and offer a brief message centered on the mission of the church, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The Presiding Elder should be given the opportunity to bring the message if they wish

4. Celebration and Testimony

Celebrate signs of God's faithfulness during the past year. This may include testimonies, baptisms, professions of faith, new ministries, mission work, answered prayers, community partnerships, and other evidence of changed lives.

The names of church members who have died since the previous charge conference may be read with prayer and thanksgiving for their lives.

5. Ministry Review and Vision

Review the congregation's worship, discipleship, fellowship, care, witness, mission, and stewardship. Reports should help the church understand where it has been fruitful, where growth is needed, and what God may be calling it to do next.

Reports should be concise. Statistics and written information are useful when they help the congregation evaluate its ministry and make faithful plans, but the reading of lengthy reports should not dominate the gathering.

6. Essential Business

Conduct the required business clearly and efficiently. This will ordinarily include:

- Receiving required reports.
- Electing church leaders.
- Setting pastoral compensation and benefits.
- Approving/recommending candidates for ministry (Certified and/or Ordained).
- Approving changes to the church's organization or ministry structure.
- Addressing property, financial, or other matters requiring charge conference action.
- Recording all motions and decisions in the minutes and the minutes included in the package sent to the Annual Conference.

For a special session, only business consistent with the stated purpose of the meeting may be considered.

7. Prayer for Leaders and Workers

Pray for the pastor, church leaders, lay ministers, ministry candidates, and others who will serve during the coming year. Pray also that the Lord of the harvest will raise up and send additional workers.

8. Commitment and Sending Forth

Conclude with a renewed commitment to Christ and the mission of the church. The congregation may use a portion of the Wesley Covenant Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

Holy Communion may also be celebrated as a sign of the congregation's communion with the risen Christ and its unity with one another.

Keeping the Right Focus

The conference must set compensation, elect leaders, receive reports, and make necessary decisions. However, if that is all it accomplishes, the church has aimed too low.

Every report, election, budget, organizational decision, and ministry plan should serve the mission of Jesus Christ. Personal agendas should yield to the shared calling to make disciples, proclaim the Gospel, care for one another, and participate in God's work in the world.

The church should depart from charge conference grateful for what God has done, honest about where growth is needed, united in its mission, and expectant about what the Holy Spirit will do next.

Reporting and Record Keeping

The Charge Conference is a legal meeting. Therefore, all minutes, reports, forms, etc., from this meeting need to be kept. All forms and minutes from the Charge Conference should be sent in a packet to the Annual Conference.

Charge Conference Checklist

Please make sure the following is turned in to the Presiding Elder as applicable

1. Charge Conference Report Form
2. Clergy Compensation Form
3. Clergy Housing Allowance Resolution
4. Clergy and Charge Annual Covenant Conversation Form
(should have been previously provided to PE by SPRC)
5. Certificate of Additional Insured (if not previously provided)