

Conference Secretary Report Regarding Election of Delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference.

They prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's deepest thoughts and desires. Show us clearly which one you have chosen..." —Acts 1:24, CEB

The selection of Matthias in Acts 1:24–26 offers one of the clearest windows into how the early church practiced communal discernment in a moment of shared responsibility. In the days following the resurrection, the disciples faced the task of choosing a new leader to join in guiding the community as it stepped into an uncertain future. What emerges in this passage is not a spirit of competition, but a deliberate and prayerful process shaped by trust in God and accountability to one another.

The community first names the significance of the role, recognizing the weight of the ministry entrusted to them. They then discern together who among them possesses the experience and faithfulness required for the task. Finally, having done what they can through careful and communal reflection, they entrust the outcome to God, praying with humility that the One who knows every heart will reveal the one called to serve.

I propose that in this, the early church models a pattern of discernment rooted in prayer, shared responsibility, and trust in God's guidance—a pattern that resists the logic of rivalry and instead seeks the wisdom that emerges when a community listens together for the leading of the Spirit.

We must acknowledge that this passage does not function as a template to be replicated step by step, nor does it invite the church to return uncritically to ancient methods. Rather, it serves as a theological lens through which we may understand the deeper meaning of discernment in our lives as a church today. Elections in the church are never merely procedural acts; they are sacred moments of communal discernment. Such moments call the community to humility, prayerful attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, and faithfulness to the mission entrusted to the church. They remind us that leadership in the church is not simply chosen but discerned within a community that seeks to listen together for God's guidance.

Acts 1 offers a meaningful framework for how we, as United Methodists in the Tennessee–Western Kentucky Conference, might approach the election of delegates who will serve the wider connection with integrity, trust, and a deep care for the whole body of Christ.

Several features of this text deserve careful attention—not only for what the disciples do, but for how they choose to do it. They begin with prayer, not strategy. Their prayer names a truth many contemporary decision-making bodies struggle to confess: *"Lord, you know everyone's deepest thoughts and desires."* This is a prayer of relinquishment. It acknowledges the limits of human judgment and

places discernment in the hands of our Triune God, the One who sees beyond appearances, credentials, and persuasion.

At the same time, the community does not abdicate responsibility. They articulate clear qualifications, grounded in shared life and faithfulness, and they narrow the field thoughtfully. Only then do they release the decision itself from personal preference and political maneuvering. The casting of lots functions here not as chance, but as a theological act—a faithful refusal to confuse human control with divine will, and a visible expression of trust that God remains active in the church's life.

Luke makes clear that this moment is not frozen in time. After Pentecost, the church's discernment practices evolve as the Holy Spirit is poured out, guiding the community through prayer, conversation, and communal wisdom. Yet Acts 1 remains instructive. It reminds us that faithful decision-making in the church is not rooted in certainty or efficiency, but in surrender—in offering ourselves to the One who shapes our community, even when outcomes unsettle our assumptions.

As we prepare to elect delegates for General and Jurisdictional Conference, this text invites us to consider the posture of the Early Church. In a church often tempted to equate majority rule with righteousness or speed with faithfulness, Acts 1 calls us to slow down, pray deeply, and trust that God is at work not only in outcomes, but in the process itself. I offer these reflections as we prepare for the election of delegates to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences, recognizing that this season calls not only for procedural clarity, but for spiritual attentiveness. How we choose matters as much as who is chosen.

Attached to this letter is a set of Conference Guidelines for the Election of General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates. These guidelines are offered as a practical companion to the theological vision outlined above. They are intended to support a fair, open, and prayerful process consistent with the Book of Discipline and the Standing Rules of the Tennessee–Western Kentucky Conference, while also inviting us into a shared posture of discernment.

Therefore, as we enter this season of preparation for General and Jurisdictional Conference, the following Best Practices for Faithful Discernment are offered as a guide. These practices reflect the spirit of Acts 1 and are commended to the Conference as a shared way of approaching this season - not as binding obligations, but as an invitation to embody the values that shape faithful community discernment.

Best Practices for Faithful Discernment

Members of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference are encouraged to enter this election season with prayerful discernment, trusting that God knows the hearts of all and is present in the life of the Church. As a best practice, approaching this process with humility, integrity, and love for the whole body of Christ is strongly commended. This includes refraining from practices that harm discernment and fracture trust, including efforts to influence votes through pressure or persuasion.

It is a best practice to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than personal preference, strategy, or fear. Honoring those who offer themselves for service - recognizing that willingness itself is an act of discipleship - reflects the spirit of this discernment. Voting prayerfully, guided by conscience and trust, and receiving the outcome with grace, free from triumphalism or resentment, are practices that strengthen the community.

In following these best practices, the Conference chooses faithfulness over control. The Church bears witness to its belief that God is not absent from its decision-making, but actively at work among a people willing to pray, listen, and trust. In doing so, the common life of the Conference is aligned with the spirit of Acts 1, creating space for the Holy Spirit to lead not only toward an outcome, but toward deeper faithfulness together.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Jefferson M. Furtado, *Conference Secretary*
Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference
The United Methodist Church

Tennessee–Western Kentucky Conference Guidelines for the Election of General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

Nature of the Election: The election of delegates to General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference should be understood as an act of prayerful discernment within the life of the Church, grounded in trust that God knows the hearts of all and is present in the decision-making of the Annual Conference. Delegates are elected to serve the whole Church and should not be understood to represent platforms, caucuses, or interest groups.

These guidelines are intended to shape the spirit and conduct of the election process as provided for in Section 3 of the Standing Rules and the Constitution of The United Methodist Church.

Spiritual Preparation and Covenant: Prior to the nomination and election of delegates, the Annual Conference should enter a time of prayer and be invited to affirm a Covenant for Faithful Discernment. This covenant calls members of the Conference to approach the election with humility, integrity, and love for the whole body of Christ, and to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than personal preference, strategy, or fear.

To preserve the integrity of discernment and maintain trust within the body, members of the Conference covenant together to refrain from practices that resemble political campaigning, including electioneering, coordinated messaging intended to influence voting, slate-making, and lobbying.

The Conference affirms that such practices can harm discernment, fracture trust, and diminish the Church's witness.

Eligibility and Role Clarification: All nominations will be validated by the Secretary of the Annual Conference in accordance with the Book of Discipline and the Standing Rules of the Conference. In the event of questions or challenges regarding eligibility or process, the Bishop and Conference Chancellors will offer guidance and interpretation consistent with the Discipline.

The Tennessee–Western Kentucky Conference has been allotted:

- Four (4) clergy and four (4) lay **Primary Delegates** to General Conference and Delegates to Jurisdictional Conference. These delegates will be fully seated at General Conference with all voting rights and responsibilities.
- Four (4) clergy and four (4) lay **Alternate Delegates** General Conference and Delegates to Jurisdictional Conference. These delegates will be seated at Jurisdictional Conference and may be called to serve at General Conference should a Primary Delegate be unable to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Three (3) clergy and three (3) lay **Reserve Delegates** to serve as reserve delegates for Jurisdictional Conference. These delegates will serve in reserve and will be seated at Jurisdictional Conference should an Alternate Delegate be unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

The combined twenty-two (22) elected clergy and lay persons will constitute the delegation of the Conference.

General Conference will cover travel and lodging expenses for the Primary General Conference Delegates. The Conference's delegation budget will include funding for the Alternate and Reserve Delegates to attend General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

Delegates will serve for the full quadrennium and are expected to be available for all required meetings, preparation, training sessions, and responsibilities related to General and Jurisdictional Conference, including participation in delegation gatherings before, during, and after the conferences, as required.

Nomination Process: The nomination and declaration of candidacy for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates should follow Standing Rule 3.3, including timelines, eligibility requirements, and submission of materials.

Consistent with the spirit of discernment articulated in these guidelines:

- Nominations shall not be accompanied by campaign activity, endorsements, or advocacy.
- Statements submitted for pre-conference materials are intended to inform the Conference, not to promote candidacies.
- Persons eligible to serve as delegates are not required to declare or be nominated in order to be elected.

Discernment Prior to Balloting: Before balloting begins, the Conference is encouraged to observe a time of prayer and silence. Members are invited to keep in mind that:

- Voting is an act of discernment and trust
- Votes are to be cast according to conscience, informed by prayer
- Members are not obligated to vote in response to pressure, persuasion, or expectation

Election and Seating of Delegates: Clergy elect clergy delegates, and lay members elect lay delegates, as required by the Book of Discipline and Standing Rule 3.1. Balloting proceeds according to Standing Rule 3.2 until the allotted number of delegates is elected.

Delegates will be seated in the order of election as:

- Primary Delegates
- Alternate Delegates
- Reserve Delegates, as provided in Standing Rule 3.4

Receiving the Outcome: Upon completion of the elections, the best practice for the Conference is to:

- Give thanks for all who offered themselves for service.
- Receive the outcome with grace, without triumphalism or resentment.

- Affirm the willingness to serve as an act of discipleship, regardless of election outcome.

Prayer and Sending: The election process should conclude with prayer for all elected delegates, asking for wisdom, courage, humility, endurance, and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit as they prepare to serve the wider Church.

Theological Intent: These guidelines are offered as a framework to support the Conference's common life. By grounding delegate elections in prayer, restraint, and trust, the Tennessee–Western Kentucky Conference bears witness that its legislative work belongs to God and is guided by the Holy Spirit.



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The United Methodist Church General Conference • May 8-18, 2028

Minneapolis, Minnesota

So, You Want to Be a Delegate to General Conference?

You may have heard that the General Conference will convene, May 2028, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where 705 lay and clergy from around the world will gather to make decisions on behalf of The United Methodist Church. For more information visit:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/general-conference-2028>

You may have gone through a process of discernment and would like to offer yourself for consideration to be elected as a delegate to General or Regional/Jurisdictional Conference. The Church has long desired to have new faces and fresh perspectives be part of the decision-making body, and this guide will provide some insights on what it means to hold the sacred responsibility of being an elected delegate. If you feel called to serve as a delegate, you are stepping into an important role that requires prayer, preparation, and a spirit of service.

1. What is General Conference?

“The General Conference is the only body that can set official policy and speak for the international denomination. General Conference brings together lay and clergy delegates from four continents whose decisions will affect how millions of United Methodists do church for years to come. General Conference is the denomination’s highest legislative body. As such, it has the authority to make revisions to the denomination’s Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions. The Discipline is the denomination’s governing document that contains its doctrine, constitution, church law, rules of organization, and procedures. The Book of Resolutions contains the denomination’s positions on current social issues. Resolutions expire after eight years unless General Conference readopts them.”

General Conference approves the four-year budget allocating apportionments — shares of church giving—for denomination-wide ministries around the globe. General Conference also sets the formula used for apportioning the budget to annual conferences, the denomination’s regional bodies, which in turn ask for apportionments from local churches.”¹

- **The Worldwide Gathering of the Church:** General Conference sets church law, revises the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions*, establishes church policies, and approves worldwide mission priorities.
- **Representative Leadership:** It includes an equal number of clergy and lay delegates, elected by their annual conferences.
- **Diversity of the Body:** Delegates represent United Methodists in Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the United States, alongside embodying the worldwide nature of the church.

2. Who Can Be a Delegate?

- **Lay Delegates:** Any professing member of a United Methodist congregation for at least two years and active in the church for at least four years may be eligible. Please reference the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline ¶37. Article V*
- **Clergy Delegates:** Ordained elders or deacons in full connection. Please reference the *2020/2024 Book of Discipline ¶36. Article IV*

3. How Are Delegates Elected?

The 2020/2024 Book of Discipline ¶16. Article III outlines the ratio of representation, with each annual conference entitled to at least one clergy and one lay delegate to the General Conference. Beyond this mandatory minimum, conferences are allotted their delegate slates using a formula based on their professing lay and clergy membership numbers. The delegation allocations for the coming General Conference in Minneapolis are based on the most recent membership data submitted in 2024 from annual conference journals and statistical information. The denomination currently has 51 annual conferences in the U.S., and 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines

ANNUAL CONFERENCES: Annual conferences — the geographical entities consisting of lay and clergy voters from multiple churches — each elect their provided allotment of delegates. *The*

¹ Source In Part: Hahn, H. (2024, February 1). “A beginner’s guide to General Conference”. *United Methodist News*. Retrieved from www.umnews.org

Book of Discipline requires that laity elect the lay delegates, and clergy elect clergy delegates.

- **Nominations and Voting:** Annual Conferences set their own processes for nomination and election. However, per *The Book of Discipline*, “delegates shall be elected in a fair and open process by the annual conferences.”
- **Diversity Matters:** Annual Conferences seek to elect delegations that reflect the richness of the church in terms of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, and experience.
- **Make Inquiry:** Inquire with your annual conference to familiarize yourself with the annual conference’s process for electing delegates. Know when your annual conference will be electing their delegates for General Conference. Please ask others who have served as delegates what to typically expect.

DELEGATE CATEGORIES: Delegates are ELECTED by the annual conferences and NOT APPOINTED. Delegates are “seated” in the order for which they are elected by the annual conferences. Those elected first, within the allotment of delegates, are considered Primary Delegates.

- **Primary Delegates:** Primary Delegates will be seated at General Conference and will have all voting rights, privileges, and responsibilities for the work of General Conference.
- **Alternate Delegates:** Alternate Delegates will serve as a delegate to Regional or Jurisdictional Conferences. Additionally, these delegates could be asked to serve (*move up*), should a Primary Delegate be unable to fulfill their responsibilities (either permanently or periodically during General Conference).
- **Reserve Delegates:** Reserve Delegates are those who are willing to serve, and will be able to serve should an Alternate Delegate be unable to fulfill their responsibilities (either permanently or periodically during Regional or Jurisdictional Conference)

Note: *The General Conference’s budget only covers the expenses of the Primary General Conference Delegates. Any Alternate or Reserve Delegate expenses are the responsibility of the individual (or some annual conferences may provide some support—check with your respective annual conference for their policies and practices).*

4. What Does a Delegate Do?

Once elected as a delegate to General Conference, it is a privilege and honor. While you were elected from your annual conference, you are not representing them. It is assumed that there

has been actively listening in the delegation and around the annual conference to hear the concerns of the members. However, when at General Conference, the process of voting is derived from being attentive to the work of God's Spirit and voting one's conscience.

As a Primary Delegate (those elected to be seated at General Conference)

- The General Conference will pay for your travel and lodging expenses while at General Conference. The General Conference will provide some meals while at General Conference. However, there may be additional financial resources needed that do not cover expenses, and one will need to give consideration for that personal financial investment.
- Please be prepared to be away from family and ministry responsibilities for at least two full weeks. If a layperson, you will have to take the personal time off to fully invest and participate in General Conference for the full two weeks.
- Before General Conference convenes, there will be numerous meetings with delegation members to discuss and prepare for the work of General Conference. These meetings may require in-person, driving, and time for preparation.
- At General Conference, you will be seated in a legislative committee, where you are expected to have reviewed the materials from the Advance Daily Christian Advocate (and Daily Christian Advocate), and be prepared to fully engage in the life of the legislative committee.
- When not in legislative committee there will be Plenary Sessions with worship, reports, and voting on legislative matters.
- There will be opportunities to engage in fellowship and cross-cultural exchanges with United Methodists from around the world.
- The business days typically begin around 8:00a and the time of adjournment is typically 6:30p. However, there may be additional time needed for further review, delegation meetings, and preparation for the next day's work.
- After General Conference, there will be those eager to hear about your experience and anticipate a report back to your annual conference and local churches to help interpret the decisions of the General Conference.

As an Alternate Delegate (those elected to be seated at General Conference)

- The General Conference will pay only for expenses, should you engage in the work

of the General Conference as a fully seated Primary Delegate (not temporarily serving).

- As an Alternate Delegate you stay ready and prepared, if you are needed to step in when a Primary Delegate is unable (for a short period or longer periods of time).
- Alternate Delegates are active observers to stay informed of all matters, so they can be an active participant should the opportunity arise.
- Depending on the Primary Delegates, oftentimes Alternate Delegates may not get an opportunity to fully participate in the activities of the General Conference, and one must be at peace and not pressure colleagues to “let you in.”

5. What Qualities Make a Good Delegate?

- **Faithfulness to The United Methodist Church:** A strong spiritual grounding in prayer, scripture, and the Wesleyan tradition.
- **Open-Mindedness:** Willingness to listen across cultures, languages, and perspectives.
- **Commitment to the Mission and Vision:** Keeping the focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- **Integrity and Courage:** Making decisions guided by conscience and love, even when issues are complex.
- **Time and Energy:** Preparing thoroughly and being present for long days of work at General Conference.

6. Next Steps if You Feel Called

- Pray for discernment about your gifts and calling.
- Speak with your pastor, lay leader, or annual conference representatives about the election process.
- Stay informed about the life of the church locally and globally.
- Be prepared to serve with humility, courage, and love.
- If elected, being able to obtain and keep a passport and a government-issued identification.

7. Why It Matters

To participate in the General Conference is to join heart and hand with fellow members of The United Methodist Church from our worldwide connection. Elected delegates shape the direction of The United Methodist Church for the next four years and beyond. They carry the prayers, hopes, and concerns of their annual conferences and local congregations into the global conversation. Being elected is an honor, but more importantly, it is a sacred trust to serve The United Methodist Church.

Being a delegate is more than holding a vote—it is about embodying the connection of the worldwide church. If you sense God’s call, step forward with prayer, preparation, and the confidence that God’s Spirit works through those who are willing to serve.

General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegation Nomination Form

Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference

2028 General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegation

The **2028 General Conference** of The United Methodist Church will be held **May 8–18, 2028**, at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The **2028 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference** will be held in **July 2028** at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. The Jurisdictional Conference lasts approximately four days.

As a connectional church, delegation members serve not only as representatives but as participants in the shared discernment and mission of the whole church .

Nomination Timeline

- Nominations will open in January 2027, and details will be published with Annual Conference Report.
- Additional nominations may be made from the floor of Annual Conference

SECTION 1: Personal Information

- * First Name
- * Last Name
- * Email Address
- * Phone Number

SECTION 2: Membership & Status

- * Status
 - Clergy (Full Connection)
 - Laity
- * Local Church / Charge

(Name of church where you hold membership or appointment)

* **District Name**

SECTION 3: Demographic Information ***(for representation & equity)***

Ethnicity *(optional)*

Age *(optional)*

Gender *(optional)*

Different Abilities *(check all that apply)*

- None
- Auditory
- Mobility
- Neurodiverse
- Visual
- Other
- Prefer not to specify

SECTION 4: Leadership & Experience

Previous Conference / Denominational Experience *(optional but encouraged)*

(e.g., Annual Conference participation, boards, agencies, delegations, etc.)

SECTION 5: Biographical Statement

* **Biographical Sketch (max 250 words / ~1800 characters) Include:**

- Your background and ministry involvement
- Your sense of call to serve as a delegate
- Your perspective on key issues facing the church

SECTION 6: Commitment to Serve

* **Willingness to Serve**

If elected, I commit to:

- Participate fully in preparation for General, Jurisdictional, and Regional Conferences
- Engage in holy conferencing, discernment, and connectional accountability
- Represent the Annual Conference faithfully

For Lay Delegates:

I understand and commit to attending Annual Conferences during the quadrennium (2027–2031).

Response:

- Yes
- No

SECTION 7: Covenant & Expectations

As a nominee, I affirm my commitment to:

- Engage in prayerful discernment
- Participate in connectional decision-making
- Respect the diversity of the Body of Christ
- Seek the unity and mission of the church

SECTION 8: Photo Submission

*** Upload Current Headshot**

Accepted formats: JPG, PNG

(Max size: 25 MB)

SECTION 9: Eligibility Certification

*** Signature (Typed Name)**

By signing below, I affirm that I meet the eligibility requirements as stated in the *Book of Discipline*:

- **Lay Delegates:** Must have been professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least **two years** and active participants for at least **four years** prior to election (¶137).
- **Clergy Delegates:** Must be clergy members in **full connection** (¶136).

I affirm that the information provided is accurate and that I am willing to serve if elected.

Signature (Type Full Name): _____ **Date:** _____