

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING DISTRICTS WITH ANNUAL CONFERENCES

Since one of the options for a way forward, and the option recommended by the Leadership Team (LT) of the Alaska United Methodist Conference (AUMC), is to become a district of another annual conference, it might be informative to examine the similarities and differences between an annual conference and a district.

SMILARITIES

Annual conferences and districts are similar in some ways, such as the following:

- 1) Annual conferences (§603.1) and districts (§659.4) may be incorporated when it seems helpful to take action to do that. It might or might not be significant that if the AUMC were to retain its corporate status, which is recommended by the LT, upon becoming a district of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference (PNW), it would be the only incorporated district of that conference.
- 2) Annual conferences (§§603.2 & .3) and districts (§658) may hold regular conferences.
- 3) Annual conferences (§610) and districts (§661) may organize with subunits in charge of specified ministries within the area and to extend mission and ministry beyond the bounds within which they subsist as entities.
- 4) Annual conferences (§607) and districts (§660) may have lay leadership which has specific responsibility for promoting the participation of lay people in the decision-making processes of the Church at all levels.
- 5) Annual conferences (§635) and districts (§666) have provision for structures to promote, facilitate, regulate, and monitor candidacy for ordained ministry and licensed ministry.
- 6) Annual conference (§§648 and 647) and districts (§§671 and 670) both have provisions for the organization of United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women.

DIFFERENCES

Annual conferences and districts are different in some ways, such as the following:

- 1) The membership of an annual conference is prescribed in the UM Constitution (§32), whereas the membership of a district is prescribed by the annual conference of which it is a part (§659.1).
- 2) The order of business of an annual conference is prescribed by the General Conference (§605), whereas a district is free to establish its own order of business (§659.2) and deal with whatever is relevant to the membership of that district.

- 3) The annual conference is the basic or fundamental body of the Church (§§11 and 33) and as such is required and expected to hold regular meetings or conferences, whereas the district conference is subordinate to the annual conference and meets either at the command of the annual conference or as called into session by the district superintendent (§658).
- 4) The annual conference chooses how to distribute its budget among the subordinate entities of the conference, and it may apportion that budget either to the districts, to the charges, or to the local churches (§614). The district has a fully subordinate role in budgeting, and either apportions the charges or local churches the budget apportioned to it by the conference or has no involvement in that process, as determined by the annual conference.
- 5) Clergy members of the Church have their membership in the annual conference. Lay members of the Church have their membership in local churches. Neither clergy nor lay members have a fundamental right to membership in a district conference.

This list is intended to be representative, and not exhaustive.

It might also be important in this context to note that in many significant ways, as a missionary conference within the episcopal area that includes PNW, Alaska already functions as though it were a district of that conference.

- 1) We share a bishop.
- 2) Our superintendent sits on the area appointive cabinet as though he were a district superintendent.
- 3) Our Professional Ministries Unit performs virtually all the functions of a District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
- 4) Brant Henshaw, the AUMC treasurer is also the treasurer of PNW.
- 5) The Mission Vitality and Innovation Team of PNW also serves that function for the AUMC.

Respectfully submitted,

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