

## Step Up to Leadership at General Conference: A Toolkit for United Methodist Women Leaders

Within The United Methodist Church, there is no higher level of leadership than serving as a delegate to General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body. General Conference delegates are leaders who help shape the doctrine and polity of our denomination.

General Conference needs United Methodist Women leaders like you—women trained for leadership—for its important task.

**Leadership Development** is one of United Methodist Women's core commitments and is integral to our organizational identity. We **prepare** and **move** women to **new** levels of leadership. United Methodist Women leaders have served at all levels of the organization even as they serve in their local churches and in the larger Church.

That's why United Methodist Women members are leaders in The United Methodist Church—although we don't always show up with our United Methodist Women hats on!

This toolkit will help United Methodist Women leaders think beyond their local engagement in mission with women, children and youth and act to lift up these critical needs before the whole Church and community. This work requires our full participation in the development of policy of the Church at every level.

Explore this toolkit and consider becoming a delegate to General Conference. As a United Methodist Women leader, you are prepared, and the Church needs you.

### How to become a General Conference delegate

#### 1. Become active in your local church.

- ❖ Teach a Sunday school class, lead a Bible study, become a youth leader, and serve as a chair of at least one committee or board.
- ❖ To be a delegate you must have been a member of the UMC for two years and active in a United Methodist congregation within the bounds of the annual conference for four years.

#### 2. Become an annual conference member.

- ❖ Your church is allowed one lay annual conference member for each clergy appointed to your congregation.



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- ❖ Tell your pastor that you would like to be considered as a member of the annual conference.
- ❖ Speak with members of the committee on lay leadership to let them know of your interest.
- ❖ Elections for all church offices are held at the church/charge conference in the fall.

### **3. Get Involved in the larger Church.**

- ❖ After being elected a member of the annual conference, attend conference events and let your district superintendent know you'd like to serve on conference boards or committees.
- ❖ Volunteer to take minutes, join work teams, or write articles for the conference newspaper.

### **4. Read rules for electing General Conference delegates.**

- ❖ The conference journal for your area may include the rules for electing delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences.
- ❖ If not, call your annual conference secretary for information on election procedures.
- ❖ Annual conference procedures differ, and you may need to declare your interest one year in advance.

### **5. Publicize your interest.**

- ❖ Conferences have very different expectations as to how candidates should campaign. Check with former delegates.
- ❖ Some conferences require a biographical sketch.
- ❖ Some allow candidates to prepare brochures or other campaign materials.
- ❖ Get samples of materials from previous elections to give you some hints on what works in your conference.

### **6. Seek the counsel of others.**

- ❖ Introduce yourself to the conference and district lay leaders. Tell them of your interest in being a delegate to General Conference and seek their advice.
- ❖ Seek support from friends you have made while serving on conference committees. Ask them to speak to others on your behalf.
- ❖ Evaluate the benefits and liabilities of support from a caucus or other political-action group within your conference.

### **7. Campaign at the annual conference [1 or 2 years before General Conference]**

- ❖ Prior to the conference, read through Paragraphs 601-657 of the *2016 Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church so you are familiar with operating rules of the annual conference.
- ❖ Arrive early and introduce yourself to members while they are registering.
- ❖ If they are attending their first conference session, provide them with information about the sessions and tell them about voting procedures.