

Appendix C: General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegation Elections Policy

APPROVED: June 7, 2005 UPDATED: June 4, 2018

Intent of Policy

Every four years, the members of the annual conference elect the delegates that will represent them at General Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. The intent of the Elections Policy of the South Georgia Conference is to level the playing field for all candidates and create an atmosphere of fairness, respect, collegiality, and mutual trust that is in keeping with our rich, diverse, covenantal life together. We also want to provide the means for candidates to share information that allows members of the annual conference to make informed decisions.

Elections Website

Each election year, in the months leading up to annual conference, an Elections Website will be opened to facilitate open communications, fairness, and informed decision-making. Through the Elections Website, candidates will be able to share, in a statement of up to 300 words, their interests, issues, concerns, convictions, qualifications, and other information to aid the annual conference in electing a representative delegation. Also, members of the annual conference, within a designated time period, will be able to submit through the Elections Website questions that candidates may choose to address in their statement.

The Elections Website is an attempt to bring all of us together, level the playing field, make the process public and fully transparent, and help us stay in covenant together. Any mass communication conducted outside the website, through printed or electronic means, undermines this covenant. To be clear: the questions and statements entered through the website are to preclude candidates, supporters, or caucus groups from disseminating other forms of campaign materials, letters of endorsement, slates of candidates, or lists of questions.

Hopefully, the desire to stay in covenant will be all that is needed to comply with these procedures. Any infraction should be reported to the Conference Secretary. Candidates are required not to respond to lists of questions submitted outside the official website.

Other Information to be Gathered on the Website

- Name, Email, Main Phone Contact, Gender, Race/Ethnicity
- List of Leadership Positions Served in the Conference and District
- A Picture of the candidate

Clergy

- Current Appointment, Appointments Served

Laity

- Church Membership, District, Occupation, Positions served in local church
- Identification as a Youth, Young Adult, Adult

Required Communications

Several months prior to the Annual Conference session in which elections are to take place, communications will go out explaining the process and encouraging diversity in the delegations.

Eligibility for Election, according to The Book of Discipline

- Clergy Delegation: All clergy members in full connection (Full Elders and Full Deacons), whether or not they declare their interest to serve or furnish information on the conference elections website. The Presiding Bishop and/or Conference Secretary frequently will remind that all eligible persons may be elected whether or not they have declared their candidacy.

- Lay Delegation: Professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years, and active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years. There is no age requirement as long as membership and participation requirements are met. Although it is recommended that lay candidates declare their desire to stand for election through the conference website before the announced deadline, this recommendation does not preclude candidates from introducing themselves during the Laity Orientation Session in an election year.
- Lay and Clergy: Must be willing to devote three weeks of their time to attend these conferences plus other days to attend meetings of the delegation, and should expect that they will bear a portion of the cost of being a delegate, since the per diem rates often do not cover all costs.

Lay and Clergy Gatherings

In the election year, a gathering of laity and a gathering of clergy will be held prior to voting during the Annual Conference session. Attendance at these sessions will be optional, of course, but they will allow time to visit with one another, know one another better, and possibly discuss each other's beliefs, convictions and concerns. These gatherings may be held in conjunction with the Clergy Executive Session and the Laity Orientation Session, each to be designed by the Orders of Elders and Deacons and the Board of Laity respectively. We also believe that a great responsibility in this process should rest upon the voter to find out information on potential candidates either prior to or during breaks in Annual Conference sessions.