

# 2020 GC/JC Clergy Delegate Candidates

# Essay Questions

**Question 1:** Please list your service/involvement in your local church and/or the North Texas Conference, including leadership positions held.

**Question 2:** Share briefly why you want to serve as a delegate to GC/JC and what difference you believe you can make as a part of the delegation.

**Question 3:** Please list previous experience on GC/JC delegation and why you feel your previous experience has prepared you to serve as a delegate if elected.

**Question 4:** What leadership experiences have you had in the church or community that will help you do the work of the delegation?

**Question 5:** What do you believe are the most important issues facing General and Jurisdictional Conferences of 2020?

**Question 6:** What do you believe God is calling The UMC to do in the near future to more effectively live out its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?



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**Answer 1:** Council on Finance and Administration, North Texas Conference, 2018-present Faith Forward Dallas, Clergy member, 2018-present, Housing, Migrant Status and Racial Equity task forces North Texas Conference Delegation, reserve to UMC General and Jurisdictional Conference, 2014-2019 Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County Faith Alliance for Children, 2014-2017 Leadership Allen-Fairview, member 2013-2014 Board of Ordained Ministry, 2010-2016, Executive Committee Chair of Provisional Membership, North Texas Conference Committee on Provisional Membership (Residency), 2008-2016 Northeast Dallas District Committee of Ordained Ministry, 2008-2010, Registrar 2009-2010 Denton Wesley Foundation Board, 2008-2010 North Texas Conference Clergywomen, Co-Convener, Convener, and Strategy Chair, 2004-2007 Annual Conference Planning Committee, 2002-2005, Chairperson 2004-2005

**Answer 2:** I would like the opportunity to continue to be a bridge builder during this transformative time in our conference and denomination. I believe God through the power of the Holy Spirit is doing a new thing in our church. I continue to learn and grow in awareness about how racism and cultural prejudice/discrimination affect the work of our church. I am committed to advocating for people of color both locally and globally as we navigate the choppy waters of what it means to be a global church. I am also committed to work for the good of the North Texas Conference and furthering collaboration with clergy and laity to lead our conference in the best way possible.

**Answer 3:** I served as a Jurisdictional Reserve Delegate 2014-2019. I was faithful in attending meetings and engaging the delegation team. I have learned much about the work of General and Jurisdictional conference and believe that leadership at the 2020 general conference will face very difficult decisions especially as it relates to doing what is best to further the ministry of the North Texas Conference. I believe a diverse and younger delegation is essential as these are the leaders that will provide for the future of our church. Having seen the struggles of changing the UMC's structure and with the One Church Plan, I believe our church is a different day and will need adaptive leaders to lead us forward. Finally, I believe that my experience as a reserve has taught me more about the process of electing bishops. This will be an incredibly important process for the 2020 delegation to engage.

**Answer 4:** I have become passionate about the work of the church in addressing the pillars of racism that affects our nation, community, church, denomination and world. I believe that institutional racism is directly affecting the stalemate in which we find ourselves as a denomination. In my current appointment, we are learning how to become advocates in our community with people of color, and I believe this is needed in our denomination as well. I also believe that empowering people globally is essential to our movement forward as a church. I have gained experience and study in this in my role in mission and advocacy at FUMC Dallas. Finally, I have grown in my ability to stand in the middle of conflict and engage more fully during tension-filled situations. I believe this will be essential to the delegation's work in 2020.

**Answer 5:** I believe the church is at a stalemate and needs younger and diverse voices to chart the future. I also believe that the church in the United States has very different needs than the church in other places in the world. It is time for the church to make moves that allow each part of the church to thrive contextually. I believe this will mean not only a difference in structure but in the way that money is allocated in the church. I believe I can represent the North Texas Conference as a church that does want to allow for contextuality and allow the church to be transformed in a way that provides for a graceful future in ministry. Finally, in 2020, our conference will receive a new bishop, so our delegation's involvement in the process of electing bishops at jurisdictional conference will be incredibly important.

**Answer 6:** I believe the church in the United States needs to be allowed to have contextual ministry, and I believe that the global church needs to be empowered to do the same. I believe that the North Texas Conference finding ways to act more like a One Church Conference will further the growth and ministry of our local churches. I also believe that there are many ministries of justice in relationship to people of color, LGBTQIA+ persons, and other oppressed groups that are essential to us moving forward as a conference and denomination.

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**Answer 1:** Senior Pastor, Oak Lawn UMC 2017-present Executive Pastor, University Park UMC 2007-2017 Chair, Conference Committee on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Relationships 2016-2018 Co-Chair, Faith Forward Dallas 2018-present Communications Chair, Faith Forward Dallas 2017-2018 Co-Chair, Annual Conference Planning Team 2010-2016 Co-Chair, Nehemiah Project 2009 Metro District Committee on Ministry 2012-2016 Episcopacy Committee 2016-present

**Answer 2:** I care deeply about the United Methodist Church. I believe that because of my experiences both in the local church and through Uniting Methodists that I'm uniquely positioned to effect positive change in uncertain times.

**Answer 3:** While delegation experience is limited, I have had significant experience with General Conference work, specifically:

- Coordinated tactics for legislative leads on the floor of the 2019 General Conference.
- Strategized and coordinated lunches and special events for delegates to rally for the One Church Plan
- Communications Director for Uniting Methodists for the past two years.
- Served on steering committee for Uniting Methodists from its inception.
- Coordinated and executed Uniting Methodists conferences leading up to the 2019 General Conference
- Volunteered with the 2016 North Texas Annual Conference Delegation (Legislative Team – Higher Ed & Ministry)

**Answer 4:** As one of the founding members of Safe Spaces – Lebanon and co-chair of Faith Forward Dallas, I've had the opportunity to develop partnerships with diverse groups of people with varying religious backgrounds, cultural identities and nationalities. This helps me navigate the kinds of conversations necessary to find new ways forward for our denomination.

My extensive work with neighbors experiencing homelessness has afforded the opportunity to work closely with Methodists of varying theological beliefs in order to rally around that which we can all agree is critical work to our mission. This has required significant behind-the-scenes work navigating city authorities that ultimately determine the feasibility and limitations of our ministry.

**Answer 5:** The United Methodist Church as we know it is broken and it cannot be repaired. The greatest issue before us is what kind of mosaic we will craft with the broken pieces of yesterday. I'm a sixth generation United Methodist pastor. I deeply love the church that has formed my family for generations. 2019 demands the regrettable reality that the Methodist church will not be as united as it was in my childhood, but I know it wasn't united in my grandfather's childhood. The people called Methodists have weathered such storms before. I do not yet know what 2020 will hold, but find hope in the conviction that God is cultivating something new. Delegates must be as persistent in their commitment to creativity as they are to connectionalism as we craft a new future.

Our Jurisdiction lags behind all other jurisdictions in episcopal leadership on the part of women and clergy persons of color. We have an obligation to seek out and support qualified, diverse candidates for episcopal leadership. By centering marginalized voices, we can position the church to live into an intentional and wholistic identity that incorporates the full range of intersectional identities that give life to the body of Christ.

**Answer 6:** Pray. We need to pray the covenant prayer more and lift up our personal petitions less.

Confess. We need to confess the ways that we've harmed one another because we have disagreed with one another's biblical interpretation, because we have allowed inequities in our church body and because we have harmed LGBTQ+ siblings. We cannot repent from the sins that stunt our growth until we name them.

Study. Embrace the roots of the Methodist movement that was as focused on studying the Bible as putting the virtues of the Bible into action; as intentional about personal piety as social holiness. We must adopt new ways of evangelism for a new world as John Wesley did when he left the pulpit for the pathways.

Re-form. What once was is not what will be. That's the kind of work that God does. We need to see what God is up to and become a part of that.

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**Answer 1:** Currently serving: Go Camp, Board Member and Chair (2018); District Committee on Ordain Ministry, Committee Member (2017); Path1, Strategist and Executive Board Member (2017); CART, Team Member (2016); World Methodist Wesleyan Accent, Contributor Author (2017).

Served in the past: Amigos Days, Director (2015-2017); Center for Leadership Development, Board Member (2010-2016); Board of Ordained Ministry, Chair of Certification of Specialized Ministries Committee (2012-2013); North Texas Hispanic Task Force, Board Chair (2006-2008).

**Answer 2:** I came from the Methodist church of Mexico to the North Texas Annual Conference by invitation to do Spanish ministry in 2004. I was as an immigrant that barely spoke any English at the time but did smile a lot. Since then, it has been 15 years where I have served three churches as an associate and senior pastor. I received my Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology and my Doctor of Ministry from Asbury Theological Seminary.

Through all of this, my ministry journey has been one of constant growth and challenges. However, all these experiences and leaning have positioned me in a unique place to serve the church. As a person of color (Hispanic), a minority, and millennial I represent a growing minority in the U.S.; and, as an immigrant, I bring an international and global perspective where my voice as a delegate would provide with valuable and rich insights.

My ministerial experience and my scholar qualifications along with my diversity, global perspective, and young age I believe can help our North Texas delegation represent our churches and mission field effectively and faithfully.

I will serve with the heart of a pastor, always doing the next thing in love. I will be a moderate voice for the local church that supports diverse and inclusive ministries. And, I will lead and serve with the utmost integrity of my calling and profound love for the United Methodist Church.

We have been blessed with an exceptional delegation leadership that has witnessed to God's heart in General and Jurisdictional Conferences all these years, and I want to help continue such stellar legacy.

**Answer 3:** In 2008, I attended the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth as a listener. After this experience, I realize the difficult path we had ahead in our denomination. Since then, I started following closely the events, processes, and legislation of the Jurisdictional and General Conferences that followed so I could be an informed pastor that effectively leads the local church in these matters, particularly to provide healthy dialogue around sensitive issues.

Also, after General Conference 2016, I have participated and engaged in various conversations and events with Progressive, Evangelical, and Centrist groups addressing and discerning pathways for our denomination. For example, in 2018 I was a guest preacher and panelist for the Uniting Methodist Conference held in Dallas.

I know church polity, but most importantly I know and love our church. This will be my first experience as a delegate, and I am ready and prepared for the charge.

**Answer 4:** I have served in numerous committees, teams, and boards. I know church life, polity, and govern-

ment. Nevertheless, the experiences that have prepared me for such a time as this, are the ones I have had serving the local church.

As a pastor, I have dealt with conflict, division, and animosity in the local church. I have gone through seasons that taught me wisdom and deep compassion to bring healing, unity, and peace to the church. Also, through my many missteps and learning processes in ministry, I have never given up to any challenge presented before me but have always relied on God being with the church and me, and my character integrity to overcome adversity. This is a strength I bring to the table as a delegate. I will represent our faith and Wesleyan values with the highest integrity regardless of the intensity and complexity of our challenges.

I also have experience in dealing with change. In 2015, I helped lead a merger of two churches and gained significant experience regarding transitioning times, dynamics, and processes. These insights are valuable considering the issues we face.

Last, I have seen the church being successful and enjoyable in ways that hardly can be described. The church is meant to be a source of life. God empowered and called the church to bring Good News to all people. My pastoral leadership is about inspiring, encouraging, and teaching people to live the teachings of Jesus Christ in a joyful and fulfilling manner.

While I have all this practical experience, most importantly my heart has learned to care for people and to contribute to their well-being in any possible ways. I will serve not only with the heart of a pastor but also with the spirit of Shalom.

**Answer 5:** I believe there are three critical issues at hand: eroded trust, denominational schism, and church decline.

I have witnessed firsthand how our political maneuvering has eroded our trust in each other and hindered our ability for further dialogue. Some of our denominational brokenness may be fixable, but the hurts can only be healed by recovering trust with, and in each other, only then we can have a vision for our future.

While we deal with issues of trust and dialogue, we have tremendous forces leading our denomination into different splits of schism. No one knows how our church is going to look like in the near future, which to some may be a cause of despair but also an opportunity to hope for a renewed church that is faithful to the gospel of Jesus and is in ministry with all people.

Nevertheless, an issue that is close to my heart is church vitality and growth (my doctoral dissertation work). The vast majority of our dialogue and strength has been used to address our denomination's constitutional challenges while our church in the U.S. rapidly declines. For this reason, there is an urgent need of new voices that can help direct energy and funds to resource, empower, and encourage local churches and leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the church of our future.

In all of this, it is critical that we vote and elect the kind of leadership that will care deeply and look after the local church with such vision and priorities.

**Answer 6:** I pursued my doctorate in church revitalization because I am hoping and committed to be here the next 30+ years serving and helping to continue building the kingdom of God through the United Methodist Church. Through my pastoral experiences and my scholar learning, I know that church health is a critical factor for the future of our congregations.

Today, we need a new beginning, new paradigms, a renewed way of being the church. I believe that all our issues and conflicts are opportunities to discern new wisdom for our future. Through this discernment, I envision a new way forward that honors God, is guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ, and accomplishes the work of redemption and sanctification of all of God's creation.

New life is ahead if we are willing to move into it. I believe God is calling us to hope and missional vitality. We have the opportunity and gift to enter into a new season of ideas, to imagine through new lenses the church of our children and their children, and to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to new people to fully embrace diversity in all of our churches.

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**Answer 1:**

- Senior Pastor of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church 1998-Present
- NTC Committee Finance and Administration 2000-2004
- Board member at CC Young—2000-2005
- NTC Board of Ordained Ministry (Chair of the Theology Room) 2012 to present

I have decided to offer myself for consideration as a delegate. The strong connections that have been a blessing to me with pastors and lay leadership throughout the church hopefully can be leveraged for work toward a common good. We must start to talk together as soon as possible about legislation that could get wide support; otherwise 2020 will be a new and worse version of 2016 and 2019. I am offering myself as a delegate but I will continue to work with others for a better and more impactful United Methodist Church whether or not I am elected. I will continue to love the United Methodist Church with my whole heart.

**Answer 2:** I think I can make a difference through my negotiation ability and relationship with leaders throughout the connection. One reason for my decision is that I own that I have been part of creating the problem. My beliefs have not always been where they are today concerning marriage and ordination of LGBTQ persons. These changes in my life can be attributed to our congregation and my charge for twenty-one years, and most importantly, acknowledging the Holy Spirit. Our beloved United Methodist Church is stuck in a 48-year quagmire, and navigating through it has been hurtful to many of our members on all sides, and has damaged our brand immensely. We are becoming more and more irrelevant to many (the world we are called to transform), especially Millennials and Gen Z's.

Many of my views and thoughts about making a difference were expressed with my Associate Pastor, Scott Gilliland, in the book we co-authored Together—United Methodists of the Temple, Tabernacle and Table. We have distributed approximately 9,000 copies, including 500 copies that were translated into French and distributed to French speaking African delegates at General Conference. This was done in hopes that it would explain our transformation, not so much to convert anyone to our point of view, but to humbly share where we are in support of a church of many voices and a common mission and vision. Our prayer is that Together will influence global delegates in a positive way.

We need to find a way to get to a better place, either together under a One Church Plan, or separate in a way that resembles what the Connectional Conference Plan proposed or a way that has yet to be conceived. The Traditional Plan will not work for our larger US church and never was intended for the Global Church. The Traditional Plan is not only constitutionally flawed in principle, but its punitive measures are unenforceable. Its very passage in the state it is in is evidence of our severe dysfunction. The divisions are severe, but I know and love people on both extremes, and we simply have to get to a place of respecting our different approaches and cease to judge those whose faithful pursuits lead them to different conclusions. It is my belief that I can be a bridge-builder.

**Answer 3:**

- Elected in 1996 as an alternate clergy delegate to General/South Central Jurisdictional Conference in the Texas Conference
- Elected in 2004 as a clergy delegate to General Conference in the North Texas Conference
- Elected in 2008 as a clergy delegate to South Central Jurisdictional Conference in the North Texas Conference (have chosen not to run since then and believed we were well represented in NTC)

I was 37 years old when first elected to a General Conference alternate post, and I am 59 years old today. I do believe experience is important, and relationships cultivated over time can be helpful in making important decisions and working with other delegations across the connection. Likewise I believe that theological, racial, cultural, and generational diversity makes for a good delegation. Defining myself as a seasoned guy who is a theologically traditional and socially progressive (Wesleyan) and therefore somewhat theologically bi-lingual feels accurate. My roots are in rural East Texas United Methodism and I love the small membership church that shaped and molded me. In my ministry I have served most in urban settings in Kansas City, Houston and Dallas. My Wesleyan Evangelical convictions are underscored in our mission statement at Lovers Lane UMC, "Loving All people into relationship with Jesus Christ", which is our most important pursuit. I have a lot of passion for our church and will work hard for the greater good and just solutions that we seek.

**Answer 4:**

- Board of Saint Paul School of Theology—1997-2004
- Board of Methodist Health Systems—1999-2003
- Committee of Student Affairs at SMU—2000-2004
- Board of Trustees at Lydia Patterson Institute—2000 to present (6 years as Chair)
- Board of Methodist Health Systems Foundation—2003 to present

Today the stakes are high, and the matters we are facing will require tough decisions and wise deliberations with others in the church with whom we see eye-to-eye concerning our future, and those with whom we have strong disagreement. It truly has been a blessing for me to have worked with clergy and lay leaders throughout the connection, both across the church in the USA and globally. My global connections are particularly focused in Zimbabwe, North Katanga, South Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Eurasia. Lovers Lane UMC has members who are from these nations and about twelve additional African nations. This 2020 General Conference may be our last best hope at keeping the largest number of churches together, but strong negotiations are called for. I think I can help.

I was also a part of the group that created the Uniting Methodists coalition, and we hosted one of this group's largest Conferences at Lovers Lane UMC. I been invited to speak to large gatherings in the Central Texas Conference, and I have been invited to speak to a group expected to be 400 to 500 in the Texas Conference sponsored by the Reconciling Network of that Conference this May 2019. My invitations to speak at these inter-Conference events is largely to share the story of how a more Centrist congregation that some call a "microcosm of the UMC" can thrive in the midst of wonderful diversity with vision casting leadership. My message is about when pastors, staff and lay leadership are committed to focus on mission, vision and dreams. I have witnessed that when these dynamics are based in unity around a higher purpose and sacred calling, the Holy Spirit can bring about transformation. It is humbling and I am grateful to do whatever I can do to help during these unsettled times.

**Answer 5:**

1) How we really address living into our Mission—Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the world--- and at the same time create a vision—a preferred future of who we desire to be. We have never had a compelling vision as a denomination. I am invested in significant work now with colleagues who are dealing with these matters for a new United Methodism.

2) The unfairness of decision making that the US church currently lives by; matters being decided by global delegates who do not live under every order of the Book of Discipline that we recreate at General Conference. Central Conferences make their decisions for their own autonomous Polity and Discipline without any outside influence from the US church. The US needs to function like a Central Conference, and Global delegates need to be influenced regarding a need for "fairness" and equality in the way we make decisions regarding our Discipline.

3) Reconsideration of A True Way Forward which can create a denominational existence that is freeing to all persons in the Connection, as we know it now. We have to be bold enough to think "outside the box" so there can be multiple expressions of what was once "United Methodism."



4) It seems that there is a super majority of United Methodists who believe that our structure is antiquated and needs to be changed. The way we have shared in apportionments is in need of a major overhaul, which may be a good measure to come out of our conflict. I will continue to work with others to create a new structure.

5) We simply must get to a place of less concentrated energy focused on human sexuality and address the social ills in our country, and throughout our world, leading to stark divisions regarding race and culture. The United Methodist Church needs to be leading the way in addressing these matters and the way these divisions and the non-addressing leads to violence, hate speech and damaging actions, as well as inhumane and ineffective immigration policies. We must be a prophetic voice as a church that should be bold enough to lead, in a country and world that is too often led by our fears.

**Answer 6:** Quit fighting! Do mission! Create vision! Dream big! Impact positive changes empowered by the Holy Spirit that bring about the gift of abundant life that Jesus came to give and others-oriented living based on our relationship with a loving, gracious, living God.

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**Answer 1:** Senior Pastor, Fellowship UMC

Co-Chair, 2019 NTC Annual Conference Planning Team Member, NTC Council on Finance and Administration Member, North Central District Board of Building and Location Healthy Church Initiative Coach, Center for Church Development Advanced Leadership Coach (For Clergy), Center for Leadership Development Member, North Central District, 380 Corridor New Church Initiative President, African-American Clergy Fellowship Member, Black Methodists for Church Renewal Preaching Instructor, NTC Licensing School Polity and Administration Instructor, Course of Study School, Perkins School of Theology

**Answer 2:** I want to serve as a delegate to General Conference 2020 because I believe that I can be a leader in the discussion concerning the current and projected United States/Global General Conference voting trends as the US delegation declines and the Global delegation grows. I believe this issue must be addressed head on and immediately, as it will have strong political implications particularly at the next three meetings of General Conference. I believe this is the most important issue facing the UMC in the US. Even if our General Conference system of US/Global governance cannot be altered or changed, I think it is urgent that our current and projected General Conference voting realities are clearly articulated and communicated to the clergy and laity of the UMC in the US.

I want to serve as a delegate to Jurisdictional Conference 2020 because I believe the work of electing episcopal leaders is the most important work we do as a jurisdiction. There is a Dr. John Maxwell quote that says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." I would like to have a role in selecting the best leaders possible for the annual conferences of the South Central Jurisdiction. I believe these new effective and impactful leaders will engage our annual conferences and help them grow spiritually and numerically. I would love to have the opportunity to be a part of the inspiring story of change that will be written by the new bishops elected at Jurisdictional Conference 2020.

**Answer 3:** I do not have any previous GC/JC delegation experience.

**Answer 4:** I have had several leadership experiences that will help me serve on the delegation. I see myself as a bridgebuilder that can bring coalitions of people together to organize, set goals, and achieve desired outcomes. I am proud of the staff, lay leadership, and laity of Fellowship UMC as our work together has resulted in budget and worship attendance growth over the 5 years I have been blessed to serve there. I am also excited to have effectively led us through two capital campaigns that have improved and expanded our campus. I believe these experiences will help me be a good team member and team leader for the NTC delegation.

In NTC committees and coaching, I have worked hard to be known as a person who is willing to do what it takes to achieve successes that can be shared with others. I have enjoyed all of the churches I have been blessed to coach through the Healthy Church Initiative, and all of the clergy I have been blessed to coach through the Advanced Leadership Coaching Initiative. What I have learned through these experiences is the importance of listening, connecting, challenging, and caring for people. I believe we need bridgebuilders to have the crucial conversations that are before us at General/Jurisdictional Conferences in 2020. It will take intense, committed, and strategic leadership to talk and work with people from all over the world to craft and implement solutions for the big issues and opportunities before us. I will be a reasoned, goal-oriented, and outcome driven voice at the General/Jurisdictional Conference table. I firmly believe that my leadership in various boards and teams of the NTC over the past 20 years equips me to do the very important work before us.

My perseverance and drive helps me as well. Having started two new churches in our conference, I know what it is like to taste victory and defeat in ministry. The victories did not go to my head and the losses did not break my heart. I believe we need people at the table that are creative and adaptable because it will take it ingenuity to get things done.

Finally, I have the unique experience of having served in NTC churches in the inner-city (St. Luke "Community" UMC, East Grand/Owenwood Foundry UMC- Dallas), the suburbs (St. Andrew UMC - Plano), a fast growing suburb (St. Andrew Frisco, Connection UMC - Frisco), and a small town (Fellowship UMC - Trophy Club). Each of my appointments have taught me how to work with different people. I'm thankful to have been able to serve in cross-racial ministry since 2003; I am also thankful to have been able to maintain a connection to the African-American clergy and laity in our conference through my leadership as President of the African-American Clergy Fellowship (AACF) and my former service as an Executive Committee Member (Membership Chair) of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). All of these experiences have given me a wealth of knowledge and an ability to build relationships and community with several different types of people. This experience gives me the ability to represent the views, concerns, and hopes of a large cross-section of people that make up the NTC.

I would treasure the opportunity to leverage my leadership experiences as a member of the 2020 NTC General/Jurisdictional Conference delegation.

**Answer 5:** I believe the most important issue facing General Conference 2020 is effectively talking about the declining political power of the US UMC (58.3% of the delegates at GC 2019 were from the US), and the surging political power of the Global UMC (41.7% of the delegates at GC 2019 were from outside the US). I see a coming crisis concerning the autonomy of the UMC in the United States as it continues to lose delegates (the GC 2020 Global delegation will increase by 20 seats and the GC 2020 US delegation will decline by 20 seats). Correspondingly, I see a coming crisis of funding for the global church as very important funding for ministry comes from the United States. I am particularly concerned about what this will mean for our UMC churches in Africa as a result of the votes at GC 2019. I think we should have a front and center discussion about these crises that are on the horizon.

I believe the most important issue facing Jurisdictional Conference 2020 is selecting the best episcopal leaders for the annual conferences of our jurisdiction. The UMC annual conferences in the US, particularly in the South Central Jurisdiction, need episcopal leaders who will inspire the clergy and laity of their respective conferences to lead a US UMC revival that will result in new members, worship attendance growth, baptisms, spiritual growth, small groups growth, growing generosity, and unbounded passion. We are always in need of more growing districts, clergy, and laity. I pray that we elect episcopal leaders who will inspire those whom they lead to be the spark to a brand new flame.

**Answer 6:** I believe God is calling the UMC to continue to grow in membership across the board. I believe addressing the political realities of the US/Global UMC can address that growth in the US. The US UMC's ability to have the flexibility it needs needed to minister to its national and regional mission fields in the US is paramount. This growth will help us deal with the General Conference political reality that is looking us squarely in the face. Once the Global delegation passes 570 delegates, it will have the required 2/3 votes needed to make constitutional amendments to the Discipline without US input. I think we need to talk now about how we address this issue so that US progressives "and" conservatives, will maintain the ability and autonomy to adapt its ministry for the most effective reach to the mission field in the US.

I also believe God is continuing to call the entire UMC, US and Global, but particularly the UMC in the US, to rekindle its fire and bring about a revival within the UMC in the US. In response to that call, we have to roll up our sleeves and begin the crucial work of reversing our current trends of plateau and decline and lead more people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. The UMC in the US can grow its way out of its current predicament. I believe with all my heart that it (we) can.

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**Answer 1:** This is my 17th year of serving as clergy under appointment in the North Texas Conference. I am currently serving as pastor at Lakeway UMC in Pottsboro, and have also served as pastor at FUMC Bonham, associate pastor at Lake Cities UMC, and pastor at Cooper Creek UMC in Denton. At the conference level, I currently serve on the Conference Committee on Investigation, the Committee on Camp and Retreat Centers as a member of the Prothro Center Board of Directors, and on the Conference Clergywomen's Leadership team. In the Northwest District, I currently serve on the District Committee on Ministry and assist the Board of Ordained Ministry with hospitality during the interview process at the Prothro Center. In the past I have served as Chair of the Personnel Committee and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Denton Wesley Foundation, as a Clergy Representative on the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries, and on the Superintendency Committee in the East District.

**Answer 2:** I am interested in serving on the delegation because I think these 2020 conferences will require strong leadership, discernment, wisdom, vision, and courage, as well as the ability to lead through conflict and change. All of these are strengths that I believe I have. I not only bring strong gifts of leadership, but, having served six years in our outlying districts, I represent a perspective of ministry that has not been well represented in our past delegations.

I am kind. I am also strong, courageous, wise, compassionate, calm, intelligent, educated, and empathetic. I can think critically. I am able to lead through chaos and change. I stay calm under stress. I listen. I have a strong backbone. And, I am a team player.

I am a seven on the enneagram- an enthusiastic visionary, an optimist. I believe we can be more than we think we can be. In the movie *Invictus*- Nelson Mandela asks the captain of the South African rugby team, Francois Pienaar, "How do you get your team to be better than they think they can be? Inspiration perhaps! How do we inspire ourselves to greatness when nothing else will do? How do we inspire everyone around us? We need inspiration, Francois, because in order to build our nation, we must all exceed our own expectations." I believe our denomination needs inspiration, now more than ever, because in order for the United Methodist Church to be builders of the Kingdom of God, we must all exceed our own expectations. I believe I would bring that inspiration to the delegation and to the North Texas Conference as a 2020 delegate.

**Answer 3:** I have not served as a delegate to General Conference or Jurisdictional Conference, but I believe I can bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to the work of the delegation.

**Answer 4:** In the last several years, I have taken lead roles in both Northwest District and the East District Charge Conferences and Lay Leadership Training events, participated in the Academy for Adaptive Leadership, and taken the lead in Pottsboro's Great Days of Service, as well as serving on several Emmaus walks. While at Brite Divinity School, I served on two faculty search committees, served as President of the Advanced Programs Student Association, and participated in the Brite History project and the publication of *Institutional Change in Theological Education: A History of Brite Divinity School*, which I contributed to as both an author and editor.

**Answer 5:** I think the biggest issues facing General and Jurisdictional Conference in 2020 are unity, justice and ethics. I think the most important problems we will be addressing within our own denomination are fighting systemic racism and gender inequality, attaining full inclusion for our LGBTQ members, ensuring funding to all of our churches abroad, ensuring ethical voting practices, and being in full communion with the Episcopal Church.

**Answer 6:** I believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to continue the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and that of our 2016 and 2019 delegation, by looking at all alternatives that could move us forward together, including a Connectional Conferences Plan. We are better together. I believe that to the core of my being. Like the Law and the prophets in the Old Testament, and like Peter and Paul in the New Testament, we are better together, because together we are forced to wrestle with complexities that alone we would ignore. We are better together. However, if we cannot function together in healthy ways in our mission and ministry in the world, building the Kingdom of God in spite of our differences, then we must have the courage to, at the very least, create in very intentional ways, a foundation that allows our children and grandchildren the possibility of working together to achieve the unity that we are currently unable to achieve.

**Full Name:** Maria Dixon  
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**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Black, African American  
**Occupation:** Senior Advisor to the Provost for Cultural Intelligence Initiatives and Associate Professor at SMU  
**Email:** madixon@smu.edu  
**Church:** Cochran Chapel UMC



**Answer 1:** August 2004-July 2015: Sunday School Teacher/Supply Preacher/ Small Group Leader (Highland Park United Methodist Church)  
2006-2012: Member, The General Commission on Communication  
2012-2014: Founding Chair of Union Coffee Shop Board of Directors  
2018: Developed the Cultural Intelligence Curriculum for the North Texas Conference.

Since 2004, the vocational call of the Order of a Deacon has shaped my pastoral work within the North Texas Annual Conference. There are two primary contexts for my service: the local church and Southern Methodist University.

Highland Park United Methodist Church was the site of the majority of my local church service since arriving in Dallas in 2004. One of my first points of service was the honor of working with Rev. Susan Robb and Frank Roby in the development and teaching of a young adult Sunday School class for single members. I served as a frequent liturgist and preacher in the Cox Chapel service and as an adult Sunday and Weekday teacher. From 2014-2015, I was proud to answer Rev. Elizabeth Ethun Mosley's request to form the Secret Sisterhood: a ministry for those struggling with infertility. In 2016, I moved my charge conference membership to Cochran Chapel UMC where my husband is the senior pastor.

I believe that an essential context of my service to the conference is as a tenured professor at Southern Methodist University. The opportunity to work with faculty, staff and students throughout the University and spiritual developmental life cycles continues to strengthen my understanding of the emerging needs of God's people and the opportunities required to address them. Whether it is leading a prayer vigil around the bed of a dying administrator; conducting a wedding; walking a student through the process of coming out; or encouraging a call to the ordained ministry, I am invigorated daily by the opportunity to walk with people who don't have access to an authentic pastoral presence. I was able to utilize my experience in working with the SMU community to establish the initial organizational framework and governance for the Union Coffee Shop until 2015. Finally, my work as a scholar culminated in the development of a Cultural Intelligence curriculum for the North Texas Conference and a social innovation and entrepreneurship emphasis for students of the Perkins School of Theology.

**Answer 2:** The General Conference and Jurisdictional Conferences of 2020 are pivotal for the North Texas Conference given that they will set the boundaries and opportunities for ministry and leadership for the next generation of clergy and laity. As the UMC grapples with their organizational response to fissures over culture and globalization, I believe that members of our next delegation must bring not only experience from the local church context but insights from the Jurisdiction's largest university, as well as, other organizations that have gone through significant leadership and development challenges. Additionally, I think it will be essential for us to have delegates who have strong connections with other annual conferences and jurisdictions.

As one of the few deacons not serving in a local church context, I believe I bring a set of skills that intermarries the experiences of the clergy and those who are in the pew (and those who have left). With a strong relational network with clergy and leaders throughout the SCJ cultivated as both a trainer and consultant, I bring a unique awareness of the political and organizational dynamics of several large annual conferences.

**Answer 3:** I have attended the 2008 and 2019 General Conferences as an observer and member of a General Agency. In 2008, I worked closely and assisted NTUMC key delegates throughout the committee sessions to understand the legislative process that happens prior to floor debates. Part of my work was working with delegations from Congo, North Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina to outline and articulate concerns about legislative positions.

Consequently, I am aware of the emotional, cultural, and spiritual gifts one must have in trying to knit together such different interests and needs for the good of the denomination. Moreover, I am aware of the physical demands that two weeks of General Conference requires a member of the delegation.

**Answer 4:** The strength of my portfolio is that I have worked with several global/multinational organizations Southwest Airlines and The Federal Reserve who have grappled in one way or another with the very issues that are facing the United Methodist Church--organizational innovation; generational, geographical, racial, identity, and political fissures; leadership transition; and the need to navigate an increasingly skeptical and dismissive society. My work with the Vatican and the Southern Baptist Convention informs my understanding of how the tenets of faith can serve as a glue or a grenade during times of organizational or doctrinal truth. My role as a professor of undergraduates informs my experience the growing skepticism that the church faces from late Millennials and Generation Z as well as the critical skills and messages needed by our leaders and clergy to address them.

**Answer 5:** There are 4 challenges facing the General Conference in 2020:

- \*Rebuilding the safety nets of the integrity of our legislative processes to prevent fraud and external manipulation of our elections.

- \*Grappling with the reality that our conflict over sexuality is only a foreshadowing of the growing conflicts of the role of the episcopacy, apportionments, General agencies, and the very nature of the meaning of what it means to be in "connection."

- \*The financial implications of Baby Boomer clergy retirement, the needs of rural churches and uneven financial contribution of jurisdictions.

- \*The ratification or dismantling of the terms of Dissolution and Disaffiliation and the Traditional Plan

For the Jurisdictional Conference, we have one issue--discernment of episcopal leadership. During GC2019 one observer pointed out, "We can trace the conflicts of the Church to the SCJ." While this may be an overstatement, the reality is that those Bishops elected/ selected by our Jurisdiction have come to play decisive roles in the current environment and conflicts. For good or for ill, the Bishops selected by our jurisdiction are denominational game changers.

**Answer 6:** In the near future, God is calling us to attend to our WITNESS of the love of Jesus Christ. The most powerful evangelism tool that any church has is the witness of its people. Until, the UMC is able to demonstrate that we are not a microcosm of the political rancor, self-aggrandizement, and insularity that plagues our civil and governmental we will be handicapped in differentiating ourselves from the world.



**Full Name:** Andrew Fiser  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
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**Occupation:** Pastor  
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**Church:** Union Coffee House  
**District:** Extension Ministry



**Answer 1:**

- Neighborhood Partnership Intern and then Co-Pastor with Edgehill UMC (4th Reconciling Church in US, Nashville, TN) 2008-2013 - I worked with congregation to re-engage its multi-cultural neighborhood and start new ministries with neighborhood teen girls, intentional community and young adults, and FreeStore, and successful \$300K capital campaign.
- Chair, Clergy for Inclusion – Tennessee Conference (2012-2013) Led 70+ UM clergy group in working for LGBTQ+ inclusion in Conference.
- Eagle Ford Shale Planting Strategist, Rio Texas Conference (Laredo, TX) 2013-2015 – Created action plan and planting strategy for 127,000 square miles of South Texas impacted by oil boom.
- Director of Site Church & Community Development, Project Transformation – North Texas 2015-2017 – Created processes for selecting and resourcing host churches to use programming to meet neighbors, listen to community, and make disciples.
- Associate Director, Center for Missional Outreach, North Texas Conference 2017-Present – Led Zip Code Connection toward expanded resourcing for local churches and communities around Conference. Facilitating White Fragility Discussion groups, assembling LGBTQ+ Ministry Resources for moderate churches, and supporting Ministry With programming to support local churches.

**Answer 2:** Now is the time for bold change. Although this is an anxious time, it offers the opportunity that the Wesleys' had to re-imagine the church for new people in a new day. I come from a family that has been Methodist since they switched from Moravianism. I want to see this movement take new shape to welcome new people into the way of Jesus. We need to enable our church to be able to have positive missional impacts in our contexts past 2020. The Special Called General Conference proved that we as a denomination cannot move forward together, as we had hoped. I will be an advocate for creating the most equitable and mission-focused plan for Progressives and Centrists to continue to do the work of ministry. This means breaking the current voting deadlock by agreeing across the lines of division to an equitable separation agreement. I want to make sure our churches and clergy that have often been marginalized (Black, progressive, LGBTQ+, Latino, etc.) are protected and given voice in the decision-making ahead. Persons of color, women, and LGBTQ+ voices need to be heard and their leadership honored. And the important work of missional agencies and progressive voices in Central Conferences should continue with equitable support and local leadership.

**Answer 3:** I have not experienced being on a General or Jurisdictional Conference previously, but I have learned much from those who have served. I understand that serving on a delegation requires diligent work reviewing and processing legislation, listening to diverse voices from variety of ministry contexts, and many hours of working together as a delegation to prepare. From my friends who have attended General Conferences I have begun to understand that it is a time filled with work, that there can be heartbreak for attendees, and also that one has the opportunity to witness the beauty of a Church that the Spirit is always bringing to new life.

**Answer 4:** Two leadership experiences have prepared me for the work of the delegation. Firstly, my service as a resource person for local churches and leaders across the Arkansas, Rio Texas, and North Texas Conferences has given me a unique perspective in understanding the opportunities and challenges facing our church. As a researcher for the Hunger Coalition for the Arkansas Conference, I traveled across hundreds of miles of rural highways and backroads meeting lay and clergy leaders who make life-saving impacts for their neighbors.



Secondly, as a church planting strategist in the oil fields of South Texas, I came to understand how local churches can lean-in to changing demographics and embrace Latino neighbors and encourage innovative discipleship opportunities. And with Project Transformation I deepened my understanding of how local churches can use connections with diverse neighbors and young adults to learn anew how to form disciples of Jesus Christ, while also making positive impacts in our local communities.

Secondly, my ministry experience as a reconciling pastor who comes from rural Arkansas, and who has served in urban, suburban, and rural settings gives me insight into how our church operates across contextual differences. And my pastoral experience among LGBTQ+, black, and Latino congregants and friends has given me a passion for igniting ministry among diverse new people. My apprenticeship with clergywomen leaders ignited in me a drive for gender equity. We need concrete higher standards for how we as Church treat lay and clergy women, as well as better equipping for how we teach men to be non-violent.

**Answer 5:** The most important issues for our work in 2020 are a) creating space for centrist, progressive, black and Latino churches to continue to do ministry in their contexts, and b) help select episcopal leaders who have track record of effective leadership in multicultural ministry, and who will support LGBTQ+ affirming churches and clergy.

In these two issues, the “-isms” and “-phobias” are all connected and may all be addressed. We have the chance to begin anew the work of dismantling the racism, sexism, colonialism, and homophobia that have locked-up the Holy Spirit too long in our Church. These are all connected to the “principalities and powers” (Ephesians 6:12) that try to keep the Kingdom of God at bay. It’s time to “bind the strongman” (Mark 3:27) so we can move-on to a new reality of being a Church that is visibly FOR all God’s people.

**Answer 6:** God is calling the UMC to lean-into this time of institutional disruption. This is a holy opportunity to create a new structure to support the work of missional innovation and creativity needed to welcome new people into following Jesus Christ. We need to take a deep breath and act boldly to empower Progressive and Centrist churches in North America to be able to connect to their mission field. And we need to center our leadership on diverse life experiences and identities so that we can leave behind racism, sexism, colonialism, and homophobia as we create new spaces for new people. This likely means creating space for churches and clergy to separate amicably. It’s time to stop the harm, stop the distraction, and move-on to the bold work of being the Church in a new day for ALL people.

**Full Name:** Cammy Gaston  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Director, Center for Leadership Development  
**Email:** cgaston@ntcumc.org  
**Church.District:** Other  
**Why other:** North Texas Annual Conference



**Answer 1:** This year I will celebrate my 29th year of being ordained as a United Methodist Elder in the North Texas Annual Conference. It has been my privilege to serve in a variety of roles. I began my service to the Conference as a Camp Dean at Bridgeport Conference Center in the late 80's and continued serving for over a decade. I became the Conference Youth Coordinator in the early 90's and served on the creation and design team for Perkins School of Youth Ministry.

In 1993, my husband Matt and I planted and built the UM Church of the Disciple in DeSoto. This was a creative time that included the spiritual and theological design of the church building and curriculum design for children and youth, much of which was published by the General Board of Discipleship in the late 1990s.

I was asked to be the Residency Program Covenant Group Facilitator for the Board of Ordained Ministry in 2002 and served in this position for 11 years. I was honored to be appointed the Director of The Denton Wesley Foundation while also serving the residents. I employed my Clinical Pastoral Education and leadership knowledge while serving this appointment and found myself investing in a new generation of Christian leaders for our church.

In 2013 I was appointed to be the Metro District Superintendent. The Metro District is home to a diversity of theological, ethnic and social perspectives. Today I serve as the Director of the Center for Leadership Development and my portfolio includes Board of Ministry, clergy effectiveness, lay and clergy development, crisis and mediation services, Intentional Interim Ministry, cultural competency, Commission on Race and Religion, Commission on the Status and Role of Women, campus ministry and age level ministries including youth and children.

Other notable leadership positions have included the following: NTAC Strategic Planning Committee, NTAC Core Leadership Team, Commission on the Status and Role of Women, Commission on Religion and Race, Campus Ministry, and Board of Director membership for Union Coffee, Bethlehem Center, and Project Transformation of which I serve as Board Chair.

**Answer 2:**

- 1) I would like to bring my years of experience with the Book of Discipline to the delegation. I have come to know it intimately and I have found that the policies, procedures and practices are not fully aligned with our Wesleyan heritage and the grace we proclaim.
- 2) I would advocate for the US to be a Central Conference under a U.S. Book of Discipline or a solution that would allow for contextual ministry and full inclusion.
- 3) I am presently serving on the General Conference "Ministry Study Commission" where we are developing a definition of Ordained Ministry and looking closely at the work and function of the Elder, the Deacon and the Local Pastor. I will have the opportunity to interpret study documents and our process for recommending changes to the upcoming General Conference.
- 4) I have sought to keep integrity in our District Committee on Ministry work where a wide range of theological and social perspectives are present. I believe that it is important to have traditional, evangelical, centrist and progressive perspectives in the North Texas Conference. Separately, I understand the value of Deacons, Local Pastors and Elders. I believe that I have a unique perspective that understands the intricacies of our present time and solutions to address ministry issues that come before General Conference.
- 5) I believe the United Methodist Church can continue to make a profound difference in human life through

our holy and social witness in the world. We are a connectional church with the belief that we are better when we embrace one another and engage in ministry together. I embrace the One Church concept and believe that it is the best way to continue the work of the connectional church.

6) I am concerned about the fallout caused by the 2019 General Conference. I believe higher education and campus ministry, local and global healthcare, and social justice advocacy, may experience funding issues I have personal experience in each of these areas and understand their importance in our social witness. My work with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Campus Ministry and seminaries has convinced me of their importance in our church eco-system. I am passionate about investing in young people and our candidates for ministry and streamlining their experience toward service in the church and beyond.

**Answer 3:** I attended the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth as an observer. I embraced and engaged our Four Areas of Focus for the global church.

I attended the 2016 General Conference in Portland as an observer and sat in on the legislative sessions concerning GBHEM recommended changes in the BOD.

I attended the 2019 General Conference with specific attention to the legislative impact on the work of our Cabinet and Board of Ministry.

**Answer 4:** Metro District Superintendent, Cabinet, conflict resolution, crisis management, change management, systems analysis, extensive work in the area of family systems theology, knowledge of the Book of Discipline and familiarity with United Methodist Church both in the US and in other countries.

**Answer 5:**

1. Our top priority for 2020 is mediating a way for the U.S. church to have autonomy and be governed as a Central Conference under a U.S. Book of Discipline, Or a solution that would allow for contextual governance.
2. Clarify core theology, doctrine and practice for the Global Book of Discipline.
3. Continue to support and streamline the General Boards and Agencies
4. Refocus on our mission and ministry to reach New Faces and create New Spaces

**Answer 6:** I believe that God is calling us to become a more agile church. Our ability to change and adapt is essential for reaching people in our mission field. As we move outside of our church walls and ministry settings, our creator God will move new United Methodist Christians to create fresh expressions of the church.

I also believe that faith leaders become effective when they are grounded in spiritual practices and engage in our Wesleyan means of grace. Covenant groups, faith partnerships and authentic Christian relationships are vital components for renewal and life-long leadership in the Church. Strong faith leaders, women and men, are the best recruiting tool for new, young and diverse leaders.

Lastly, I am proud our United Methodist Church raises a voice for social justice, education and health care. When we use our hands, our hearts, our minds and our connection to Christ, God can transform the world. This is the connectional church at its best! This is the church I love and want to serve.

**Full Name:** Rev. Scott Gilliland  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Associate Pastor  
**Email:** sgilliland@llumc.org  
**Church:** Lovers Lane UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:**

- Associate Pastor, Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas (2015 – Present, Staff since 2010)
- Ordained as Elder in Full Connection (June 2019)
- Co-Chair, Young Clergy Fellowship of North Texas Conference (2019 – Present)
- Member, Clergy Retreat Planning Committee (2019 – Present)

**Answer 2:** First, I believe the work matters. As a cradle United Methodist, I care deeply about our denomination, our Wesleyan theology, and our public witness. Recently, all three have been harmed by our GC gatherings. At GC 2020, I pray we can move forward, in whatever structural form the Holy Spirit leads us, so that we can do the ministry God has called us all to do. I hope that at JC 2020, we can uplift more clergywomen and people of color to the important role of bishop in our jurisdiction.

Second, I believe new perspectives are needed. As Co-Chair of the Young Clergy Fellowship, I was disappointed, but not surprised, to read that only 7% of the delegates at GC2019 were under the age of 35. In the NTC, we define “young clergy” as under-40, and we have a history of electing young clergy to GC/JC delegations. I hope we can continue to be an example for our larger denomination, though it will mean electing new faces and new perspectives; none of our 2016/19 clergy delegates are “young clergy” as of this year. Whether or not you vote for me, I encourage you to find a young clergyperson you can support and to vote early and often for them to be included in our GC/JC delegations.

Lastly, I feel I am well-equipped to represent our conference as a delegate to GC or JC. I have gifts for strategic thinking, writing and public speaking, and creative problem solving. I’m thankful to have worked closely with Uniting Methodists for the past couple years, where I have been able to use my gifts, learn about the many layers to our current crisis, and grow in hope for what God is doing amongst the broad tent of United Methodists.

**Answer 3:** I have not served as a delegate previously. I did, however, serve as Internal Communications Director for Uniting Methodists in 2019 in St. Louis. This put me in contact with hundreds of leaders and delegates throughout our global denomination, including leading delegates from every annual conference in the US. I believe that my work to build relationships broadly throughout the larger church will be an asset during this season of strategizing, negotiation, and conversation about what the next era of Methodism looks like... a future that other young clergy like myself will inherit.

**Answer 4:** Serving at Lovers Lane, I am in community with persons from the LGBTQ+ community, Preston Hollow Dallasites, Rwandan refugees, third-generation immigrants, the list goes on... We have had to navigate incredibly difficult conversations as a local church, but we find ourselves united around a common mission, vision, and dream that we believe comes from our shared love of God in Christ. We believe that being a “sacred blend” of God’s diverse children is a gift, despite the challenges we may experience. This work has culminated in a book titled Together, which I co-authored with Stan Copeland.

Having seen the work God can do first-hand on our campus, I know that while schism or restructuring is almost certainly in our future as a denomination, I also remain committed to building a future that makes room for ALL at the Lord’s Table.

My work as a pastor at LLUMC and in our larger community has prepared me to navigate difficult conversations, mediate differing perspectives, and bring together different groups to work towards a common mission, vision, and dream.

**Answer 5:** The most important issue facing General Conference is forging the future of our denomination(s). Any plan for our future that passes by a 54-45 margin is not a decisive one for a global church. Whether we form two or more new denominations, restructure in a vision akin to the Connectional Conference Plan, establish one or more Central Conferences for the US, or some new idea that is birthed in the coming months, something must be done, and our divisions must be acknowledged and dealt with.

At Jurisdictional Conference we must uplift more women and people of color for the episcopacy to greater represent the diversity in leadership of our Annual Conferences. I also believe it is time for a woman to be bishop of the North Texas Conference.

**Answer 6:** God is calling us to humble ourselves and recognize that the fastest growing faith in America is not a progressive Christianity nor an evangelical Christianity, but agnosticism. We need to free one another to be about the Gospel work God has called us to, so that we can experience revival in our mission fields. Revival sounds nice, but it means the Holy Spirit is in the driver seat, which also means things are less-structured and less-controllable than we may like. To make revival possible, we have to be willing to go somewhere new; our current structures and ways of being as United Methodists simply are not adapted to a 21st century world.

Lastly, there is one word that God has been lifting up in my own heart recently: Dignity. I want to be part of a UMC that seeks to bring dignity to people throughout our world, by addressing injustice, and also by creating systems of a self-sustaining global church. Among others, these are my prayers.

**Full Name:** Ricky Harrison  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor of the Pecan Street Mission Community at FUMC Decatur  
**Email:** rharrison20@gmail.com  
**Church:** Decatur First UMC  
**District:** Northwest



**Answer 1:** Lay Member: North Texas Annual Conference, 2008-16 Clergy Member: North Texas Annual Conference, 2017-Present South Central Jurisdiction Youth Team, 2008-10 North Texas Conference Council on Youth Ministry, 2004-10; Chair, 2009-10 North Texas Conference Episcopacy Committee, 2012-14 South Central Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, 2012-14 Connectional Table of the United Methodist Church, 2012-16 Lay Delegate to General & Jurisdictional Conferences: 2012 & 2016

**Answer 2:** Having been deeply involved in the work of the General Church over the past 8 years, I want to continue shaping & serving the United Methodist Church at this crucial moment in our history. I believe I can bring many things to the Delegation, including the network of young lay & clergy persons I've nurtured in the South Central Jurisdiction & the General Church, my studied knowledge of the history and polity of our Church, a unique perspective on global & connectional issues from serving with Connectional Table, and an array of friendships I've formed with faithful & diverse United Methodists across our nation and around the world.

**Answer 3:** In 2012 I was elected as the Lead Lay Delegate for the North Texas Delegation. This election was an unprecedented and unexpected event, being my first time on the Delegation at the age of 19. The learning curve was steep and the workload heavy, but intense and intentional preparation, including two semesters studying under Bishop Dan Solomon, helped me develop tools with which to serve the Delegation. In 2016, I was again elected as a General Conference Lay Delegate and served actively with the Delegation even while attending seminary in North Carolina. Upon being Commissioned in 2017, I gave up my Lay Seat on the delegation but continued to work closely with our delegates in preparation for the 2019 Special Session. In St. Louis, I served in a supportive capacity working to network & foster relationships across our connection in order to pass the One Church Plan – a continuation of the Third Way legislation I first began with the Connectional Table. I believe my extensive service and leadership experiences in North Texas, the South Central Jurisdiction, and our General Church have effectively equipped me again for the work of the Delegation.

**Answer 4:** In 2012 I was elected at Jurisdictional Conference to serve on the Connectional Table of the United Methodist Church. From 2012-2016 I was deeply immersed in the work of our Global Church. I learned how to work closely with people from a variety of cultural and theological backgrounds, how to effectively navigate a legislative body, and how to engage the difficult but critical issues facing our denomination. During my tenure on Connectional Table, I worked closely on development of the Third Way legislative proposal –forerunner of the One Church Plan. In this capacity I served as the CT Ambassador for South Central Jurisdiction, traveling to consult with many of our SCJ Delegations leading up to General Conference 2016. I believe the relationships I have built with a diversity of episcopal, clergy, and lay leaders from across our denomination will be an asset to the Delegation as we engage in the crucial work of building consensus across coalitions regarding the future of our denomination.

**Answer 5:** The most important issue facing General Conference 2020 is determining whether the United Methodist Church can continue to live together as a single denomination which allows for the faithful practice of contextual ministry in order serve a wide diversity of mission fields. If not, we must come to a practical consensus on how to part ways in order to allow for the full practice of contextual ministry. The local church continues to be the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs; thus, we must ask critical questions about the way our broken & dysfunctional system and structure have largely hindered our best efforts at making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. If we are unable to effectively address this

pivotal issue, then all else will simply amount to the proverbial rearranging of deck chairs as our Titanic of a denomination continues to sink.

**Answer 6:** I believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to deep renewal and revival. By and large, the Spirit which drove the early Methodist movement has been squelched under decades of bureaucratic institution building. No General or Jurisdictional Conference, no General Agency or Annual Conference will accomplish our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” It is primarily in local Spirit-driven communities of faith & through those followers of Jesus that our mission is most effectively lived out. The United Methodist Church must empower local communities of faith and leaders in those locales to engage in contextual ministry in ways only they know how.

**Full Name:** Ronald D. Henderson

**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy

**Gender:** Male

**Ethnicity:** Black, African American

**Occupation:** Minister - District Superintendent (North Central)

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**Why other:** Since I am a District Superintendent, my membership is with the North Texas Conference. My Charge Conference membership is Custer



**Answer 1:** Throughout my ministry I have served as a member of several agencies in the Annual Conference and General Church. In the Annual Conference I have served on the Council of Finance and Administration, Ethnic Minority Local Church, and Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry from 1992-1996. I have been blessed to serve the General Church as member of the Board of Directors of the General Board of Global Ministries, 1988-1992, Director, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Division of Ordained Ministry, 1992-2000. I was elected by the Annual Conference to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees, Southwestern University, 2006-2018; and currently I serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of Gammon Theological Seminary, 2012-present. I have also been an extension of the conference in the community by serving as a director of the Dallas Bethlehem Center and three years as Board President.

**Answer 2:** I strongly believe that the 2020 General Conference is going to be very important in that there will be a number of legislative proposals to start new expressions of Methodism. Currently, there are several conversation groups with a purpose to create an expression of Methodism that is totally inclusive and empowering of all people regardless of race, gender, class status, or sexual orientation. I know the culture of General Conference and know how to navigate the system and how to have an impact in this very complex system. For the upcoming General Conference, I believe institutional memory will be very important in having a vision and voice of power. Inasmuch as I believe that there will be different expressions of Methodism, perhaps under a larger umbrella of United Methodism, I think it is very important to have persons who can represent the stewardship of African Americans and other disenfranchised groups in order that African Americans and other disenfranchised people are full and equal partners in what I believe will be a new expression of Methodism. Currently, I participate in a very significant national group that is shaping the conversation for a new expression. In addition, a group of African Americans who are members of the larger group are meeting separately to establish core values to ensure that African Americans are full and equal partners in a new expression of Methodism. I have accepted the call to be a member of this particular group. I list the above statements about the future of United Methodism, because I strongly believe that there will be new expressions of our church and that I can be a vital steward in shaping a new movement of our church.

**Answer 3:** I have been a member of the full delegation since 1988. General Conference delegate in 1996, 2004, 2012, 2016, 2019 and jurisdictional delegate since 1988. Collaborating with delegates from other Annual Conferences, I have helped shape good legislation for the good of our church as well as help defeat in committees, bad and harmful legislation.

Electing younger and a new wave of leaders for our delegation is necessary for a new future, both for our conference and general church. I am making myself available to be elected a delegate to General Conference because my experience at past General Conference, my institutional memory, and passion for a new church will be helpful to our 2020 delegation as we work to have an impact at General Conference 2020.

**Answer 4:** My work in the community consists of numerous involvements. On two separate occasions, I served as a member of the Board of Directors of Methodist Hospital. In this capacity, I was instrumental in advocating new black doctors received hospital privileges; that is, the ability to admit and treat patients.

For more than twenty years, I have been an active member of the Black Pastors Coalition. This group has taken the lead in advocating for justice, particularly for those on the margins. We have been a voice for reconciliation and peace with justice. Being a part of this group has given me an understanding on how to develop



coalition with others, how to lead in the role of advocacy, and how to build trust among different and sometimes competing groups. This involvement will help me as a delegate to General Conference in that the present atmosphere and culture of General Conference calls for advocacy, voice, and coalition building and trust.

**Answer 5:** I believe the most important issue facing General Conference is, what kind of church will the United Methodist Church be? In light of the decisions of General Conference 2019, do we find the strength and way to separate so that people can live out their calling with integrity? Do we stay and fight for the soul of the church? How do we move forward with the discipline, devotion, and Wesleyan Spirit that is true to our historical core that is fully inclusive. Will the United States be a Central Conference? I think 2020 General Conference could very well be the shaping of a new United Methodist Church with more than one body, and I believe this issue will be the most critical facing General Conference.

**Answer 6:** I strongly believe that people are trying to discern God's voice and calling for our future composition and diversity. At this time, I don't believe God's calling is totally clear, but is evolving into a body that sees in all people, the image of God. Theological pluralism has been our strength and weakness as a church. In more modern times, we as a church have not been able to put our theology of diversity and core values into practice. Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the margins will once again make us an attractive and powerful church for all people.

I am passionate about shaping a new expression of Methodism that is already underway and may crystallize at General Conference 2020. That's the church I want to leave behind.

**Full Name:** Rebecca (Becky) David Hensley

**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy

**Gender:** Female

**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American

**Occupation:** Doctoral Student

**Email:** rebeccadhensley@gmail.com

**Why other:** Currently appointed to full-time student status at Iliff School of Theology/University of Denver.



**Answer 1: Church Positions Held:**

Associate Pastor of Young Adult Ministries - Grace UMC Dallas, TX - 2017-2018

Interim Associate Pastor - First UMC Lewisville, TX - 2017

Associate Pastor of Discipleship - First UMC Dallas, TX - 2012-2014

Associate Pastor of Children's and Missions Ministries - Flower Mound UMC - 2010-2012 Youth Director, Holy

Covenant UMC - 2003-2006 Youth Director, FUMC Celina - 2001-2003

**Position/Service/Leadership within North Texas Conference:**

Associate Director, North Texas Conference Center for Leadership Development - 2014-2017 Member, North

Texas Conference Board of Church and Society - 2012-2016 Member/Staff Liaison, North Texas Conference

Committee on Religion and Race - 2014-2017 Member of Ad Hoc Committee Appointed by Bishop McKee to

Explore Discrepancies in Female Clergy Appointments/Pay - 2013-2014

Throughout my church ministry experience, I have directed ministry programs for every age level from children to senior adults, at both large and small, as well as urban, suburban, and rural churches. I have served as an Associate Pastor at a Reconciling Congregation, as well as congregations that have considered becoming Reconciling, and congregations that (at the time of my service) had no desire to become Reconciling.

In my role as Associate Director of the NTC Center for Leadership Development, my portfolio included: oversight of six North Texas Campus Ministries; planning and implementation of annual Clergy Retreat with our Clergy Retreat Planning Committee; development and direction of Luke 4 Initiative program for developing community organizing capacity in NTC churches; oversight of NTC MinistrySafe program; direction and oversight of Clergy Fruitfulness Initiative; direction of Students In Ministry (SIM) Fellowship program for college students discerning a call to vocational ministry; collaboration with NTC Committee on Race Relations to develop and implement training in racial-ethnic and cultural competency for residents in ordination process; assisted in leadership of various aspects of residency program, including Enneagram training for residents.

**Answer 2:** As a woman and as a Deacon, I believe representation is important. However, even more important to me is representing a growing group of voices who desperately desire to see a fully inclusive church, where everyone is welcomed and embraced, and no one is openly discriminated against in the form of policy OR practice. I believe I can make a difference because fighting for justice on all fronts is central to my call to ordained ministry, and something I have sought to do (and continue to work at improving upon) throughout the entire course of my ministry – both when I was a lay member and since I was first commissioned as clergy. While I believe in the importance of coalition-building and will happily and respectfully engage in work and conversation with those with whom I disagree – I will not support legislation that is unjust or discriminates against entire groups of people. I think we need representatives on our delegation who are unwavering in that respect.

**Answer 3: General Conference:**

Research Assistant, North Texas Delegation - 2015-2016 Attended GC 2016 (committee week + legislative session), sat in on Human Sexuality Committee Sessions - 2016-2016

**Jurisdictional Conference:**

Secretary, South Central Jurisdictional Mission Council - 2012-2016

At Large Member, South Central Jurisdictional Mission Council - 2010-2016

While I have not served as a General or Jurisdictional Conference Delegate previously, I attended General Conference in 2016 and Jurisdictional Conference in 2012 and 2016. I also served on the Jurisdictional Mission Council (the council responsible for implementing Jurisdictional Conference) for six years. In 2016, I served as a research assistant for our delegation in their pre-conference preparation, attended delegation meetings throughout both General and Jurisdictional Conferences, and attended the human sexuality committee sessions for General Conference. I believe these experiences have equipped me well for the work of the delegation, as have the relationships I've built throughout the connection through these and other UMC experiences.

**Answer 4:** I served the North Texas Conference for three years as Associate Director for the Center for Leadership Development. In that time, I developed relationships with a large number of clergy and lay members throughout our Conference. One of the main connection points I had with laity was through our initiative to teach basic community organizing practices and strategies to NTC churches.

After serving with the CLD, I spent a year deepening my understanding and skills in community organizing as a Public Theology Fellow with Faith in Texas. While there, I worked closely with several of our NTC churches, but also worked with a broader coalition of multi-faith organizers and activists focused on building a movement for racial and economic justice in the North Texas region. Currently, as a PhD student, my studies are focused on intersectional feminist approaches to faith-based community organizing. Furthermore, as a member of the North Texas Conference currently living in the Western Jurisdiction, I have plenty of opportunity for building relationships and organizing with Western Jurisdictional leadership as a sort of “unofficial liaison” between Conferences/Jurisdictions in the months leading up to GC/JC.

Having served as a research assistant for the NTC GC Delegation, and having attended both the committee meeting week, as well as the legislative session of General Conference of 2016, and as part of Jurisdictional Mission Council for the 2012 and 2016 South Central Jurisdictional Conferences – I can attest to the fact that there is a great deal of organizing work which happens both before and during General/Jurisdictional Conference – most of which occurs long before the legislative sessions. Having already formed relationships with leaders throughout the Connection, I believe my experience in organizing (from both leadership and academic perspectives) will bring valuable expertise, while also bringing the fresh perspective of a new member, to the work of the delegation.

**Answer 5:** As Dr. Eric Smith, professor at Iliff School of Theology, recently stated in the wake of the terrorist attack on two mosques in New Zealand: “The evidence is piling up that if you are a clergy person or a scholar of religion in the 21st century, part of your job description is understanding and combating white supremacy, whether or not you thought that was the business you were getting into.”

I would add that it is not only white supremacy that the church must boldly confront at all levels – it is also hetero-patriarchy. Until we get serious about truly working to dismantle all oppressive systems and structures permeating the foundations of our society – and also present within every level of our denomination – we will not be able to build a future that is, at its core, based in the love, grace, and liberative practices and teachings of Jesus the Christ.

None of us really know at this point what will happen at GC 2020. What we do know, without a doubt, is that our current system and structure is broken. I will seek to center and listen to the voices of the most marginalized persons in this process. I will vote for delegate representation from the most marginalized persons in the church (and so should you!). I strongly believe that if we continue to do things in the same manner we've done in the past – we will end up with the same results. I'm committed to seeking new paths and following **WHEREVER** the Spirit leads...

**Answer 6:** Find a way to become a church that fully includes all God's children in all aspects of its ministry and mission. This means removing all policies that discriminate against our LGBTQ+ siblings, and those who seek to be in full ministry with them. Further, it means that in practice, we have much work to do on full inclusion at all levels of leadership for women, persons of color, persons with disabilities, etc. – as well as the LGBTQ+ community. Now is the time to stop being ruled by fear and become co-creators with God in building the “new thing” that is springing forth! This is our Isaiah 43.19 moment – let's embrace it so that we truly can make disciples who transform the world!

**Full Name:** Ben A. David Hensley

**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy

**Gender:** Male

**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American

**Occupation:** Associate Pastor of Student Discipleship

**Email:** ben@phumc.org

**Why other:** Currently appointed on loan to Park Hill United Methodist Church, Denver, Colo.

**District:** Mile High/Metro



**Answer 1:** Park Hill United Methodist Church, Denver, CO Associate Pastor of Student Discipleship (2018 – Present)

Oak Lawn United Methodist Church, Dallas, TX Minister of Music (2014-2015) Associate Pastor of Worship and Discipleship (2015 – 2018)

First United Methodist Church, Duncanville, TX Associate Minister of Music and Director of Children's Music (2012-2013) Interim Minister of Music (2013)

North Texas Annual Conference Commission on Church Archives and History – Chair (2017-2018) At Large (2016-2017) North Texas Annual Conference Board of Church and Society - (2017-2018) North Texas Annual Conference Clergy Retreat Committee - (2015-2016)

**Answer 2:** One of the most important assets I believe can benefit any delegation who participates in General Conference are people who are willing to commit to knowing the rules of parliamentary engagement deeply, who have an eye for the details in petitions and parliamentary activity, and who have the gut to detect the sub-text that is present in almost every moment of deliberation and planning.

I believe I can be a vital asset to our delegation not only because I am deeply committed to do the work of studying petitions, attending meetings, and reaching across to other delegates through one to one conversations--but also because I am uniquely situated as a clergy member of this conference who has already made relationships with General Conference delegates in other Annual Conferences--namely, Mountain Sky. I am willing to continue to make relationships, and also to work toward new relationships. It will be relationships and coordination across annual conferences that will be vital to maintain in order to make a positive impact on the work we do together at General Conference. I want to do this because I don't think the struggle is over for us as the UMC--and I am not interested in giving in.

One significant question many might have about my ability to serve will be the fact that I am not currently living in the confines of our Annual Conference. But I am completely willing to teleconference to every meeting, do every ounce of homework I need to do, and believe that I can be a part of the preparation in Denver as effectively as if I were living in Dallas. I am also situated well to have conversations with delegates in the Western Jurisdiction, and can serve as an outpost for coalition building and can be a bridge builder to other annual conferences.

I am also unabashedly willing to admit that I am interested in going to General Conference in order to vote in the interests of our annual conference to ordain and commission gay and lesbian candidates for ministry, and to vote in such a way that celebrates LGBTQ spouses and their desire to have their families fully embraced by their faith communities in the UMC. It is time to be direct and embrace that there isn't a middle ground on this particular argument--we are either for embracing the LGBTQ community as God embraces them, or we are not.

**Answer 3:** General Conference 2016 - Observer and helper to the Higher Ed and Ministry Committee team. Examined petitions and sat in on committee meetings.

Jurisdictional Conference 2016 - Observer

Being at General Conference/Jurisdictional Conference in person had a huge impact on how I understand the work that gets done at our quadrennial meetings. Watching the livestream only shows the meeting in session, it does not show the late night meetings, the preliminary study of petitions, consent calendars, nomination slates, caucus endorsements, etc.. General Conference/Jurisdictional Conference 2016 was my first opportunity to see and learn about this process since I officially became Methodist--and I took it. I believe it (and the many questions and conversations I have had with delegates and participants of GC) has prepared me with a significant base of knowledge that makes me a valuable member of our General Conference delegation.

**Answer 4:** I have served as a member or participant in multiple committees in our Annual Conference, and chaired the North Texas Annual Conference Commission on Church Archives and History. I have also served as the vice president of a local chapter of Chorister's Guild, giving me experience with non-profit administration.

In Dallas, I have helped convene a summit of city leaders, faith leaders, and homelessness service providers to gather together and find a solution to the lack of beds available for our neighbors experiencing homelessness when the weather becomes dangerously cold. Convening this gathering involved not only having many one to one conversations with participants, but also research of the various dimensions of the problem, and coming up with accessible ways to present it. I believe this work to be very similar to how a delegation has to look at various plans and submitted legislation to map out the potential impact, pros vs. cons, viability, constitutionality, etc. and not only understand them, but be able to communicate them accessibly to others. The conclusion of the summit resulted in a plan that had the group's consensus. In General Conference, especially now, it is the work of coalitions that guarantees success, so being able to guide a group to consensus is invaluable, especially when a coalition can be full of folks who have completely different worldviews and life experiences.

I am also a certified in Mediation by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center and have a foundational understanding of family systems and effective communication skills that allows me to navigate disagreement deftly. My training in this has granted me the ability to handle most disagreements without taking them personally, reacting in unhelpful ways, and maintaining a healthy lack of anxiety in my communication and work. General Conference is two weeks of non-stop work, frustration, and intense emotion-- I believe these skills will be very useful should I be elected to serve.

**Answer 5:** The most obvious challenge facing General and Jurisdictional Conference will be in how we respond to and manage the fallout from General Conference 2019. It is significant to recognize that, aside from the moral and theological vacuum within the Traditional Plan that was passed, the General Conference was willing to pass legislation that was (twice) demonstrably unconstitutional. This is alarming and reveals a deeper reality that needs to be named--there is a well funded, and effectively organized agenda that has seized control of our General Conference at all costs. This agenda is willing to plow through deliberation at any cost in order to pass legislation that seeks to wrest control of the church from the constituency that not only wants to ordain gay and lesbian people and marry them, but also the people who are seeking a co-existence between the two sides of this debate. We need to recognize that co-existence isn't a likely reality that will result from General Conference. The results of General Conference 2016 guarantees that more delegates will come to Minneapolis in 2020 whose votes are virtually in lock-step with this agenda--so the North Texas delegation needs to be willing to consider how it might be most effective in resisting the worst of what will come in 2020. The North Texas delegation needs to be willing to use its privilege and location to undermine legislation that seeks to destroy the church as we know it and create a church that seeks to centralize punishment and undermine due process rights of Bishops and clergy.

General Conference 2020 will also be considering the vital work of our United Methodist Hymnal committee, work that could possibly lead to innovation in the denominationally-vetted songs of the church that has not yet been achieved by other sister denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The United Methodist Church has been an historic leader when it comes to the songs that the church sings, I look forward to how we can continue to offer the next new innovation to the church's song.

We will also be looking at the work that has been done to create a Global Book of Discipline, work that could have a significant effect on how we proceed together as a denomination, and work that might present creative solutions to our deepest disagreements as a denomination.

There will also be many legislated attempts to create pathways for churches, clergy, and annual conferences to leave the denomination. This has significant financial implications for the church and the ministry that the UMC does across the world.

**Answer 6:** God is calling us to live into the Great Commandment: to love God with all our souls, minds, spirits, and strength--and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

**Full Name:** Jill Jackson-Sears  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Senior Pastor of Lake Highlands UMC  
**Email:** pastorjill@lhumc.com  
**Church:** Lake Highlands UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** \*Conference Candidacy Registrar, Board of Ordained Ministry, 2010-present \*Member of the Board of Ordained Ministry, 2004-present \*Member of the C.C. Young Board, 2018-present \*Member of the Conference Episcopacy Committee, 2000-2008 \*Registrar and Member of the Dallas South DCOM, 2006-2010 \*Member of the Dallas South Superintendency Committee, 2004-2008

**Answer 2:** God has great dreams for the United Methodist Church. I passionately desire to be a part of what God is doing! My spiritual gifts include discernment, faith, and perseverance. All of these gifts are necessary to the work of the church and delegation. We must pay attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit; believe that God can and will do great things through us; and make our way through a mountain of legislation and hours of conference calls. My gifts are especially suited for this legislative and committee work. I am willing to share these spiritual gifts for the glory of God.

**Answer 3:** I was elected and served as a delegate to the 2012 and 2016 General Conferences, where I represented our conference in the legislative committee on the local church. I also served as a delegate to the 2019 Called General Conference as an extension of my 2016 election. During those conferences, I developed significant and invaluable relationships with United Methodists from all over the world. I have continued working with them outside of the parameters of General Conference, particularly in regards to the South Central Jurisdictional Clergywomen's Convocation, which will take place in our conference this fall.

**Answer 4:** As an associate pastor of a suburban church, a lone pastor at a growing rural church, a co-pastor of a vital merger church, and a lead pastor of a large urban church, my ministry experiences represent the broad spectrum of churches that make up the North Texas Conference. My passion is rooted in the local church, which is the primary place where disciples of Jesus Christ are made. I bring this perspective and voice to the delegation.

**Answer 5:** My greatest hope for the United Methodist Church lies in our passion for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The Church, as the body of Christ, has the responsibility of sharing the hope of the Gospel with all people. We need to refocus our energy and passion on creative ways of offering this hope, whether that be through the creation of "new spaces for new faces" or intentionally sharing the Gospel through acts of social holiness.

In addition, we must find a way to honor each other, even if we do not agree with one another. We must elect episcopal leaders, who are able to lead the United Methodist Church with faithfulness and compassion.

**Answer 6:** The closing verses of the book of Acts describe Paul as one who was "... preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered." (Acts 28: 31). Therefore, we must equip our clergy and lay people to know our story – God's story – and be able to share this witness with openness, unhindered, and unashamed.



**Full Name:** William B. Lawrence  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Ordained Elder, in the Retired Relationship  
**Email:** wblawren@smu.edu  
**Church:** Northaven UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** Before my retirement, I was appointed as the Dean of Perkins School of Theology at SMU and as Professor of American Church History. During those active years, I served on the Board of Ordained Ministry of the Annual Conference and on the Conference Committee on Episcopacy. Having entered into the retired relationship in 2018, I now live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and worship at Christ United Methodist Church in Chapel Hill. My local church involvements include teaching an adult class on Sunday mornings, contributing to a bi-weekly discussion group of laity on matters of public policies for the church, and serving as a guest preacher or presider when invited to do so.

**Answer 2:** The General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 2020 will be pivotal events that may determine the future of the denomination, not only whether The United Methodist Church endures as a single institution but whether the entity (or the entities) that endure beyond 2020 will be faithful theologically to Wesleyan doctrinal standards, doctrine, discipline, and public witness. The denomination has been distracted by decades of writing policies and laws that demonize and demean certain persons because of their sexual orientation or identity. We have neglected the theology of grace that is our theological foundation. I believe that I can make a positive, constructive contribution to the Conferences in 2020 in overcoming these difficulties.

**Answer 3:** In two previous quadrennia, I was a delegate both to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences. As a member of Legislative Committees on Global Mission and on Ordained Ministry in these quadrennia, I participated in writing legislation that contributed to our mission and ministry. I understand how much time, dedication, thought, and preparation is necessary for a delegate to be an effective contributor. In addition, my experiences have equipped me to be ready for the delicate task of being an effective legislator at General Conference, to function within the Rules of the General Conference and also the parliamentary procedure that accompanies those Rules. In addition, I respect the importance of being part of a team on an annual conference delegation.

**Answer 4:** I have had the privilege of developing relationships across the United Methodist connection. Through my work as Dean of one of the official theological schools of The United Methodist Church, my service as a faculty or staff member of three other official United Methodist schools of theology, my term as District Superintendent, my pastoral experience as the minister for a two-point charge and as the senior minister of large congregations, my membership on Boards of Ordained Ministry in three annual conferences (four years as Chair), my membership on Committees on Episcopacy in two annual conferences (four years as Chair), my membership on (and Presidency of) the Judicial Council, and my leadership of a complex academic institution will serve me well.

**Answer 5:** The two most prominent issues facing the General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 2020 will be facing the crisis over homosexuality and facing the crisis involving denominational finances. Of these two, the first is well-documented, and I have addressed it in another question. The second, while well-known in some circles of the Church, is not as prominent or as thoroughly discussed, but the General Conference is going to be asked to approve a denominational budget that averages a 25% reduction for the next four years, while at the same time it is going to be asked to approve the addition of five new Bishops. In addition, these recommendations arose before the threat of withholding apportionments became a serious possibility.

**Answer 6:** We have to reconnect with our Wesleyan doctrinal standards and our United Methodist doctrines by affirming that God's grace extends to all and that God's grace is all that we need to embrace the gift of salvation. We have to align our church laws with our Constitution, which declares all persons have "sacred worth." We have to apply our doctrine and our constitutional polity to remove the precepts and practices which demonize and demean a number of God's children. And we have to move away from a single-minded obsession with our own internal, denominational issues so that we can focus on transforming the world as our mission statement declares.



**Full Name:** S Dianna Masters  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Black, African American  
**Occupation:** Associate Director, Center for Church Development NTC  
**Email:** masters@ntcumc.org  
**Church:** St. Paul UMC Dallas  
**District:** Extension Ministry



**Answer 1:** In 2012 I was appointed associate pastor of St Luke Community UMC to help heal this broken congregation. In 2014 I was appointed lead pastor of Warren UMC in South Dallas where the congregational was not vital and had not paid their mortgage for two years. The the same time I was appointed as the missional strategist for the Metro District Office to help strengthen the churches with Rev Cammy Gaston. In 2017 I was appointed Associate Director for the Center for Church Development where I lead the work of strengthening our black churches.

I have been elected a Director to General Board of Global Ministries as well as a Director for Women's Division 1992-2000 This service was a lay woman. I returned to NTC in 2012 as an ordained elder to serve as associate pastor of St Luke Community UMC. While at St Luke I found myself as a pastor giving leadership to many outreach ministries of the community, As the pastor of Warren UMC in South Dallas, I gave leadership to this needy community also . I birth the idea of an after school program and wrote a grant to fund it. The grant was for one year but I was able to fund this important ministry for two additional years without accepting money from the church, the district or the Conference. Our after school program at times needed to help Warren pay the bills. This program served poor children and families that lived in South Dallas near the church. I also sought volunteers to read at the two elementary schools near the church. Church leaders gave time to volunteering during the date at Martin Luther King Elementary and Charles Rice Elementary. The after school program picked up the children in the church van to come to the church where we feed them a full meal knowing they might not have an evening meal at home. We tutored these children only in Reading and Math. The volunteers did the reading portion and I did the math because I knew what the children would be tested on by the State. Their report card grades went to passing in every subject and at the end of our first year, these children also passed the State Math and Reading test for the first time I have also given leadership to other pastors so that they could begin an after school program at their church .

I helped develop the leaders at the churches to lead in bible study using the Disciples Program.

At St Luke I gave leadership in organizing the laity in serving the community. I taught them to go into the community and give Holy Communion to the sick and shut in. I gave them a script and purchased portable kits for them. This ministry continues to today,

**Answer 2:** I would like to serve as a delegate to GC/JC because I have a voice that is not being heard. My voice is that of a black woman that has served in very poor communities as well as in large congregations across the denomination. My voice will be for those voices not heard that needs to be heard. I have served both as a lay woman and an ordained clergy woman in leadership nationally as well as locally. I will see issues from a perspective that is usually not present. I believe we are stronger together and therefore, must find a way to be inclusive of all voices including our sisters and brothers in the LBGTQIA community.

**Answer 3:** In 2000 I was an alternate delegate to GC/JC from NTC as a lay woman and enjoyed learning from the delegates as we meet very often in preparation for the Conference. This was a unique experience but did not run for being a delegate in 2004 because in 2001, my husband was appointed lead pastor of Holman UMC in Los Angeles. Therefore, our family moved to LA and we lived there for eleven years. While there I started and completed my seminary training as well as became an ordained elder in the UMC. I passed the Board on the first time which is very rare in California Pacific Conference because there are very few churches for appointments.

**Answer 4:** My leadership experiences in the community and in the church have been rich and rewarding. While a Director for the GBGM and Women's Division I served the UMC in many leadership positions. This work was helpful for the delegation because I had to build relationships with people like me, different from me, people that were American citizens and people that we not American citizens. Serving as a delegate is about making relationships because the work of the General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference is about making decisions that affect relationships. You can't hate up close.

**Answer 5:** I believe that two of the most important issues facing General and Jurisdictional Conference of 2020 is how to be inclusive of all people. It's not just the LGBT issues even though that is a major divisive issue that is hurting the people of this denomination.

The issue is also how to grow our churches. We have many small churches that are African American that are closing across the nation. They are closing for many reasons but one is lack of leadership on the part of the DS's and Bishops. People don't seem to know what to do and there is not enough money to do it. However, I believe we need to stop trying to fix our churches and learn more about making disciples. When you are making disciples, the money is there to do outreach and evangelism work.

All the money we need to do this work is out there but people are not buying into the UMC brand. I believe we as UM have the right theology and for the most part have a good handle on the Bible but we are not living what we say we believe. We need to show that we believe in a mighty God and that God is using us to do the work of offering and receiving grace and unconditional love. We need to elect bishops that are able to lead us in this work. I believe Bishop McKee is doing all that he knows to do in strengthening our Black Churches but I don't see this in other Annual Conferences.

**Answer 6:** I believe God is calling us to stop trying to fix our churches and fix our belief system by making disciples from all races, all socio economic groups and people that are both heterosexual as well as homosexual. I believe we are all made in the image of God and we should be treated as such. I believe we need to stop judging and start accepting people. I believe we can't hate up close. Let's get up close and love God's people by offering them Christ. This is how I have done my ministry in all the places I have served including now serving from the Conference. If I can offer Christ to a known drug dealer in South Dallas, then surely I can offer Christ to anyone and not be afraid. We must remember that it is not us but it is the Christ in us that is doing this important work.

**Full Name:** John McLarty  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor  
**Email:** jmcclarty@fumcwf.org  
**Church:** Wichita Falls First UMC  
**District:** Northwest



**Answer 1:** Coach through Center for New Church Development and Center for Leadership Development  
Lead Consultant for Healthy Church Initiative Formerly on North Central District Committee on Ministry  
Chair- Northwest District Superintendency Committee Incoming Chair- Wichita Falls Wesley Foundation Board  
of Directors Formerly on Denton Wesley Foundation Board of Directors Center for Church Development Advi-  
sory Board Northwest District Finance Committee Drummer with Connections Band

**Answer 2:** I am offering myself in service to the North Texas Conference delegation primarily to be a voice  
and advocate for the people of the churches outside the Metroplex. I believe my experiences in as a sole  
pastor in a two-point charge, a church planter, Senior pastor in a large suburban church, and now Senior  
pastor of a large church in an "outlying" district have given me a broad perspective of the church and the  
needs of the people we are called to serve. I think my personality type as a strategist will serve the delegation  
as we work with other delegations to create a pathway for United Methodists to chart new territory for the sake  
of God's Kingdom.

**Answer 3:** No previous delegation experience Attended General Conference 2019 as an observer

**Answer 4:** New church planter: problem-solving in creating new systems and structures where none had ex-  
isted Large-church turnaround: courage to make difficult decisions in order to improve the overall health of the  
organization District leadership: understanding and representing the views of others

**Answer 5:** Creating a mechanism for the Church's structure to branch in different directions while maintaining  
the best parts of our Connectional identity

**Answer 6:** Allowing churches in the USA, as well as across the globe, the flexibility to practice ministry most  
effectively in their context, while allowing for and appreciating our great cultural and theological diversity

**Full Name:** Jenna Morrison  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor  
**Email:** pastor@tryfaith.org  
**Church:** Faith UMC Corinth  
**District:** North Central



**Answer 1:**

- Senior Pastor, Faith UMC, Corinth – 2018-Present
- Ordained as an elder in full connection in 2016 after being in full-time youth and pastoral ministry in North Texas since 2010.
- Delegate, Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly, Philippines – 2014
- Member, District Committee for Buildings and Locations – 2016-2018
- Member, Clergy Women Leadership Team – 2013-2018
  - o Communications Coordinator – 2014-2016
  - o Co-Convener – 2017
  - o Convener – 2018
- Chair, Clergy Retreat Planning Committee – 2018-Present
- Junior High Camp Director, Bridgeport Camp and Conference Center – 2012-Present.

**Answer 2:** I have always had a heart and passion for the work of the larger denomination. I attended my first General Conference as a student at TCU when the conference was in Fort Worth and have been watching closely since then (also having attended in Portland). I would love to serve as part of the delegation because I believe that there is still work to be done, and my gifts for strategy, seeing the bigger picture, and dreaming big can be of great use in this global work. As a young clergywoman with considerable experience in both the local and global church, I come to the table with wisdom and knowledge and a unique and important perspective.

**Answer 3:**

- Delegate to GYPC-LA in the Philippines: this work was a firsthand look behind the scenes of General Conference where we had the opportunity as young people (who are often not elected to delegations globally) to participate in a "mock" general conference. I participated in writing legislation, brushed up on my Robert's Rules, worked through the conversation on the floor, and eventually voted on the work before us. It was a time full of learning and absorbing information about the inner workings of the global church! This experience gave me firsthand knowledge and insight, and prepared me to use this knowledge and work at the bigger table!
- Visitor to Fort Worth and Portland GCs: especially in Portland, I was able to watch the work of GC closely, learning from delegates who took time to teach me about what was happening and why. Watching the delegation work was an incredible peek into the work they do, and the work I hope to do as a delegate.
- Currently, I am serving with a group of women who are planning the jurisdictional clergy women gathering in October with the goal of lifting up and supporting excellent women for the episcopacy. This work is giving me an inside view of the workings of the church, connecting me with a vast number of women locally and jurisdictionally, and giving me the space to creatively work with others toward a common goal.

**Answer 4:** So much of my knowledge of the inner-workings of General Conference procedure come from years of serving as the VP of my college sorority at Texas Christian University. I served at both the local, district, and national level (briefly) of the organization, working continuously to make it better and safer for its members. I was a part of legislation writing, in working "across lines" to get work done together, and the day-to-day regulation of the organization at the local level. This work laid the groundwork for deep understanding of parliamentary procedure, legislative and regulative work, and the political nature of large-scale organizations.

I also believe that my work in the local church over the years—from youth ministry to camp ministry to adult education and worship coordinating and eventually becoming a solo pastor—has set me up well as I've learned the art of compromise, the importance of listening first and well, and the absolute necessity to stick to one's principals with grace and respect.

**Answer 5:** The most important issue that we are facing with the upcoming General/Jurisdictional Conferences are:

- How can we move forward and do the absolute least amount of harm possible (recognizing that harm has and is already being done)? We need to be prepared to be creative in the ways we can give people the grace to act their conscience.
- How can we elect more excellent women and people of color to the episcopacy?

**Answer 6:** As I have dozens of conversations with members and visitors to my church and even more with lifelong friends through the UMC, I am learning that people across all spectrums within the church feel as if we are a church in ashes after the called GC. I believe that God is calling the UMC to find ways to foster resurrection within those ashes, building vast, creative avenues for ministry to be cultivated in a wide array of mission fields of theological, social, etc. perspectives. I am holding tight to the promise that "God is doing a new thing!" and deeply believe that we can be a part of that new thing in the world, making space for disciples of Jesus Christ in all walks of life.

**Full Name:** Tim Morrison  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Deacon in the UMC  
**Email:** TMorrison@crumc.org  
**Church:** Custer Road UMC  
**District:** North Central



**Answer 1:** Current Chair: Board of Ministry Current Staff: Perkins School of Theology teaching CM 8107 since 1999 Past Chair: Order of Deacons Past Committees Served: Conference Worship, DCOM, Jurisdictional Worship, Nehemiah Current Mentor: Thomas Elementary

**Answer 2:** a.) As the current Chair of the NTC BOM, I am aware of the ramifications of the 2019 GC in St. Louis as related to candidacy. I am deeply concerned and feel strongly that NT needs an informed, passionate voice in the continued dialogue in Minneapolis in 2020. Experience, (as chair and delegate) has prepared me for the challenging work ahead.

b.) The process of electing Bishops for our Jurisdiction is a paramount issue for NT. I feel well connected and networked in our region and ready to empower gifted leaders for this crazy time in our Church. Clergy and lay relationships beyond NT are invaluable in this process.

**Answer 3:** I have been honored to serve as a NT JC Delegate for the past two quadrennium. Continued dialogue on controversial subjects with gifted people around the world has re-shaped my perspective, widened my horizons and challenged my positions. I have grown and find myself stronger and uniquely equipped for the challenges that lie ahead. The Church is fractured. The dynamics are seemingly impossible. I am broken for the Church. . .and yet. . .ready to help the Church take the next step in healing. I feel I could have been a poster child for the One Church Plan. I believed to my core that it wasn't merely a stop-gap or a compromise but the best model for the future. The Church will again face a dividing issue. Endorsing a plan that allows for diverse opinion while sitting on the same pew would have helped us today and in the future. I grieve the passing of the Traditional Plan and long to work to re-shape the direction we are going.

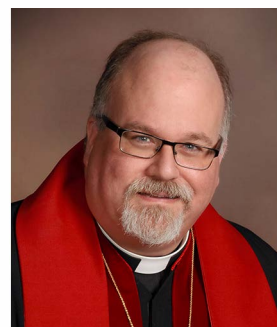
**Answer 4:** Serving as the BOM Chair is a time consuming blessing. I have scrutinized over the Book of Discipline. I have tried to balance my heart and my head in examining candidates. I have enjoyed deep conversations about the calling of ministry. And I have tried to hold together a BOM team of clergy and lay that is diverse in the practice of ministry. I am fully aware of the 2019 GC implications for the work of the BOM and stand ready to go back to the trenches in 2020.

**Answer 5:** a. remaining relevant in a post Christian culture b. Election of Bishops c. Sexuality, still, has divided us and must be repaired.

**Answer 6:** I feel God is calling the UMC, and me, to stand in midst of a secular culture and proclaim the incredible news of Jesus Christ with confidence, conviction and passion. The UMC, I, must not be shy or apologetic about the goodness of God. We must share our unique perspective on how to read the Bible while enthusiastic about the Bible's content. We must humble ourselves, pray for grace to fill us up and prepare us to share God's love in every capacity



**Full Name:** Gregory S. Neal  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor  
**Email:** revneal@mac.com  
**Church:** Farmersville UMC  
**District:** North Central



**Answer 1:** Conference Board of Global Ministries Conference Ecumenical Committee Dean, Cooperative School of Christian Missions Event (1993-1994) Annual Conference Planning Committee Member, and twice Chair, of several DCOMS over more than 20 years District Statistician and Assistant Statistician in multiple Districts for over 25 years Community Spiritual Director for the Dallas Emmaus Community Member of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Consultation on Online Holy Communion (2013) Regional Leader for the "This Holy Mystery" Communion Study (2004-2014)

**Answer 2:** I believe that, as a Conference and a Denomination, we have reached a crossroads in our journey together that calls us to accept that things must change. We must re-envision what it means to be church, to be Methodist, and to be in mission and ministry with each other. While a daunting task, it is one that we must face. I am ready and willing to work with the other members of our Conference delegation, as well as delegates from other Conferences, to make this possible both in the run-up to, and during, the General Conference.

**Answer 3:** I have never before been elected to serve on the GC/JC delegations. However, I have attended multiple GCs (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012) and 2 Jurisdictional Conferences (2008 and 2012); I served as a photographer at the 2008 General Conference and as a Russian Translator for GC2012. I have also observed the majority of the 2016 and 2019 GCs proceedings via Live Stream.

**Answer 4:** I've been involved in multiple branches of the general Church's ministries, including through the Upper Room with the starting of Emmaus Communities in several European Countries and in teaching the "This Holy Mystery" Communion Study across the country. Because of this service, as well as due to my online ministry and book writing, I have developed connections with Methodists in all of the US Jurisdictions, as well as in the Central Conferences, across a broad spectrum of theological and cultural settings. As a District Statistician I am aware of the financial and membership trends that face our Conference in particular, and the US Church in general. I am something of a Discipline-nerd, meaning that I'm generally aware of what's in the Discipline and what needs to be adjusted, changed, added, or subtracted in order to make legislation work.

**Answer 5:** The United Methodist Church needs to go in a new direction. I have long believed in the unity of the Church, and have been opposed to talks of separation. But, after the 2019 Called Special Session of the General Conference, I have come to the painful conclusion that the Centrists and Progressives of the US and Northern European Church need find new ways of being in Connection, while allowing those with a more Conservative perspective to go their own way. Through such a separation -- sharing those resources and institutions we can, and dividing the rest -- we can best reach the contextual needs of our many various ministry settings.

**Answer 6:** I believe that, if freed from this horrific internal conflict, we will be able to better reach people with the Gospel in words and in deeds and, thereby, make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. To this end, I believe that God is calling the UMC to be open to new ways of being church while truly honoring the validity of each others' callings and agreeing to disagree amicably. My prayer is that we may all be one, and in Christ we will be, but the important issues of social justice, contextualized ministry, and self-determination are calling us to "be one" differently. While a social progressive, I am earnestly dedicated to working with Methodists of all theological and social persuasions to further our ministries both together and separate and to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

**Full Name:** Clayton Oliphint  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor  
**Email:** jco@fumcr.com  
**Church:** Richardson First UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** I have served as a pastor in the North Texas Conference since 1986, as an associate pastor at Lovers Lane UMC (1986-90), and senior pastor at FUMC The Colony (1990-1996), FUMC Duncanville (1996-2001), and FUMC Richardson (2001-present). Each of the churches I have served as senior pastor have seen significant increases in attendance, membership, giving, and mission outreach in the community. In the North Texas Conference I have served as Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (2000-2004), Chair of Conference Finance and Administration (2012-2016), and currently chair the Committee on Episcopacy (2016-present). I have also chaired the Board of Directors of Methodist Children's Home (2006-2012), CC Young Retirement Community (2013-2014), and Texas Methodist Foundation (2019). I have also served on the Board of Directors of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns (OCUIR) from 2008-2016, and the South Central Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy (2016-present).

**Answer 2:** Simply put, unfinished business. I do not believe the witness of the United Methodist Church was enhanced by General Conference 2019. I am committed to a Wesleyan witness of love and grace for all. I truly believe in the Big-Tent church, where we do not have to agree on all issues, but our hearts burn as one in our desire to connect people to the good news of Jesus and His love. I believe my experience at previous General Conferences, and being a part of many delegations, would be an asset to the North Texas delegation for GC/JC 2020.

**Answer 3:** 2004 First Reserve Delegate to General Conference, Jurisdictional Delegate 2008, 2012, 2016, 2019 General Conference and Jurisdictional Delegate

I have developed trusted relationships with people across the connection and across the theological spectrum through past service on the North Texas delegation. I know first hand the workings of General Conference, the work required of the delegation, and the importance of networking ahead of General and Jurisdictional Conference. Having people on the delegation who have been there before can help new delegation members navigate the complexities.

**Answer 4:** Besides serving as a General Conference delegate, I have served on a General Agency, worked with the Council of Bishops on the budgeting aspects of the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund, and have testified before the Judicial Council. As a Board Chair of several large non-profits, I have led organizations through structural and leadership changes that required a calm, steady presence. Some of the most challenging work I have done as a pastor has involved overseeing the relocation, building, funding, and growth (both in membership and staff) at FUMC Richardson. Leading large, complex systems through change is not easy, and requires focus, faith, and flexibility. I believe these experiences would be an asset to our work in the delegation.

**Answer 5:** General Conference 2019 had no winners. The United Methodist Church must find a way to move forward together or bless some new expressions of the Wesleyan witness in some new form. I want to help the church find a way forward that is as unifying and as inclusive as possible. Our structure makes General Conference a non-functioning body, and we must work toward appropriate structural changes allowing for greater autonomy on social issues for different regions.

For Jurisdictional Conference, I am committed to electing bishops who have leadership ability in helping move the church forward in faith. In the South Central Jurisdiction we have a particular need to raise up outstanding candidates for the episcopacy who represent diversity in race and gender.



**Answer 6:** We have to get focused on our purpose as a church. While we are playing power games at General Conference, communities are facing real life issues which the church could be involved in addressing. This is an opportunity for the church to claim a new future, centering our efforts on making disciples of Jesus Christ, offering God's grace and practical solutions that will help transform communities. With all of the problems of the church, there are still tremendous possibilities for the church. I want to be a part of a church that inspires the best in people and challenges people to focus on the basics of loving God and loving neighbor.

**Full Name:** Sheron C. Patterson  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Female  
**Ethnicity:** Black, African American  
**Occupation:** Senior Pastor  
**Email:** S.Patterson@theparkumc.org  
**Church:** Hamilton Park UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** Associate Pastor- First UMC Dallas Senior Pastor – Crest- MOORE King UMC (now Community UMC) Senior Pastor – Jubilee UMC Senior Pastor – St. Paul UMC Senior Pastor – Highland Hill's UMC Extended Cabinet, Communications Director- NTC Senior Pastor- Hamilton Park UMC Chair – Ethnic Local Church Committee  
Member- Metro District Board of Ordained Ministry  
Member- General Board of Discipleship

**Answer 2:** Our denomination is in uncharted waters. We are building the road as we walk on it. In light of that, I would like to serve as a delegate to General Conference/ Jurisdictional Conference because I am a builder in adverse conditions. I am experienced in the unknown. I am not afraid of chaos and confusion. I can make a difference as a part of the delegation because I calm under pressure. I have a grasp the global church issues, and the denominational structure. I am innovative and can look at old problems and see new solutions.  
I have a keen interest in the Jurisdictional Conference because the South-Central Jurisdiction, to date has never elected an African American woman to the Episcopacy. We can make that happen in 2020

**Answer 3:** I have attended three previous General Conferences as journalist, 1984, 2012 and 2016. From this unique vantage point I developed a keen understanding of the mechanics of our denomination.

**Answer 4:** As Communications Director for the NTC, I gained the leadership skill of connecting people, and building bridges.  
As the senior pastor of local churches, I developed the leadership skills of perseverance in dismal situations. As an adjunct professor at Perkins School of Theology, I taught classes on transformative leadership. I developed the leadership skills of embracing change and how to bring it forth.  
As an author of a book on leadership (Lead Yourself Now: The Busy Leaders 30 Guide to Personal Success), I developed the skills that I wrote about, including flexibility, listening, humility and ability to disagree without being disagreeable.  
As an advocate for improved Police/ Community relations, I developed the leadership skill of tackling difficult issues head on.

**Answer 5:** I see an immediate need of exposing the alleged fraud and buying and selling of votes as a high priority.  
Secondly, we must decide if the UMC is going to remain united. As I write this response, national news sources report that our denominational leaders are meeting to plan splits. If a divorce is the decision, let's make it an amicable one.  
Thirdly, we must decide to form a United States Conference and is separate from the African nations. We must respect the culture of most of our African nations that consider the LGBT+ lifestyle illegal.  
Lastly, the General Conference must refocus on our purpose as a church- saving souls for Jesus.

**Answer 6:** God is calling us to get the LGBRQ + differences settled and get back to creating vital congregation, attracting young people and saving souls for the Kingdom of God.  
As we make the main thing the main thing, the UMC will be the church that our society needs.

**Full Name:** Dr. Owen K Ross  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Director Center for Church Development  
**Email:** ross@ntcumc.org  
**Why other:** I am in multiple churches every week



**Answer 1:** Director, NTC Center for Church Development, 2017-present NTC Appointive and Extended Cabinet member, 2017-present Founding Pastor, La Fundación de Cristo/Christ's Foundry UMM, 2002-2017 Vice-Chair, South Central Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals, 2016-present Board Member, United Methodist Development Fund, 2019-present Board Member, Texas Methodist Foundation, 2010-present\* \*TMF Executive Board Member and Chair of Leadership Committee, 2016-present NTC Committee on Racial Ethnic Local Church Concerns, 2012-2016 Director for Outreach, Lovers Lane UMC, 1998-2002

**Answer 2:** I have been to over 160 of our North Texas Conference churches (and many more by GC/JC 2020) since I started in my work as the Director for the Center for Church Development. Spending extended time in all four districts, working with pastors and churches, and sharing successes and struggles with our churches inspire me to want to serve as a delegate. My contacts and relationships as well as my knowledge of potential episcopal candidates position me to help shape legislation and elect effective bishops to lead our church.

**Answer 3:** General Conference Delegate 2019 Jurisdictional and First Reserve General Conference Delegate 2016 Jurisdictional and First Reserve General Conference Delegate 2012

At General Conference 2019, I authored legislation with other delegates from around the connection. While the legislation never had the opportunity to be presented, this experience prepared me to be an active delegate for 2020. I want to be a part of a delegation that not only RESPONDS wisely to legislation crafted by others but also SHAPES legislation. Through my experience and relationships as a church developer, as a TMF and UMDF board member, through serving on the 2012, 2016, and 2019 delegations, and through studying at three different seminaries (including Africa University), this broad network of friends, classmates, and colleagues will help the NTC delegation collaborate beyond the conference for greater impact.

**Answer 4:** Beyond working throughout the NTC and as silly as this may sound, the FFA Chapter Conducting Team in high school where I competed in navigating Robert's Rules of Order was one of the best leadership experiences that helps with delegation work. This experience combined with my degree in political science, working for a U.S. Congressman, being a son of a politician, and being engaged in political activities have helped me in legislative and elections work, as odd as all of this may sound. While relationships with other delegates and knowledge of issues and knowledge of the conference one represents are THE MOST helpful experiences in delegation work, prowess in politics and Robert's Rules are essential for effectiveness.

**Answer 5:** The most important issue facing General and Jurisdictional Conferences of 2020 is the global structure of the church. Church structures and general church decisions should enhance and not hinder the work of local churches. To have international delegates voting on pension plans they do not participate in, electing a university senate that only address U.S. schools, setting ordination standards that are not applied to them, and voting on numerous other issues that only apply to the U.S. make no sense. Moreover, as GC becomes more and more represented by delegates from outside of the U.S., international delegates voting on matters exclusive to the U.S. hinders our mission and is unsustainable. GC 2020 must change our structure.

**Answer 6:** The general church exists for the local church and the local church exists for the mission field. Therefore, I believe God is calling The UMC today to renew our efforts to "equip the saints for ministry" (Eph. 4:12-16) to more effectively live out our mission. I am hopeful, for I perceive God is doing a new thing. I perceive new things in our churches and new spaces in the NTC. I perceive new things in the engagement of

of more and more persons in the life of the general church while keeping focus on the local church and mission field. And I perceive new things springing forth as a response to old things that are no longer strengthening our churches, no longer equipping the saints, and no longer making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I am honored to be a part of the new things that are taking place all around our conference and ask for the support of my sisters and brothers to collaborate with you by being elected to serve on our delegation to help GC and JC more effectively equip us all for ministry in the NTC and beyond.

**Full Name:** Rob Spencer  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Pastor  
**Email:** rccbs@swbell.net  
**Church:** Paris First UMC  
**District:** East



**Answer 1:** I have served five churches, as lead pastor, over the past twenty-six years. Eighteen of those years have been in outlying Districts.

Westview in Greenville	1993-1997
FUMC Lancaster	1997-2000
Whaley in Gainesville	2000-2008
Ridgewood Park in Dallas	2008-2013
FUMC Paris	2013-2019

Episcopacy Committee North Texas Conference 2014-2019 Chair-Prothro Retreat Center Board 2017-2019  
CitySquare Pastoral Leadership Facilitator (a new poverty alleviation effort in partnership with the NTC Mission Outreach Center)

**Answer 2:** While in St. Louis, working with the One Church Plan (OCP) coalition, I was approached by two of our Lay Delegates, Kelly Carpenter and Linda Parks, and asked to consider putting my name in the Delegate hat so that outlying Districts in the NTC could have clergy representation.

It has been nearly a decade since there has been clergy representation from our East or Northwest Districts on a Delegation. These two outlying Districts compose more than half of all of our churches and 17% of our membership!

After giving this much thought and prayer and having many conversations with colleagues and friends I am putting my name forward and ask for your consideration.

I do believe it is very important to have clergy representation from these Districts that contain 150 of our 285 churches. Having served for eighteen of my twenty-six years of ministry in the Northwest and East Districts I believe that I have a good understanding of our outlying areas. The culture and makeup of our churches and communities outside of the metroplex is unique. The counties in which we serve tend to be more conservative; at the same time, our churches are often the only United Methodist option for miles. Therefore the stakes are particularly high for how we handle conflicts and uncertainty in our settings. These dynamics intensify the challenge of attempting to live out the Gospel with integrity as we seek to meet the needs of our communities while attempting to keep all voices and followers of Jesus at the table. I believe that representation from our distinctive outlying Districts is especially important now as we move into an uncertain future.

I also believe that relationships with leaders from other Annual Conferences is extremely important as we move into this new place. Over the past year I have been a part of the Uniting Methodists support system and served on the OCP Coalition Team at General Conference in St. Louis. During this time I have built up more relationships across Conference lines. I believe these relationships have put me in a better position to help bring about change as we find a new way forward.

**Answer 3:** Although I have not been a member of previous delegations I have supported them and kept up with General Conference actions.

I attended in 2008 (and was a proud, though seldom used, member of the 3 on 3 Nothing-But-Nets GC Tournament Championship basketball team from Whaley UMC in Gainesville representing the NTC).

In 2019 I was in St. Louis and worked with the OCP Coalition that I talked about in the previous question.

**Answer 4:** Building relationships with different groups and individuals is something that has always been an important part of my ministry. Over the past six years as pastor at FUMC Paris these relationships have helped to enable us to build a Downtown Community Park with 15 community partners picking up half the tab

and our church receiving the Chamber of Commerce NPO of the Year award in 2016. These types of relationships and work have also played a key role in helping us to become a subsidiary of CitySquare (CitySquare Paris) in our poverty alleviation work in one of the poorest counties in our Conference.

In the NTC my work is now expanding with the launch of CitySquare Pastoral Leadership cohorts and gatherings. Larry James (CEO of CitySquare) and I are very excited to be partnering with the NTC Missional Outreach Center to help pastors, churches and communities to fight the causes and effects of poverty through service, advocacy and friendship.

I believe the relationships that I have and continue to build within the NTC and across Annual Conference lines will be very helpful on the journey into a new place.

**Answer 5:** How we will move forward either together (possibly the USA becoming a Central Conference) or apart (with as amicable a separation as possible).

Our General Conference legislative process has become an obstacle to churches being able to be flexible in reaching their context. We must find better ways to free up our churches for effective ministry which includes diversity factors such as racial justice, poverty/class, gender and LGBTQ concerns, etc.

It is also important to elect bishops who can lead us through this critical time that are committed to a church that makes room for all!

**Answer 6:** I believe in an OCP type of church. When I saw Delegates gathered in the center of the floor in St. Louis, after the defeat of the OCP, to pray and show that we are one church I found myself very moved! That is the church that I want for us—a church that provides room for all--those on the right, the left and in the vast middle. In this type of church we can hear many voices and do not find ourselves living in an echo chamber. But what I love most about this type of church is that it allows a place in which movement can take place--a church that can truly transform the world!!

**Full Name:** Joseph (Joe) Stobaugh  
**Clergy or Lay:** Clergy  
**Gender:** Male  
**Ethnicity:** Caucasian, European American  
**Occupation:** Deacon in Full Connection, currently serving as the Executive Minister of Worship and Arts, Grace Avenue UMC  
**Email:** joe@graceavenue.org  
**Church:** Grace Avenue UMC  
**District:** North Central



**Answer 1:** Jurisdictional Conference Currently serving on the North Central District DCOM Has served as a Mentor Pastor Lead worship designer for Covenant Day, 2015-2016 Previously served as the Chair of Worship for the North Texas Annual Conference Designed and facilitated the opening worship service for the 2012 Ministry Forum for the Probationary Members of the Annual Conference.

Served as the lead worship designer for the 2011 and 2012 Presence Young Adult Clergy Retreats.

Attended the New Church Leadership Institute in 2011 Served on the Board of Directors for the Denton Wesley Foundation.

Served on the District Committee on Ministry for the Dallas-Denton District Served on the North Texas Annual Conference Worship Committee, 2002, 2008-2011, 2015-2017.

**Answer 2:** It is not hyperbolic to say that we are truly in uncharted waters in the life and history of The United Methodist Church. I find this liminal moment in the life of our church to be a time filled with deep sadness, yes, but this moment is also a time brimming with hope for the new work that God is doing in our midst! If elected I believe my growing network of colleagues and friends across the connection, coupled with five years of active experience on the delegation, can be a valuable tool in our work to catch a glimpse of what God is doing and to help bring this new dream of God into place. As someone who hopes to serve in the church for another 30 years and who wants to pass on a vibrant, inclusive, and flourishing church to the generations to follow us, I am willing to again enter this work wholeheartedly!

**Answer 3:** First Clergy Alternate for the North Texas Delegation to the 2019 General Conference Member of the North Texas Delegation for the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conference

As a part of the work of the delegation I served on several subcommittees that served to help prepare our delegation for GC 2019 and GC and JC 2016 and in so doing I've had the opportunity to take a "deep dive" into the legislative process as well as learning more about Robert's Rules of Order than I ever wanted to know! I have also served on the GC 2012 staff and have participated in the 2008 and 2000 General Conferences and in JC 2008 in worship leadership, these experiences have prepared me to serve with an understanding of the inner and outer workings of the polity of The United Methodist Church. As I continue to develop and nurture relationships with delegates from every jurisdiction and some from our central conferences, I believe these relationships will help build the next Methodism in wonderful and new ways.

**Answer 4:** I have been very blessed to serve in a variety of capacities: from being an in-demand clinician in music, worship, and the arts, to serving as a frequent preacher in my current appointment, to being a performing, improvising musician. (One of the great joys of improvised music is that one must know the structure and form of a piece inside out and then work collaboratively through listening to others to build together something new and beautiful: this kind of collaborative, improvisatory spirit, is desperately needed in our current polity!) I was the nationally elected President of The Fellowship of United Methodist's in Music and Worship Arts from 2012-2017, an organization that serves as our denomination's guild for worship artists of all kinds. This work has allowed me six years of top-level executive experience and has given me the opportunity to meet and work with many leaders in every jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.

I also serve on the Executive Team at Grace Avenue United Methodist Church, which allows me to serve in work related to every aspect of the life of the community at Grace Avenue.

Two years ago, I founded The Frisco Ukulele Society, which is a monthly gathering, open to all people, that is a meeting point for diverse folks in the North Texas region who are united in a love of music, fellowship,

**Answer 6:** I believe God is calling the United Methodist Church to continue the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and that of our 2016 and 2019 delegation, by looking at all alternatives that could move us forward together, including a Connectional Conferences Plan. We are better together. I believe that to the core of my being. Like the Law and the prophets in the Old Testament, and like Peter and Paul in the New Testament, we are better together, because together we are forced to wrestle with complexities that alone we would ignore. We are better together. However, if we cannot function together in healthy ways in our mission and ministry in the world, building the Kingdom of God in spite of our differences, then we must have the courage to, at the very least, create in very intentional ways, a foundation that allows our children and grandchildren the possibility of working together to achieve the unity that we are currently unable to achieve.



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**Church:** Dallas First UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** My service record includes student pastorate in the Texas Conference, on staff at Greenland Hills, associate at First Denton, associate in the North Texas Conference Office, associate at First Dallas, senior at Walnut Hill, and senior at First Dallas. Serving in a variety of settings, especially my position in the NTC office, afforded me a deep connection with our churches around the conference. For nearly twenty years in North Texas, I have served as camp director for children's, junior, and senior high camps. I served as chair of the Missional Outreach Committee for the conference for eight years. I was on the Board of Ordained Ministry for a quadrennium. I currently serve on the Episcopacy Committee. First Dallas has launched One + One Dallas with the Pastors for Texas Children, Meadows Foundation and Fellowship Southwest of the Cooperative Baptist denomination. Additionally, I serve on the Faith Forward Dallas steering committee and several ministerial alliances in south Dallas.

**Answer 2:** I believe that I bring a broad coalition-building and systems approach to my ministry and service. The North Texas delegation will be the most prepared and the most ready for the change to come.

**Answer 3:** As an alternate jurisdictional delegate in 2012 and a jurisdictional delegate in 2016, I have been at the table for the last eight years connecting with delegates and delegations. I believe that the game has changed and that we have to think and act differently as a delegation. There are a coalition of lay and clergy in this jurisdiction that will encourage a vibrant, new conversation for world-transforming-disciple-making.

**Answer 4:** I serve as the Chair of the Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) Board of Trustees in the Segundo Barrio of El Paso, Texas; LPI is the last South Central Jurisdiction apportioned ministry. I have seen firsthand what an organization needs to do to thrive with the global and national attention on borders and walls; the LPI Board has empowered students and their families to speak up for the needs of the community. Also, being connected with the City of Dallas serving on the Mayor's Ministerial Roundtable and on the Dallas ISD Superintendent's Advisory Council, I have been privy to large, institutional conversations concerning racial and gender-based violence, public school financing and racial and economic equity and equality. I serve on the Executive Boards for Dallas Arts District, Methodist Dallas Health System and CC Young. Working with these diverse institutions have enabled me to see a diversity of personalities around city- and systems-wide challenges and opportunities.

**Answer 5:** General Conference will need to focus on looking forward as a denomination, so that, spiritually and administratively, we can create a global denomination based on equity and equality. Jurisdictional Conference will need to focus on candidates for the Episcopacy who are willing to lead through incredible institutional and systemic change. Both Conferences must focus on compassionate collaboration for this generation and the generations to follow.

**Answer 6:** God is calling the United Methodist Church to be at the forefront of difficult and transformative conversations on race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, work, healthcare, education and human rights. We are a people born from (and now into) reformation. The United Methodist Church will be in the "business" of lifting EVERY voice, so that transformed disciples of Jesus Christ live into the world God has so wonderfully made.

**Full Name:** Dr. Tom Waitschies  
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**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** I've served on District Committee on Ordained Ministry in 3 different districts; Sherman-McKinney, Dallas South, North Central. I've served on the Conference Planning Committee, Trustees, Global Ministries, Standing Rules. I have served on several municipal boards in Farmersville; Park Board, Senior Citizen Advisory Board, Chair of Planning and Zoning.

**Answer 2:** I would like to serve as a delegate to bring a fresh perspective to the delegation. I believe the 2020 General Conference will be a watershed meeting where the direction of the General Church, as well as the direction for our North Texas Conference will be at stake. I understand there will be a need to find a way for our denomination to find new ways to relate to one another, new ways to reach more people for Jesus Christ. These are areas I feel comfortable working in and excited to be a part of.

**Answer 3:** I have not served on the GC/JC delegation prior to this. I have attended several GC and JC sessions and am familiar with the process. I do believe a fresh face may be helpful in crossing some boundaries and in making new connections to pass legislation.

**Answer 4:** Having served on the Planning and Zoning Commission for the City of Farmersville has given me a depth of experience in working through complex legal issues related to the broader community. As a sworn representative of the city government, the training and experience I received aided me in understanding inter-related issues and ways of working through issues. As the chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission I worked with the city leadership to assist in its overarching growth plan for the city, and the extraterritorial jurisdiction.

**Answer 5:** For the General Conference, I believe we will be revisiting the issue of inclusion and how best to structure the denomination going forward to reach more people with our witness and ministry. The divided nature of the connection is fragile at best, we must find a way to continue to be in ministry in the 21st Century. The Church's witness to the world is at stake. We have a chance to demonstrate to the world the love, grace, mercy and unity that exists in spite of the differences among us. Christ is the connecting point for us, we can show Christ to the world through our words and actions at the 2020 General Conference.

**Answer 6:** I believe we are going to have to find ways to relate to persons across the theological spectrum in more creative and affirming ways, reduce the tension, and re-focus our efforts on our mission and ministry. Keep the main thing, the main thing!

**Full Name:** Adam Young  
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**Church:** Spring Valley UMC  
**District:** Metro



**Answer 1:** Senior Pastor, FUMC The Colony, 2019  
Associate Pastor of Youth and Contemporary Worship, Spring Valley UMC, 2015-2019  
Assistant Pastor, Preston Hollow UMC, 2012-2015  
Commissioned July 2015, Ordained in Full Connection July 2018  
NTC Cultural Intelligence Team, 2017 - Present  
NTC Commission on Religion and Race, 2013 - Present  
NTC Christian Nurture Incubator, 2016-2017  
Host of the Uniting Methodists Podcast, 2018-2019

**Answer 2:** The future of Methodism is hanging in the balance. As a young clergyperson, I am deeply invested in how that future unfolds. I am eager to see a stronger, more inclusive form of Methodism emerge from the brokenness we currently face. As a strategic thinker, I will put my passion and energy to work towards this outcome.

**Answer 3:** As GC 2019 loomed on the horizon last summer, I felt somewhat helpless. I longed to DO something that might shift the tide of GC history so that the United Methodist Church might live fully into its grace-filled, inclusive nature that drew me into its fold from the denomination I grew up in. So I invested time and energy into forming relationships across many different geographical and theological lines. I had conversations with clergy and laity around the U.S. and across the globe, reaching even to Kenya. I was not sure what difference I could make by being at GC 2019, but I decided to go anyway. I was able to meet in person many of the people with whom I had become conversation partners. I attended every delegation gathering and every session of GC. I went to the caucus gatherings and helped strategize next moves. I reported back to my local congregation via Facebook Live what I saw and experienced. GC 2019 was a gritty experience. I saw Methodism at its best and I also experienced it at its worst. There were moments that made my heart soar and some that drove me to tears. I will not soon forget that experience and I think it will prove valuable to any work I might get to do as part of the 2020 delegation.

**Answer 4:** One of the main things I did in preparation for GC 2019 was host the Uniting Methodists Podcast. This podcast was the means by which I had conversations with clergy and lay leaders across the denomination. Among the conversations I had, I interviewed two of the members of the Commission on a Way Forward, a seminary professor, the Wespath representatives who were continually called upon on the floor of GC 2019, clergy delegates from California, Ohio, and Virginia, a traditionalist clergy leader, a gay clergyperson, and an LGBTQ+-affirming District Superintendent in Kenya. I prepared, hosted, interviewed, edited and produced the podcast and through the process I became much more connected to my UMC siblings across the globe. Even though GC 2019 did not turn out the way that Uniting Methodists and 63% of Bishops had hoped - the work and the conversations were incredibly life-giving for me personally. I plan to continue building those relationships regardless of whether or not I am elected to serve on the North Texas Conference Delegation because that connectionalism is a large part of what makes me love Methodism and gives me hope for the future.

**Answer 5:** After the Traditionalist Plan passed at GC 2019, I witnessed two substantial groups of people gather on the floor: one that was rejoicing and the other lamenting. That image has left an indelible imprint in my mind. We are deeply divided and I do not think that we will be able to legislate our way into a compromise. However, what gives me energy is thinking and dreaming of a new form of Methodism that is inclusive of as many different theological viewpoints as possible while embracing our LGBTQ+ siblings as more than

second-class citizens. We also need to answer these questions: How do we maintain relationships with the people of the Central Conferences who also do not all think alike? How do we handle the General Boards and Agencies? How do we balance togetherness/separateness among disparate caucus groups? What does the episcopal leadership of the North Texas Conference look like through this seminal transition? How do we maximize the witness of Methodism throughout the global in its unique and varied contexts?

**Answer 6:** We must listen to our young people as we engage in this work, and beyond that, give them the space and ability to lead us into the future. We have to navigate this liminal moment in the history of Methodism in such a way as to not do harm, while doing as much good as we can, and staying in love with God. This means living into our call as individuals, churches, caucus groups, and annual and jurisdictional conferences.