

The Susquehanna Conference in the United Methodist Church

Later this year, the United Methodist Church will once again have a Susquehanna Conference. Within United Methodism, the Susquehanna Conference was created November 14, 1964. In 1968 that ecclesiastical body officially became the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church.

On October 18, 1969, the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church joined with other mid-state United Methodist congregations to become the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. The name of the new conference and the date of the union were deliberately chosen to coordinate with statewide efforts to reorganize the denomination's structure and ministry in Pennsylvania. The previous week on October 11, 1969, congregations to the west voted to join and become the Western Pennsylvania Conference. The following week on October 25, 1969, congregations to the east voted to join and become the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

On June 4, 2009, the Central Pennsylvania Conference voted to return to the name Susquehanna Conference. The change was prompted by the union of the conference with the Pennsylvania congregations of the Wyoming Conference, named for the Wyoming Valley in northeastern Pennsylvania. To adequately identify the conference within national and global contexts, the tentative logo for the new conference's letterhead and website explains that the Susquehanna Conference is "A Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church."

While both the old and the new Susquehanna Conferences covered churches in Central Pennsylvania, there are geographic differences. The old Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church also included area outside Pennsylvania but was limited to the watershed of the Susquehanna River and its extension, the Chesapeake Bay. The new Susquehanna Conference is limited to Pennsylvania but also includes areas in the watersheds of the Delaware, Ohio and St. Lawrence Rivers.

The final vote to make the name change official is scheduled for the June 12, 2010, special session to formally unite the Pennsylvania congregations of the present Wyoming and Central Pennsylvania Conferences. That session will be held in Williamsport PA at the Cultural Arts Center and will include the ordinations of the Pennsylvania candidates approved by the two Conferences.