

Ballot 2: Protecting Membership for All

There will be four ballots taken at annual conference on the proposed amendments to our constitution. The second ballot seeks to modify Article IV of our constitution to increase the protections provided for membership in the UMC. The amendment would add “gender” and “ability” to the existing social categories that clergy in The United Methodist Church cannot use to discriminate against a potential member. The updated article would read:

*“The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, **gender, ability**, color, national origin, status or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.”*

To many of us, this seems so simple. Of course we would never discriminate against anyone based on these attributes. We welcome all who want to participate in the life, worship, and governance of our local churches. However, persons in each of these groups have experienced discrimination in our broader society. Through this discrimination, people are pushed to the margins and excluded from various areas of our world. Protecting people in The United Methodist Constitution is a game changer for our denomination because it guarantees entry into our churches, all of our churches, throughout the denomination, for every person, ensuring no one is excluded because of their gender or ability. It shows the world the love we have for God’s creation.

This amendment throws wide the doors of our churches and imagines God’s enormous embrace of creation. In a world in which the average person might be targeted for any of a broad range of attributes, The United Methodist Church must stand fearlessly on the side of acceptance and love, and this amendment enshrines into our constitution the inclusive love we seek to proclaim.