

Frequently Asked Questions for Lay Delegate Election to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences

1. What are General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference?

The United Methodist Church is organized as a denomination into Judicial, Executive and Legislative branches. The highest legislative body is the General Conference. The General Conference meets every four years, with the next meeting being in Minneapolis, Minn., on May 5-15, 2020. The General Conference is comprised of approximately 850 delegates with equal numbers of clergy and laity elected by Annual Conferences throughout the denomination. The Jurisdictional Conference is the legislative body for the jurisdiction. This includes Annual Conferences from the South Central Jurisdiction made up of Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska, including the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. The Jurisdictional Conference meets in the summer after the General Conference to care for duties associated with its mission; these include oversight of missionary efforts within the jurisdiction and, most importantly, election and appointment of bishops to each Annual Conference.

2. How are delegates chosen from our Annual Conference?

The North Texas Conference has a total of eight (8) delegates – four clergy and four laity – that will be elected to General Conference. An additional like number will be elected to serve as alternate delegates to General Conference and members of Jurisdictional Conference. The North Texas Conference will also elect these alternates. The election will occur at our Annual Conference beginning June 2, 2019.

3. How is the election carried out?

At Annual Conference, the election will occur by a series of electronic ballots. The voting will be conducted on hand-held key pads and each member of Annual Conference will have a personal sign-in. A voting card will be included with your nametag. A majority-vote process will elect each position sequentially. All of the Lay members of the annual conference whose names were submitted to the office of Administration will be assigned a number on the ballot; however, other names may be written in on the ballot based on the rules of the Annual Conference. The first four lay people elected will serve as delegates to General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference, and the next five will serve as alternates to General Conference and as delegates to Jurisdictional Conference. Alternates to the Jurisdictional Conference may be elected depending on the will of the Annual Conference.

4. What do delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference do?

During the time prior to the General Conference and following election, the entire delegation will meet many times to review and educate themselves regarding issues facing The United Methodist Church. This will involve significant study and preparation along with commitment to meet as a delegation. In this manner, the perspective of the North Texas Annual Conference is best represented. At General Conference, the delegates will meet in committees and as an entire body. The alternates will fill in as designated by the leader of the delegation. At Jurisdictional Conference, the body meets and conducts its business primarily through plenary sessions with the election of Bishops.

5. Who is eligible?

Lay members of the churches of the Annual Conference without regard to age, provided such delegates have been members of The United Methodist Church for two years preceding their election and shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years preceding their election. The North Texas Annual Conference has a history of electing a diverse delegation.