

Dear West Plains Friends,

For the first time in the West Plains Conference, we are embarking on a journey to elect delegates to General Conference. The Global Methodist Church's convening General Conference has been set for September 20-26, 2024 in San Jose, Costa Rica.

As we prepare to elect delegates to this historic gathering, I believe this is a time for new wineskins! How we handle this initial voting process has the potential to set the tone for years to come in our conference. What if this delegate selection process is a spiritual journey rather than a political one? What if we replace campaigning with time on our knees before our Father in heaven? Imagine what God can do in all of this if we keep our eyes fixed firmly on Him and seek His heart.

In order for this new vision to take shape, we need to start praying and thinking about what kind of lay/clergy delegates we want representing the West Plains Conference in San Jose. We could compile a long list of qualifications, but a few things rise to the surface for me:

- A strong love for Jesus and His Church
- A commitment to bathe this journey in prayer
- A passion for the new Global Methodist Church
- An openness to listen to the people of West Plains before going to General Conference
- A willingness to be a team player with other members of the West Plains delegation
- A sacrificial heart willing to commit countless hours in preparation for General Conference

The West Plains called session of Annual Conference to elect these delegates will be April 14<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. CT/2:00 p.m. MT. This will NOT be an in-person gathering. The meeting will happen through Zoom and everyone around the conference is welcome to join the call. BUT only clergy and lay members to annual conference from each West Plains congregation will have a vote (see Special Note 1 below for who can vote). We are contracting with an online voting company that has a proven track record of reliability, confidentiality, and ease of use. We will communicate extensively in the weeks leading up to the vote with instructions on how to join the call and participate in the voting.

At this time, we don't know how many lay and clergy delegates we will be electing, but we should find out in early March. Once that number is set, we will communicate it to everyone and also establish how many alternates we will elect.

To help everyone see the big picture of how this process will play out, let's picture our journey in 5 seasons:

1. A Season of Prayer (now through General Conference) – All local churches, clergy, and laity will be challenged to enter into a season of focused prayer. We will pray for General Conference. We will pray for discernment about who should put their names on the ballot to be considered as a potential delegate. We will pray for the voting at our special

called session of Annual Conference on April 14. We will then cover our delegation in prayer all the way through General Conference.

2. A Season of Discernment (now through March 1) – The window is now open for both lay and clergy who are discerning whether to be on the ballot as a potential General Conference delegate (see Special Note 2 below for who is eligible). The voting software we will be using requires names to be listed in advance of the vote. The West Plains website has a form for lay and clergy to complete who feel led to submit their names for consideration. This form is highlighted on the homepage of the West Plains website and can be accessed here. The deadline for filling out the form will be March 1.
3. A Season of Reflection (March 1 through April 13) – The biographical forms of potential delegates will be available on the conference website for those who will be voting. We will encourage voting delegates to review and pray over those on the ballot.
4. A Season of Voting (April 14) – The actual voting will take place in an online Zoom meeting led by Bishop Scott Jones at 3:00 p.m. CT/2:00 p.m. MT. Delegates need a simple majority to be elected. Clergy will vote for clergy and lay will vote for lay. Results will be posted immediately after each vote and we will continue voting until all delegates and alternates are elected.
5. A Season of Conversation (June 1 through August 30) – The West Plains delegation will host listening sessions throughout the conference to explain the issues before General Conference. They will seek the input of West Plains clergy and laity on these issues in order to represent the conference in San Jose.

I am excited about the journey ahead of us. God is about to do something new and exciting!

Mike Schafer  
President Pro Tempore  
West Plains Conference

Special Note 1: Each local church has one voting lay delegate. Some churches will receive one additional voting lay delegate for each appointed clergy beyond the pastor and for each senior status GMC clergy in their congregation. Clergy who may vote are active deacons, active elders, and senior status clergy who meet these requirements of paragraph 418 in the Transitional Book of Doctrines & Discipline: *Senior clergy, including bishop emeriti, retain their active status and right to both voice and vote at annual conference if they fulfill either of the following conditions: a) they are within seven years of the effective date of their aligning with the Global Methodist Church or the end of their last appointment, whichever is later, provided that they notify the conference secretary at least ninety days prior to the annual conference session of their intention to participate as a voting member, or b) they are under appointment by the bishop for at least one-quarter time (no notification necessary).*

*Special Note 2: Clergy delegates shall be members in full connection in good standing of the Global Methodist Church, or its predecessors, who have served a minimum of two years preceding their election. Lay delegates shall have been professing members of the Global Methodist Church, or its predecessors, for at least two years. Both clergy and lay delegates shall be elected by a minimum of fifty percent of votes cast plus one, with clergy voting for clergy delegates and laity voting for lay delegates. (Paragraph 611.6 TBDD)*

