**THE STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH**

**BACKGROUND**

The text governing the organization and structure of the Wesleyan Church is called *The Discipline* and is used as the source for the material below. The official website of the Wesleyan Church is also cited below.

1. **LOCAL CHURCH**

A Local Church in the Wesleyan Church is a body of members who have been formally organized according to *The Discipline* and who meet regularly for the purposes of evangelism, nurture, fellowship and worship. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 49, paragraph 500). A Local Church becomes an Established Church when it meets the requirements set forth in *The Discipline* and is so authorized by the District in which it sits. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 51, paragraph 518). An Established Church has the power to assemble for business as a Local Church Conference and elect a board of administration to operate under all rights, powers and duties given to a Local Church in the Constitution of the Wesleyan Church. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 51, paragraph 518). They may also be incorporated when so authorized by the District, but its incorporation is not required. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 291, paragraph 4000). The Wesleyan Church describes Local Churches as subsidiaries of the Wesleyan Church. (Subsidiary info) A Local Church is most similarly situated to a Parish in the Roman Catholic Church.

A Local Church Conference is the highest governing body within a Local Church. It operates within the powers granted to it by the Constitution of the Wesleyan Church, the General Conference and *The Discipline*. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 64, paragraph 625).

* 1. **Constitutional Rights of Local Churches**

Local Churches, under The Constitution of the Wesleyan Church, have the right to receive or expel members, appoint their own Pastor (subject to confirmation by their District), and to elect their officers and remove them for cause. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 33-34, paragraph 315, sections 1-8). A Local Church also has the right to elect trustees and (through such trustees) to supervise, control and maintain its property for the use and benefit of the ministry and members of The Wesleyan Church. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 34, paragraph 315, section 6)

* 1. **Midler Avenue Wesleyan Church**

The Midler Avenue Wesleyan Church is an Established Local Church within The Penn York District of the Wesleyan Church. ([Milder Ave Location](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1OK8KUP4iazYutvrTGk50C7I8HcAb-cyO&ll=43.06000210000003%2C-76.10416670000001&z=8)) The Midler Avenue Wesleyan Church is not incorporated in the State of New York. (Midler Ave Church Site).

1. **PASTORS**

A Pastor is an ordained minister who is appointed to serve as Pastor for a Local Church. He is the Chief Executive Officer of the Local Church. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 69, paragraph 675).

* 1. **The Appointment of a Pastor**

A Pastor of a Local Church is voted on by the Local Church Conference. A pastoral agreement, must be reviewed and recommended by the District’s Board of Administration. The appointment of a Pastor is only made final upon the approval of the District Board of Administration. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 71, paragraph 697).

* 1. **The Removal of an Initial Call Pastor**

An Initial Call Pastor is a Pastor who is serving as Pastor for the first time. The District’s Board of Administration may remove the Pastor with a two-thirds majority vote, provided that it has been asked to do so by a two third’s majority vote of the Local Church Board of Administration. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 72, paragraph 712)

* 1. **The Termination of a Renewed Call**

A Renewed Call is when a Pastor has been renewed past their initial term of service to remain as Pastor. The Pastor’s renewed call may be terminated by: (1) resignation of the pastor; (2) a one-third vote of the Local Church Board of Administration to the District Superintendent in writing informing them of a desire to vote on a new Pastor and a two-thirds majority vote by the Local Church Board of Administration after approval by the District Superintendent; or (3) the District Board of Administration may, by majority vote, order the District Superintendent to conduct a pastoral vote. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, pages 73-74, paragraph 722)

1. **DISTRICTS**

A District in the Wesleyan Church is a grouping of churches created by the authority of the General Conference, within which the Local Churches, ministers and members of The Wesleyan Church are organized according to *The Discipline* and are under its governing authority. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 111, paragraph 1000). Each District of the Wesleyan Church shall be incorporated and shall be named “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (official District name) District of The Wesleyan Church, Inc.” (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 296, paragraphs 4100 and 4120). The Districts are to be incorporated so that they are able to receive, hold in trust, encumber, sell, transfer, and otherwise dispose of District property and such local property as may be held by the District. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 296, paragraph 4100). An incorporated District is a subsidiary of The Wesleyan Church. (Subsidiary info)

* 1. **The Constitutional Rights of Districts**

According to the Constitution of the Wesleyan Church, Districts are able to elect and ordain ministers, to receive or decline persons recommended to it for particular ministry, to alter any pastoral agreement, to veto the action of a Local Church and appoint another Pastor when in the District’s best interest, and to take charge of all the ministers and Local Churches within its bounds. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 34-35, paragraph 323, sections 1-10).

* 1. **The District Church Conference**

A District Conference is the chief governing body of a District. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 116, paragraph 1075). A District Conference has the power to approve, alter, or veto pastoral agreements, to appoint a Pastor if one has not yet been supplied at the time of the District Conference or whenever requested to do so by a Local Church, and to appoint each minister to the proper category of service or other appointment. The Conference also has the power to ordain, commission, license or grant recognition or restoration of a minister. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 126-127, paragraph 1180)

* 1. **The District Board of Administration**

The District Board of Administration carries out the will of the District Conference and serves as the chief governing body of the District in the interim of District Conference Sessions. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 131, paragraph 1200). The Board is tasked with the general oversight of all District officials, officers, boards, leadership teams, committees, employees, and auxiliary organizations. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 135, paragraph 1233). The Board is also responsible for incorporating the District, becoming the Board of Directors of said corporation and having the power to acquire, purchase, manage, sell, exchange, mortgage, deed in trust, pledge, rent, lease, and convey any property. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 135, paragraph 1233). If the District is not incorporated, the Board will still have the same powers regarding the District’s property as though it were incorporated. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 135, paragraph 1233).

The Board has the power to approve all pastoral agreements and make all ministerial appointments in the interim of the District Conference sessions. These decisions are subject to the final approval of the District Conference. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 137, paragraph 1233, section 29). They also have the power to approve a Local Church’s request to purchase real property.

The Board is responsible for taking charge of any complaints or accusations against a Local Church within the District and is tasked with carrying out disciplinary proceedings as deemed necessary. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 138, paragraph 1233, section 35). They have the power to take charge of judicial proceedings and to order investigations for any ordained or commissioned minister. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 139, paragraph 1233, section 40) They also have the power to approve a pastor’s renewed call or removal. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 139, paragraph 1233, section 39).

* 1. **The District Superintendent**

The District Superintendent is the spiritual and administrative leader of the District. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 150, paragraph 1300). They are the chair of the District Board of Administration and work with the board in establishing policies, goals, and objectives for more effectively fulfilling the mission of the District. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 154, Paragraph 1310).

The District Superintendent is responsible for the approval of any transfer of a minister from another District. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 155, Paragraph 1310). They are also responsible for recommending the removal of a Pastor to the Board of Administration. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 155, Paragraph 1310).

* 1. **The District Board of Ministerial Development**

The Board is responsible for vetting all individuals to become ministers. They conduct interviews and provide recommendations to the District Conference. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 166, paragraph 1390).

* 1. **The Penn York District of the Wesleyan Church**

The Penn York District is a District of the Wesleyan Church located in Central New York and Pennsylvania. ([District Map](https://www.wesleyan.org/about/districts)). Midler Avenue Church is a Local Church in The Penn York District.

1. **Merging of Districts**

The District in which the Midler Avenue Wesleyan Church used to sit was the Central New York District. The Districts of the Wesleyan Church underwent a geographical change on June 15, 2019. The Midler Avenue Wesleyan Church is now within the Penn York District of the Wesleyan Church. The Central New York District no longer exists. ([Merging of Districts](https://www.wesleyan.org/penn-york-newest-district-of-the-wesleyan-church)).

1. **Penn York District Incorporated in NYS as “Central New York District of the Wesleyan Church”**

There is an active Corporate Entity listing in the State of New York, originally filed in 1883 as ROCHESTER CONFERENCE OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONNECTION OF AMERICA and then re-filed in 1972 by THE CENTRAL NEW YORK DISTRICT OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH. It has a Process address of 4152 South Center Street, Horseheads, NY 14845. *There is currently no corporate listing in New York or Pennsylvania for the newly created PENN YORK DISTRICT OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH.* According to the bylaws of The Wesleyan Church, a District “shall” be incorporated.

The Penn York District may be operating under the corporate registration of the New York Central District because that corporate listing is active (even though The Central New York District no longer exists within The Wesleyan Church) and it is the same Process address as the headquarters of the Penn York District. (Entity Info - Central NY District)

1. **GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH**

The General Conference of the Wesleyan Church is the governing body of the Wesleyan Church. It is currently registered as two corporations in the state of Indiana. (Entity Info; Entity Info). The General Board of the Wesleyan Church carries out the will of the General Conference and serves as the chief governing body of the Wesleyan Church in the interim of the General Conference sessions. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church,* page 196, paragraph 1600). The General Conference of the Wesleyan Church also hears and determines the charges against the “moral character” of a minister or lay member under its jurisdiction. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 203, paragraph 1655). The General Conference adopts the overall framework for ministerial training and establishes the various agencies and schools responsible to carry out the work. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 274, paragraph 3150). The General Board provides the framework for adopting the basic courses of study and coordinating the total program for ministerial studies. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 274, paragraph 3150).

1. **The Constitutional Rights of The General Conference of The Wesleyan Church**

The General Conference has the right to designate criteria for its self-procedure and elect its own officers. The General Conference has the power to make rules for the religion, subject to the following limitations: they cannot change the Articles of Religion (the founding principles of the religion), they cannot change rules of government so as to impact equal representation of ministers and lay people, they cannot deny any church the right to receive or expel their own members, they cannot deny a District the final disposition of all pastoral arrangements, they cannot discriminate against any sex, they cannot interfere with the supervision of established Districts over the ministers and Local Churches within their bounds, and lastly, they cannot deprive any member or minister their right to a hearing by an impartial committee or appeal. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 38, paragraph 360).

1. **AFFILIATES OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH**

An Affiliate of The Wesleyan Church is formed when a District seeks to develop responses to social, humanitarian, or community needs which can be best achieved through a separate legal entity. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 306. Paragraph 4340). An Affiliate Corporation shall be incorporated apart from the subsidiary corporation. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 306. Paragraph 4340). The bylaws of an Affiliate corporation may only be amended if approved by the Board of Directors of the subsidiary corporation that created them. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 307, paragraph 4350, section 2). The Board of Directors of the subsidiary corporation also decides the members of the Board for the Affiliate corporation. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 307, paragraph 4350, section 3). All property of an Affiliate corporation shall, in the event of the liquidation or dissolution of the affiliate, devolve and pass to The Wesleyan Church Corporation or one of its subsidiary corporations, i.e. districts. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 307, paragraph 4350, section 11).

* 1. **Chambers Camp**

The Chambers Camp is a corporate entity in the state of New York. (Camp Website) It is listed on the Penn York District Website. (Penn York District Website) Camps are described by The Wesleyan Church website as Affiliates and therefore “subsidiaries of subsidiaries”. (Affiliate info) They have a registered corporate name of CHAMBERS CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER, INC. and have a process address at 112 Campground Road, Beaver Dams, New York 14812. (Entity Info - Camp)

1. **PROPERTY OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH**

All property acquired by a Local Church, District or Affiliate of the Wesleyan Church, whether incorporated or unincorporated, must be held in a trust for The Wesleyan Church Corporation. Even if this trust clause is left out of the deed, for whatever reason, its absence does not relieve the entity from its responsibility to The Wesleyan Church and is still subject to the authority of The Wesleyan Church. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 314, paragraph 4590). The trust clause required by *The Discipline* is as follows:

In trust for the use and benefit of the ministry and members of The Wesleyan Church, incorporated under the laws of the state of Indiana as The Wesleyan Church Corporation, subject to The Discipline, regulations, and appointments of said Church as from time to time legislated and declared.

1. **Local Church Property**

Local Church property within an established District may be held by the Local Church or by the District, as decided upon by the District Conference. (*The Discipline of the Wesleyan Church*, page 317, paragraph 4680).