



2024 LAITY ELECTION PROFILE BOOKLET
for the Texas Annual Conference

2024 Laity Delegate Profiles

submitted by Lay Delegates

offering themselves up for election as delegates to
the 2024 South Central Jurisdictional Conference
of The United Methodist Church

Procedure of Conducting Election of Lay Delegates to Jurisdictional Conference

The process of electing lay delegates to the 2024 Jurisdictional Conference is open to any interested individual. However, through the Delegate Profile Booklet lay delegates voting members are better informed about the qualifications of persons who have specifically expressed an interest in being elected. Balloting and counting will be quicker and more accurate.

Procedural Steps:

1. All interested individuals were invited to submit photographs of themselves together with brief resumes for inclusion in this booklet to be distributed to all lay delegates to Annual Conference. This booklet has been prepared and is being sent via email blast to all lay delegates as an addendum to the Pre-Conference Journal. The availability of the resumes and photos of persons interested in serving as delegates to the 2024 Jurisdictional Conference will enable all lay delegates to Annual Conference to study individual qualifications and vote more intelligently.
2. The voting procedure will be as follows:
 - A. Each person listed in the distributed booklet will be assigned an identifying number for use in the voting process.
 - B. Lay persons not in the booklet will have an opportunity to submit their name for the election process at the Laity Session of the Annual Conference.
 - C. Ballots will be tallied by our TAC Tellers, (Lance Richards is the Head Teller):
 - i. Following the voting session the Laity Session will move through its agenda, stopping at appropriate places in the agenda for the tally announcement and submitting of the subsequent ballot.
 - ii. When a delegate is elected, the newly elected delegate's name will be added to the list of 2024 Jurisdictional Conference Delegation on one of the screens at the front of the Grand Ballroom.



Name: Janet Allen

Church Membership: Houston, St. Mark's (Pecore)

District: Metro

Occupation: Health Sciences Research Executive

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe God is calling the UMC to strengthen its resolve to remain faithful in connection and focus shared resources to respond to the needs and dreams of communities worldwide. The UMC is called to be transformational, healing and joy filled. Even when challenged by questions of policy, structure and rules, we are called to remember that these questions arise from a responsibility to one another, to the mission of the UMC, and our calling as Christians.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Our conferences are facing the need for 1) recommitment to the work and life of the church together in response to God's call to all of us in the UMC; 2) renewed commitment to the organization and processes that provide guidance, structure and stewardship; 3) revision of processes and structures that prevent or hinder full engagement in ministry and mission; 4) thorough discernment and dedication to resolving stewardship challenges before us.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I can offer skills and experiences that could be helpful during this time of crisis and restoration. I recently served as a part of the group of clergy and laity organizing That We May Be One (TWMBO), which has shown how the church will rise to the challenges before us. In my career in the oversight, fiscal responsibility, ethics and regulation of biomedical research with both The University of Texas Health Science Center and now with Baylor College of Medicine in the Texas Medical Center I have led and engaged in teams charged with a broad range of ethical, fiscal, regulatory and process related goals in complex health sciences settings. All of these efforts require discernment, engagement, dedication and care. In short, think I can help.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I have served as a lay delegate to the TAC for over a decade and most recently as a part of the group of clergy and laity organizing TWMBO. I was founding chair and now member of the board of FAM Houston, a non-profit born from a UMC ministry and sustained through partner churches as well as businesses, individuals and community organizations. I have held various leadership roles at St. Mark's UMC including Lay Leader, Staff Parish Relations Chair and various task forces including the fire building recovery team as well as ministries with Children and Youth including Scouting and shared mission activities across the connection. Most recently I have had the opportunity to engage in group discussions with TAC leaders in exciting and generative projects related to strategic planning.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I attended the General Conference of 2019 as an observer and was inspired by the dedication and vision of those who dream of a renewed life together in the UMC.



Name: Margaret Bachman

Church Membership: Lake Jackson, First

District: Southeast

Occupation: Retired

1. **What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?**

The future of the United Methodist Church is to continue to love, accept and support all Christians in their pursuit of God's Grace and to make Disciples for Jesus Christ.

2. **What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?**

We as followers of Christ, and United Methodists, are called to live the gospel. In doing so we must make a firm commitment to accept all Christians into our congregations.

3. **Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.**

Early in my Christian life, I was content to attend a Sunday Service, sing in the choir and possibly attend a few bible studies. Over the past few years I have felt a calling in my heart that God has more for me to do. My life experiences have led me down a path of open mindedness and a willing heart to listen for God's plan not only for my life but for all his children.

4. **Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.**

Currently the Lay Representative to Annual Conference 2023 and 2024

Serve as the Praise Team Leader for my local Church

Local Church Treasure since 2014

Prior to moving to the Texas Annual Conference I was in the Central Texas Conference where I was Lay Representative to Annual Conference twice and a certified Lay Leader

5. **Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.**

I have no experience with General or Jurisdictional Conference, but feel that God is leading me in that direction.



Name: Grace L. Butler, PhD

Church Membership: Houston, St. Paul's

District: Southwest

Occupation: Associate Vice President, Univ. of Houston (Ret.)

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

Having undergone a period of separation/disaffiliation, it is time for profound intentional prayer. I believe God is calling UMC to “re-set” from distractions that impede evangelism and mission. The word of God is very clear as He calls UMC by supplication (II Chron. 7:14 (NLT)). UMC is called to set and/or strengthen its priorities, communicate them widely, establish a culture of accountability and attend to the business of Gods calling. As the lawmaking body of UMC, all decisions, laws, policies etc. are to be in accordance with the assertion “Choose this day whom you will serve” Joshua 24:15.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

I believe issues faced by General Conference (GC) are the need to: ensure unified, shared vision; resolve any remaining vestiges of its position on homosexuality; review fiduciary outcomes that may have resulted from separations; and adopt unequivocal and bold policies and practices. GC must continue to pursue its mission “Making disciples of Jesus Christ . . .” To accomplish this end, GC must create direction; communicate with strategic clarity; embrace healthy leadership, and maintain accountability. Members of GC must pray without ceasing; seek the presence of Holy Spirit; love one another; and ultimately, abide by His word.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

Spiritual results do not happen in a vacuum. Anointed, dedicated believers are required for kingdom work. Throughout my life, I received assignments from God – some I pondered “not me Lord”, some I thought I was not well prepared for. Despite my doubts and fears, I joyfully declare, that with His guidance, I have accomplished tasks with excellence in the name of Jesus. I have been afforded opportunities that in this season of my life, I can fulfill the duties required of a delegate with aplomb.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

At annual conference level, I served 4 years on the Bishop’s Episcopacy committee, also as conference delegate it was essential that I study materials, research issues and make informed votes on conference matters. Locally, I served as Lay Leader, chair of SPRC. It was important that I stay focused on essential matters, and interact with others - including those of opposing viewpoints in order to make informed decisions. Together, through these experiences, I helped to build a climate of trust. Leadership has been a focus throughout my career which I can translate and apply to UMC doctrinal standards.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

Although I have not had experience on General or Jurisdictional Conference levels, I have made it a point to stay informed. I’ve done this by attending meetings, reading literature, reading reports and engaging in dialogue with others. I am eager to engage in discourse first hand to assist in promoting and attaining the mission of UMC. Having served on the Bishop’s Episcopacy Committee four years and annual conference delegate, I became better acquainted with issues, priorities, and outcomes. Together, these experiences along with discernment by God have enabled me to have insight and understanding about matters of General Conference.



Name: Rochelle Cebrun

Church Membership: Houston, St. Mark's (Patterson)

District: Metro

Occupation:

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I struggle with this question because I dare not speak on the Lord's behalf. But I can say that I think we are being led to see things from a different perspective than we have in the past. We need to reevaluate and purpose the meaning of being united now more than ever. Take the lessons of our most recent past to start emerging into our renewed future.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Unity. Our country is experiencing a divide, and so is the church. We will not always agree, but we will need to live into and work within our differences.

With that being said, I think regionalization will be the biggest issue that we will face this coming General Conference.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I have been a sideline member of the church since joining almost 20 years ago. I want to be a true voice for the voiceless, and represent the majorities interest, even when it doesn't align with my own. I initially didn't understand the connectionalism, now that I do I would like to be a representative.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I am an employee of the Texas Conference in the Center for Connectional Resources. I currently serve as an ex-officio member of the Council of Finance and Administration, Equitable Compensation, and Safe Sanctuary. And from 2009-2020 I was an ex-officio member of the Texas Conference Board of Trustees.

I am currently the vice-coordinator of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Houston Caucus.

I have a passion for working with youth & children, and do so within my local church.

At one time, I was the president of my church's United Methodist Women (now United Women of Faith-UWF). I hope to become more involve with UWF.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I don't have any experience at the General level. I am an advanced certified member of Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Church Structure (PAUMCS)

And I am the treasurer for the South Central Jurisdiction of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.



Name: Leonard Childers

Church Membership: Kingwood, Strawbridge

District: Southwest

Occupation: Retired Mechanical Engineer

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe that God is calling the UMC to be positive leaders in our communities by welcoming all neighbors by helping them with their social justice issues, financial needs, and mental health issues as needed and to provide a Church family to support their journey of pursuing God's will and follow in the footsteps of our Savior.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

The most pressing issues involve resolving our organization in a way that allows us to continue being a true global Church that accepts our brethren from around the world. Most urgently work out a church structure that churches both in the Western US and in Africa can thrive. In other words, adopting something along the lines of the Christmas covenant so that African churches can do what is best in their reality while US churches can progress in ways that address social justice for the LGBT+ community. After this is done, then the United States UMC can address removing discriminatory language aimed at the LGBT+ community. Finally, the church can best fulfill the Great Commission and realize our church motto which states: Be the best Church for the community.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I have recently retired and I feel that I have the time, energy, and passion to help the Church move forward. For transparency, I should mention that I have been encouraged by my daughter, Rev. Lindsay Kirkpatrick, as she thinks that I would be well suited for this task.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I am a member of the Church Council at Strawbridge UMC. I co-lead a Stay UMC team at KUMC. I have taught Sunday school for both children and adults.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I really have no experience at either level. This past year I met and visited several pastors at dinner at the recent Jurisdictional Conference last Fall.



Name: Aaron Dudley

Church Membership: Gilmer, Harmony

District: Northeast

Occupation: Lay pastor/public school sub teacher

1. **What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?**
To find new ways to transform this world and welcome everyone to experience God's love without being labeled or let down.
2. **What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?**
Recovering from the split, healing and reconciliation to those we have ignored and uninvited.
3. **Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.**
This would be new for me. A time to learn and explore more of the church I love.
4. **Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.**
North District Youth Coordinator 6 years, youth ministry in UMC for 17 years, lay pastor in UMC for 4 years
5. **Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.**
None



Name: Sid Earnheart

Church Membership: Conroe, Water's Edge

District: Southwest

Occupation: Executive Director of Justice For Our Neighbors

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe that God is calling The United Methodist Church to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through our churches, members, and administrative bodies to be the hands and feet of Christ and live into the Gospel of Christ that all persons are of sacred worth, no matter what their sexuality, gender, or race may be. I think God is calling us to help bring about God's justice in this world through reconciliation to the persons that The United Methodist Church has harmed, especially persons that identify as LGBTQ+.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

The biggest issues facing General Conference include setting forth the vision for The Methodist Church, including the path for healing churches and members of the Methodist Church fractured from disaffiliation and its fallout. One way of moving down this path is through allowing full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the church. The General Conference needs to affirm The Methodist Church's commitment to serving the marginalized and the oppressed. Also, the General Conference needs to address and correct our tendencies to let politics drive our theology. Instead we need to focus on our theology driving our politics.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I would like to use my voice as a delegate to advocate on behalf of the marginalized and the oppressed while helping bring about God's justice in the world. I would help ensure The United Methodist Church is committed to the belief that all persons are of sacred worth. I have a background as both an attorney and a graduate of Perkins School of Theology. As the Executive Director of Justice For Our Neighbors North Central Texas, part of my role is to advocate on behalf low-income immigrants who are the most vulnerable in our communities.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I am a graduate of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. Previously, I was a Pastoral Intern at Faith UMC in Spring. I was also a Pastoral Intern and Legal Fellow at Texas Impact, a ministry supported by the TAC that deals with faith and policy issues in the public square. Currently, I serve as the Executive Director of Justice For Our Neighbors North Central Texas, an immigration ministry of The UMC. I am currently serving on the Board of Church and Society for the TAC. I am currently serving on my church's Leadership Council.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

My experience with General or Jurisdictional Conference is limited to what I studied at Perkins School of Theology. I made an "A" in my United Methodist Polity class taught by Bishop Max Whitfield where I studied the functions of General and Jurisdictional Conferences. My background as an attorney also speaks to my interest in governing bodies, their functions, and the policies and procedures surrounding them. One of my research papers at Perkins examined the possibility of whether an entire Annual Conference could disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church.



Name: Kate Erwin

Church Membership: Magnolia, Wildwood

District: Southwest

Occupation:

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe that God is calling us to be more open to things like, moving forward, offering hope, investing in young people today - and not living in the past.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

I believe that some of the more important issues facing General Conference would be people doing more with less, leaning into God's abundance, and communicating with one another.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

My local church has really come together over the past couple of years and with the experience that Youth 2023 gave to some of our Youth has also helped us come together greatly. I want to serve as a delegate, to get a greater understanding of the things that are happening outside of my church, and be able to learn new things.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I would like to share that I was nominated and elected to serve on Wildwood's leadership team/Church Council and that my voice is highly valued there and hope that I am able to have that same experience and impact with a larger group.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I attended Youth 2023 the national gather for youth and I attended the South Central Jurisdiction gathering at that event.

I would also like to add that my dad has served as a delegate to multiple General and Jurisdictional Conferences, and seen the commitment that is required for these opportunities.



Name: Warren Fisher

Church Membership: Houston, St. Luke's

District: Metro

Occupation: Attorney

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe God is calling us to focus on our stated mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" and to do this in ways that are inclusive, leaving room for dialogue and disagreement on matters that are not essential to faith.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

1) Move beyond the disagreements that have divided us for decades and apply healing balm to the wounds and scars that remain. 2) Deal with the new financial realities of a smaller denomination. 3) Develop more effective, efficient, and flexible governance structures and bureaucracy. 4) Revise our Book of Discipline to be more inclusive, more practical, and more adaptable.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I love the United Methodist Church. I am a lifelong Methodist and a descendant of Methodist preachers and church leaders. I want to do whatever I can to help the church flourish to be God's instrument in the world.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I have held nearly every senior leadership position at St. Luke's - Houston, including Chair of the Church Council and Chair of the Trustees. I led a long-range planning exercise that laid the groundwork for a major building project and the launch of a new worship and discipleship community. At the district level, I have served as a District Delegate to Annual Conference. I have recently been nominated to serve on the Conference Board of Pensions.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I have never been a delegate to General or Jurisdictional Conference. I have followed closely the activities of the last several General and Jurisdictional Conferences, however.



Name: Beatrice Garza

Church Membership: Houston, Ashford

District: Southwest

Occupation: Retired

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

God is calling the United Methodist Church to focus on unity. Our world is so divided. There is disconnection between neighbors. There is disconnection between cultures. God is asking us to be the church that Jesus envisions.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Among the most important issues facing the General Conference is the church's stance on non-heterosexual identity. As Methodists, we believe that our sexuality is a gift from God. We believe in living our faith by following three simple rules, "Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God" and yet, our stance on non-heterosexual identity has caused division and an environment of a "state of limbo". Our siblings have endured harm while searching to see God's love in our actions. It is time to rebuild trust and unity and it starts with a decision.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

As a delegate, I would bring a unique voice as a Latina which has historically not been well represented in United Methodist leadership. The Holy Spirit has convicted me to share my voice to more fully represent the kingdom of God for the betterment of our church.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

Texas Annual Conference- current: Conference Leadership Team, member

Southwest District- current: District Leadership Team, chair

Ashford United Methodist Church, Houston- current: Lay Leader, One Board member; past: Sunday school teacher, Finance Chair, Church Council member.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

Methodist Foundation - past: Chair



Name: Virginia Guimond-Biggs

Church Membership: Grand Saline, Grand Saline

District: Northwest

Occupation: Retired

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

In my opinion, God is asking the UMC to search for pathways that lead to being more inclusive and welcoming while maintaining UMC theology. The UMC must reimagine itself to be more responsive to the needs of the community, both world-wide and local. It is important for the UMC to be aware that each conference is characterized by its own unique worldview. God has called the UMC to continue to make disciples for Christ of all nations.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

The General Conference is confronted with the task of reforming the worldwide church to become more relevant, more equitable, while remaining connectional. The regionalization legislation submitted to the General Conference is an excellent step in this direction. As the proposal is structured, it reduces the influence of the United States on the General Conference, emphasizes the Methodist theology of connectionalism, and equips churches to be better able to provide ministry and mission with within regional contexts.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

The current unsettled status of the UMC is not to be regarded as a negative but an opportunity to reimagine and reform itself. To be vibrant and thriving, the UMC must be responsive to all its members. To quote Kenneth L. Carder, "Remaining faithful to the apostolic faith while interpreting and applying that faith to contemporary situations, is the task of every Christian." I believe that my business experience and my education at Perkins School of Theology supplies the tools required to be an effective lay delegate to the 2024 Jurisdictional Conference in 2024. I would be grateful to be part of the process of the UMC moving forward in revising the church while making disciples of all nations.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

Question #4

Currently, as a member of Grand Saline FUMC, I am an active interested member of the Board of Stewards. Also, I teach a Sunday School class, The Gathering. Previously, I belonged to the Van UMC and was very active in church affairs. I served as lay leader and lay delegate for five years, 10 years on the Finance Committee, and 3 years as member of the SPRC committee, one of those as chair, and taught a Sunday School class.

My conference level experience includes being a conscientious local lay delegate to the 2021 and 2022 Annual Conferences.

I served as a district lay delegate to the Annual Conference in 2023.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

My experience does not include the General Conference or the Jurisdictional Conference. If my application to serve as lay delegate to the Jurisdictional Conference is accepted, I look forward to helping shape the future of the UMC.



Name: Aiden Hoffmann

Church Membership: Magnolia, Wildwood

District: Southwest

Occupation:

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe that God is calling the United Methodist Church to reach out to the people left stranded. There are many areas that still have no accessible United Methodist Church to them. God is calling us to go reach out to the people of those areas either with a church plant or something signaling that the UMC is still here.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

The most important issues facing General Conference are organizing the church after the disaffiliations and getting the younger generations involved in the church. The upcoming general conference will be the first since the disaffiliations and it will be tough to figure out how to fully move forward. The second issue is really important as less and less younger people and youth are involved in the church and that needs to be dealt with.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I want to serve as a delegate as I think I will bring a new perspective and voice from the youth of the church. I would have the opportunity to make sure all members of the United Methodist Church are fully represented in the higher levels of the church.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I have served as a district delegate to the 2023 Texas Annual conference and I am currently serving my second year on my local church's nominations committee.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I have not served on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels before.



Name: Deborah Moffett

Church Membership: Houston, St. Paul's

District: Metro

Occupation: Strategic Planning Consultant

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to identify and erase the barriers separating it from its communities. Those barriers may come in the form of buildings that represent misunderstood intentions, inaccessible language, or the idea that work in the community is a ministry rather than a partnership. The community should be at the heart of everything the Church does and I believe the Church has a unique opportunity to let the communities define how partnerships should look and feel. I also believe new metrics are key to understanding the real impact of the Church on its communities.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

I believe General Conference must work to 1) develop more effective and flexible governance structures with regional voting on regional legislation 2) revise the Book of Discipline to be more inclusive and 3) strategically consider the financial realities of a smaller denomination.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I would like to serve as a delegate because I believe I could bring value to the Jurisdictional Conference conversations. I have worked in a variety of positions within the UMC, both at the church and conference level, and that experience has provided a good perspective on the inner workings of the church. I also have a love of, and respect for, the strategic planning process which requires looking for hidden ideas and dreams and developing a path for moving forward that everyone can support.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

At the local church level I have served on Board of Trustees, chaired a Task Force to identify the church's next significant mission opportunity, chaired Outreach Council, coordinated the church's soup mobile ministry, and coordinated a key administrative function of a capital campaign. I have also served as President of a large Sunday School class. At the conference level, I assisted in the development of the Laity Unleashed curriculum and co-led the sessions for a variety of audiences (lay adults, Wesley Foundation students, Christian Leadership staff, and individual church ministries). I have served on the Board of Ordained Ministry for five years and have served as a delegate to Annual Conference for four years.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

N/A



Name: Don Morriss

Church Membership: Texarkana, Williams Memorial

District: Northeast

Occupation: Insurance Broker

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I think God is more interested in us being loving, servant-leaders, saving souls and helping people in need all around the Conference and the world.... than playing politics within the church laws & social principles.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Structuring for the future in a changing, troubled world. Being a church that is important and relevant to the next generation of church-goers and leaders.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

The future of this conference, this jurisdiction, and the new reality calls for fresh thinking by people wanting to solve problems.... not create more... I have been in the church all my life, but not yet served in a jurisdictional setting.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I have been a lay delegate for over 40 years. At the Conference level, I am currently the Chair of the Council on Finance & Administration. I have previously served on the group medical insurance committee, the investments committee, the Houston Methodist Hospital Board, I chaired the Methodist Retirement Communities Board. At the local church, I have served the SPR, Finance, Administrative Council, and as delegate joined many other committees. I also sing in the adult choir, etc.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I was an active member of the General Board of Publication when Cokesbury stores were active and the United Methodist Hymnal was re-written. On that Board, I served as Chair of the Investments sub-committee to the Finance Committee.



Name: Michael Mourot

Church Membership: Lake Jackson, Chapelwood

District: Southeast

Occupation: Management Consultant

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

The United Methodist Church is diverse and will vary among its members, churches, and conferences. This is a strength and a challenge in our church. The United Methodist Church must continue to engage in ongoing dialogue and decision-making processes to discern its mission and calling. These discussions will continue to shape the future direction of the United Methodist Church. To understand the current perspectives and potential future paths of the United Methodist Church we need to continue to engage in conversations with members and leaders within the denomination.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

There is a need for clarity in the direction of our denomination. Our denomination has been and will be in the future, influenced by theological interpretations, cultural shifts, and the perspectives of its leadership and members. Key issues in recent years include debates over human sexuality, inclusivity, and the interpretation of scripture. These discussions will continue to shape the future direction of the United Methodist Church. Because of our diversity, keep in mind that opinions on these matters will vary, and the official stance or direction of the church must evolve over time.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I have been highly active at my local church and served with numerous districts, conference youth related events, i.e. UMARMY. United Methodist is my chosen denomination, and I would like to get more involved in the district, conference, and jurisdictional conferences for our church. The United Methodist Church is diverse and will vary among its members, churches, and conferences. This is a strength and a challenge in our church. My skills and desires welcome a need for a diverse view, which will be a strength as a successful delegate.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

Local Church: Board of Stewards Chairperson; Administrative Board Chair; Council on Ministries Chair; Youth Area Ministry Lead

District: UMARMY board; Camp director

Conference: Member for Center for Clergy Excellence; Clergy Accountability Ministries

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

None



Name: Melissa Perry

Church Membership: Kingwood, Strawbridge

District: Southwest

Occupation:

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

To share the Gospel's Good News to EVERYONE.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

1. Removing the harmful language that says homosexuality is not compatible with Christianity.
2. Restructure so that Central Conferences have more autonomy on policy while still being connected to all other United Methodist Churches doctrinally.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I'd like to be involved in making the changes that will shape the fabric of our beloved denomination. It would be an honor to have some input into the future so our children and grandchildren have an accepting church to practice their Christian faith.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I was a TAC delegate for 3 years before the split. I attended TAC last year as an observer. I was on church boards such as the Administrative Board and SPRC. I was the chairperson for SPRC. Last year and this year I am serving on the Church Council of Strawbridge UMC even as a new member of the church.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

None at this level.



Name: Kelsey Richardson

Church Membership: Houston, Clear Lake

District: Southeast

Occupation: Family Ministries Director

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

I believe God is calling us to provide a place where all are loved, feel welcome and accepted, and have a seat at the table; to be a safe place where everyone can meet Jesus, get to know Jesus and then share Jesus with others.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

I think the most important issue is unifying our UMC churches, no more feeling of opposing sides, no more restrictions on who should feel welcome and accepted or who is allowed to serve the church.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I want to serve as a delegate because I have worked in UMC churches for the past decade and I have had the privilege of being part of UMC churches where I felt welcomed and accepted and I've worked at some that were quite the opposite. I want to represent people that love and accept everyone, that truly believe all are welcome at the table.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I've been in full time ministry in UMC churches for the past ten years. I got to serve as a lay delegate at the Texas Annual conference in 2023.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

This would be my first opportunity to serve on this level.



Name: Paula Ryburn

Church Membership: Richmond, St. John's

District: Southwest

Occupation:

1. **What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?**

Love one another. Plant new churches for those UMC members who have been displaced from their churches due to disaffiliation and geography.

2. **What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?**

Given our new make-up, take another look at ordaining practicing homosexuals and performing weddings for same-gender persons, and hopefully finalize BOD changes so we can all move forward in love.

3. **Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.**

I am retiring next month and will be able to participate beyond my local church again.

4. **Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.**

Prior to returning to full-time employment in 2016, I served on Lakeview Board, Choir Camp Board, TAC CF&A, Pension Board, and two Task Forces. I also served the Clergy Spouses at the Conference & District levels and served on the formative board of Justice For Our Neighbors-Houston/East Texas. In my local churches, I participate in choir, handbells, Worship and Finance Committees and have led several annual stewardship campaigns.

5. **Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.**

None



Name: Jerry Springfield

Church Membership: Woodville, Hope

District: Northeast

Occupation: Retired

1. **What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?**
To be an all inclusive church. All means everyone is welcome and can participate in all aspects of the church.
2. **What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?**
Nurturing new church starts in areas where there are no UMC congregations
3. **Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.**
This is an opportunity to serve Jesus and represent my congregation and conference at a broader level.
4. **Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.**
Administrative board in three different congregations, charge lay leader two different congregations, charge lay delegate two different congregations
5. **Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.**
None



Name: Stacy Stepler

Church Membership: Houston, Memorial Drive

District: Southwest

Occupation: Executive Director

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

God continues to call the United Methodist Church to embody and demonstrate His radical love to everyone so that we can make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world. We must live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel – fostering a community where love, compassion and inclusivity prevail.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

There are several complex issues before the General Conference, but I believe the work of healing and reconciliation should be prioritized, recognizing that collective acknowledgement of past wounds and intentional efforts towards restoration will allow us to truly move forward as a unified body. The work of the General Conference should be full of grace, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to creating a community where there is indeed room at the table for all.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

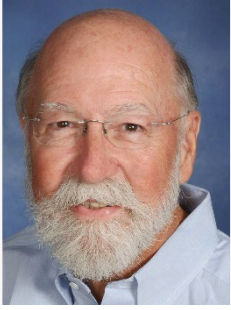
I want to continue to serve the church that has always been a part of my life. Several years ago, my senior pastor told me he knew I'd enjoy Annual Conference so he had appointed me as a delegate. He was right since I continue to serve in this way. Now I would like to take my service to the next level. I hope to help shape the future of the UMC so that we will continue to be a viable church that shares the grace, light, and love of Jesus Christ with the world.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I am currently serving my 4th year on the Southwest District Leadership Team. I have served as a lay delegate to TAC for 8 years. I am also on the board of FAM Houston, a non-profit established from a UMC ministry and sustained by church partners, individuals, businesses, and community organizations. In my local church I've been Chair of the Discipleship Committee (2 years) and served on the Church Council and Ministry Team as a part of this role. I served on the Board of Stewards for 3 years. I led a Bible study for moms of elementary aged children for 5 years. Additionally, I have had various leadership roles for VBS and with the UWF.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

N/A



Name: Steve Tefteller

Church Membership: Onalaska, Onalaska

District: Northeast

Occupation: Retired, formerly an IT professional and university professor

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

God is calling us to inclusively embrace and love all His children, to teach and demonstrate His grace, mercy and love in any and all situations in spite and in the face of the rancor and mean-spirited actions of the world surrounding us.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Simply put, the General Conference's main task is to provide a structure for the creation of disciples to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The things that were important to Him should be our focal point. It should operate in a pragmatic and efficient manner to address peoples of different geographies and cultures without pandering to the voices of the secular world.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

I am the spouse of a retired UMC clergy woman and have been a Methodist for 57 years, so I fully understand the inner workings of our denomination. When she served as a delegate to Conference, I was a de facto delegate through our discussions. I wish to serve because I believe we can no longer be complacent to let others hopefully "do the right thing" for our community of faith. Our family has over 200 years of Methodist roots and I will not stand idle and let evil intentions attempt to destroy this ministry.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

For more than 50 years, I have served on almost every board and held every leadership position in the local church except lay leader. I taught Sunday school for 30 consecutive years before surgery broke that chain. Since my wife had mission responsibility in her clergy role, I have worked more than 100 mission trips and work projects, both local, national and international. After retiring, I taught for several months in a mission computer school in Tanzania. I currently am a volunteer chaplain in a maximum-security prison where I facilitate faith-based programs.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I have no official experience at these Conference levels, only de facto as my wife served on these.



Name: Jeanne Wentzell

Church Membership: Avinger, Avinger

District: Northeast

Occupation: Lay Delegate

1. What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?

Welcome all who wish to attend with open minds and open hearts. Follow the teachings of John Wesley. Be good stewards at all times in all ways. Feed the hungry and the poor. Help those who need help. Be kind and show love to our fellow men/women/children.

2. What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?

Inclusivity, practicing what we know to be God's way, taking care of our communities with love and kindness.

3. Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.

As a lifelong Methodist, daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of lifelong Methodists, I have a great love for our Methodist Church and feel strongly that our smaller/older congregations need to be represented in all layers of our church just as large congregations are. I have been lay delegate and attended Annual Conferences and Called Sessions from Avinger UMC for many years now and feel able to attend the meetings and travel as needed. I wish to serve.

4. Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.

I have been deeply involved in our local church in almost all positions and all programs for the past 10 years, in other local churches, when I have lived in other communities, and have been involved for the past 70 years in classes, activities, organizations, groups in the Methodist churches where I have lived, including children, youth, young adult, mature adult, senior adult. I have served as a Parish Nurse, organized food pantries, hosted Ulster Teens, attended District Meetings, Area Meetings, and Conference meetings.

5. Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.

I have no experience at General or Jurisdictional Conference.



Name: Keith Zimmerman

Church Membership: Quitman, Quitman

District: Northwest

Occupation: Retired

1. **What do you believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to do in the near future?**

Be the church we are called to be.

2. **What do you believe are the most important issues facing General Conference?**

The biggest issue is bringing the division within the United Methodist Church to a conclusion.

I believe another important issue is that some Bishops, District Superintendents and Pastors do not abide by the oath they took and need to be held accountable.

3. **Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate.**

I love being a Methodist and I want to serve anyway I can to help keep the church in line with the disciplines.

4. **Share your experiences of leadership at the conference, district, or local church levels.**

I am a Northwest Texas District lay representative and am currently our local church Council Chair.

5. **Previous experience you have had on the General or Jurisdictional Conference levels.**

None