

2026 Arkansas Conference Annual Conference Vocabulary

ARUMC - Abbreviation for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Bishop Laura Merrill - Leader of the Arkansas, Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences; presides over the business sessions of Annual Conference. Sometimes the word “episcopal” is used to describe the office of the bishop; this means “pertaining to a bishop.”

District Superintendents - Clergy leaders of the four Districts that make up our conference.

Appointive Cabinet - Made up of Bishop Merrill, Rev. Judy Rudd as the Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Dr. Ulysses Washington as Coordinator of Cultural Outreach, and the four District Superintendents.

Cabinet - The Appointive Cabinet plus the Director of Administrative Services and the Conference Lay Leader

Laity - Members of the legislative body who are not Clergy

Clergy - Members of the legislative body who are Elders, Deacons, Associate Members and Local Pastors serving in churches and ministries beyond the local church

Secretary of the Annual Conference - An officer of the Conference responsible for minutes, tellers, session rules, and other items that help order the Annual Conference session.

Pre-Conference Journal - The packet of information containing the conference agenda, proposed resolutions and petitions, committee and board reports, and other important information needed for voting members to prepare for Annual Conference.

Conference Journal - The publication that includes the conference agenda, legislation, statistics, minutes of Annual Conference, and a directory of clergy and laity present, published after the completion of Annual Conference.


Plenary Session - The session of the conference where all the members are present, as opposed to the clergy session or the laity session.


Setting the Bar of the Annual Conference - During the first plenary session, the conference secretary designates the floor of the conference room where members of the conference must be seated for their vote to be counted.

Adoption of Agenda—Approval of the agenda as proposed in writing. Once it has been adopted, the conference follows only what is listed in the agenda, unless it is later amended.

The Floor of the Annual Conference—The area where conference members are seated and speak from microphones when recognized.

Session Rules - These rules only apply to the current annual conference session.



 [Proposed 2026 Annual Conference Session Rules.pdf](#)

Standing Rules - The set of rules that define our conference structure and guide our business throughout the year. These rules remain in effect until or unless modified by a future annual conference.  [Proposed 2026 Arkansas Conference Standing Rules.docx - Google Docs.pdf](#)

Consent Calendar - Items that need conference approval but are not expected to require debate. These items are grouped together and voted on at the time they are listed on the agenda. Items can be removed from the consent calendar to be considered separately.

Voting Rights -  [Copy of Voting Rights Chart Revised May 2024.pdf](#)

Robert's Rules of Order - General Rules for a legislative body to abide by. This is what the Conference uses when not in conflict with Arkansas Conference Session Rules, Standing Rules, or The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

 [Roberts Rules of Order Simplified.docx - Google Docs](#)  [parliamentaryprocedures.pdf](#)

Parliamentary Inquiry - A request for help from the bishop regarding the parliamentary process.

Point of Order - When a person interrupts the current speaker to identify a suspected breach of the rules or order and requests that the Bishop make a ruling. The person raising a point of order must first name the parliamentary rule or the paragraph in the Book of Discipline that they believe is being violated. It is not proper to say "Point of Order" and ask a question.

Daily Digest - The daily recap of the official events, happenings, and work of the Annual Conference electronically published at the end of the close of business each day of the conference session.

Ordination - The ceremony that confers clergy orders upon a candidate who has been approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry, through the "laying on of hands" by the bishop. Other clergy are also commissioned and recognized in various ways during the service of ordination.

Jurisdictional Conference—This is a meeting of a group of conferences that elects bishops and sets conference boundaries for a specific area. They generally meet every four years. The ARUMC is a part of the South Central Jurisdiction.

[Click here to learn more about the South Central Jurisdiction](#)

General Conference—Meets every four years (usually), the highest legislative body of the church, includes all conferences across the globe, and is the only body that “speaks” for the United Methodist Church.

Book of Discipline - Sometimes referred to as “The Discipline,” it contains the rules, doctrine, and structure of the United Methodist Church.

Social Principles - Established by the General Conference, they speak to the issues in the contemporary world from a sound Biblical and theological foundation and are contained in the Book of Discipline.

BOM - The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for the process whereby persons enter into ministry as clergy. The BOM oversees and administers candidacy, licensing as local pastors, ordination, clergy membership, retirement, and the gathering and publishing of clergy memoirs.

CF&A - Conference Committee on Finance and Administration; this committee oversees the conference budget.

ACCYM - Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries - The group of youth and adults who represent their local churches and districts on the conference level to plan events for youth such as Refuge, Veritas, Jr. and Sr. High Assembly, and YSF fundraisers

YSF - Youth Service Fund - A fund set up by youth, for youth, to promote and support missions; raises money at youth events then awards grants with money raised to youth in local churches to do mission work

Associate Members - is a licensed local pastor who has completed advanced educational and service requirements, been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the clergy session of the Annual Conference. They are not ordained as Elders or Deacons, but they are itinerant and guaranteed an appointment. They have the full pastoral authority of a licensed local pastor in their appointed ministry setting.

Lay Supply - refers to a qualified layperson assigned by a bishop to perform the work of ministry when an ordained or licensed minister is unavailable. This is considered an assignment to fill temporary gaps, typically for a short term (often not exceeding one year), rather than a permanent appointment. Lay supply pastors cannot preside over the sacraments of Holy Communion or Baptism, nor can they officiate at weddings. An ordained elder must be present to consecrate elements or perform these rites.

Elder - an ordained member of the clergy who is set apart for a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. They must complete a Master of Divinity from a UMC approved school. Elders have world wide sacramental authority, meaning they can administer Baptism

and Holy Communion in any context. Upon Ordination, Elders wear a stole around the neck symbolizing the "yoke of Christ".

Deacon - an ordained member of the clergy called to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Deacons often have "secular" jobs as well as serving in the church. Deacons are not itinerant. They usually find their own jobs and the Bishop approves and appoints them to that ministry setting. 2024 General Conference voted to allow Deacons to preside over the Sacraments within their specific ministry setting. Upon ordination, Deacons traditionally wear a stole over the left shoulder, which reflects the towel Jesus used to wash his disciples' feet.

Local Pastor - a clergy member who is not ordained but is licensed by a Bishop to perform the full duties of a pastor in their appointed setting. They work to complete the Course of Study, a five-year theological education program. Sometimes those in seminary and preparing for provisional membership work as local pastors.

Provisional - Clergy membership status that is conferred through commissioning and precedes ordination. Provisional deacons and elders work through a period of residency, which lasts a minimum of 2 years. During this period they have the authority to administer baptism and holy communion, but only within their appointed ministry setting. Traditionally, commissioned members do not wear a clergy stole.

Ordinand - A person who has successfully completed their provisional period and has been approved by the clergy session of the Annual Conference to be ordained as either an elder or a deacon. Newly ordained clergy receive a clergy stole, as a symbol of the "yoke of Christ."

Certified Lay Minister - is a certified lay servant who has received advanced training to fulfill his or her calling to serve in congregational leadership as part of a ministry team. Certified lay ministers (CLMs) serve under the supervision of an ordained or licensed clergyperson. This role is a specialized category of Lay Servant Ministries designed to enhance the quality of leadership in small churches or expand team ministry in larger ones. They have no sacramental authority but can be used as leaders in a variety of ministries and roles.