

April 27, 2020

Dear members of the Commission on General Conference, Ms. Sara Hotchkiss, and Rev. Gary Graves,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ! We pray for the health and safety of you, your families, your churches, and your communities.

After reading the reported dates of the postponed General Conference, we lamented that these dates would hinder the participation of young delegates, as many young people will be beginning semesters as professors and students. September is a uniquely bad time for young people because so much is required of students and professors at the beginning of the school year. We prayerfully penned a petition to the Commission on General Conference asking you to reconsider the dates that disproportionately marginalize the voices of young leaders in the church. We created the petition because it is imperative that the Commission hear the voices of young people. We received incredible support from across the diversity of the United Methodist body. **In the course of five days, 1975 United Methodists from 80 annual and central conferences around the world, including more than 50% of the young delegates elected to General Conference 2020, signed in support.** We believe this communal affirmation to be the presence of the Holy Spirit breaking through our doors with joyful and unexpected newness.

We recognize that we are in the midst of uncertain times, much like the Hebrew community as they wandered in the wilderness. We understand that the scale of General Conference requires tremendous amounts of preparation and that dates may not be available in Minnesota in 2021. We, therefore, encourage a postponement of General Conference to alternative dates in 2021 or 2022. We recognize that requesting alternative dates in 2021 or 2022 may pose other challenges. And yet, we believe that we can help address those challenges.

We experienced the Church's nimbleness in 2014 at the quadrennial Global Young People's gathering in the Philippines. After three and half years of planning, a category 5 typhoon landed on the first day of the gathering. The planning team assessed the devastating effects of the natural disaster, relocated the gathering to a different venue, and found alternative housing for the delegates and vendors to care for the many needs of the assembled body. While the General Conference is not dealing with a typhoon, the denomination faces a global pandemic. Such a time calls upon our creativity and imagination to provide a solution that does not disenfranchise young people.

We, the original authors of the Young People's petition, offer the following action items for consideration and formal adoption by the Commission on General Conference:

- **Select alternative dates for the next General Conference. Our polling shows that significantly more young people would be able to participate between June and early August of 2021 or 2022.** We understand the complexity of scheduling the event and

offer the counsel that *any other* month would be better for participation of young leaders. Alternative dates will better allow for the full participation of young people, students, teachers, families with school-age children, and people in other education-related fields.

● **Provide alternative methods of accommodating full participation, including utilizing technology to enable virtual voting.** As young people, we have developed broad skills in electronic communications. We gladly offer our assistance in reimagining General Conference, to extend the voting bar to include remote locations. With proper security measures, we believe the option to vote remotely will not only increase participation but will also lower the cost of the event in the future.

At this critical moment in our history, the Commission has the opportunity to provide for the most diverse and fully representative General Conference the United Methodist Church has ever seen. There is an extraordinary need for young leaders at all levels of our beloved Church. Your decision to choose alternative dates will increase the participation of young people, empowering a new generation to shape the future of our church. We sincerely appreciate the Commission's time and speed in engaging with the writing team on these concerns, and we look forward to journeying with you through this uncertainty.

We have been truly overwhelmed by the global support for the Young People's petition; support that spans continents, age groups, and theological and political perspectives. This petition has truly been a testament to the possibilities that arise when the Church gathers to lift up the concerns of our young people.

We seek to do our part as members of this sacred global community. We, therefore, again offer our help in reimagining the General Conference together with the Commission, including incorporating technology to make General Conference more accessible, even in the midst of a global pandemic. We look forward to receiving the Commission's response to our proposed action items, and thank the Commission in advance for your consideration, support, and continued leadership.

With deep gratitude,

Ann Jacob (Lay delegate, Eastern Pennsylvania)  
J.J. Warren (Lay delegate, Upper New York)  
Jessica Vittorio (Lay delegate, North Texas)  
Alejandra Salemi (GC Young People's Address Speaker, Florida)  
Carlene Fogle-Miller (Lay delegate, Florida)

## **List of Annual and Central Conferences**

1975 United Methodists supported the petition, "GC2021 Young People's Request for Reconsideration of Dates," from the following 80 annual and central conferences. The conferences are listed alphabetically.

1. Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference
2. Alaska Annual Conference
3. Arkansas Annual Conference
4. Austria Provisional
5. Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference
6. California-Nevada Annual Conference
7. California-Pacific Annual Conference
8. Central Texas Annual Conference
9. Côte d'Ivoire
10. Dakotas Annual Conference
11. Denmark
12. Desert Southwest Annual Conference
13. East Africa
14. East Ohio Annual Conference
15. East Zimbabwe
16. Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference
17. Eastern Russia and Central Asia
18. Finland-Swedish Provisional
19. Florida Annual Conference
20. Germany
21. Germany North
22. Germany South
23. Great Plains Annual Conference
24. Greater New Jersey Annual Conference
25. Holston Annual Conference
26. Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference
27. Indiana Annual Conference
28. Iowa Annual Conference
29. Kentucky Annual Conference
30. Kenya-Ethiopia
31. Liberia
32. Louisiana Annual Conference
33. Malawi Provisional
34. Manila
35. Memphis Annual Conference
36. Michigan Annual Conference
37. Minnesota Annual Conference
38. Mississippi Annual Conference

39. Missouri Annual Conference
40. Mountain Sky Annual Conference
41. Mozambique North
42. Mozambique South
43. New England Annual Conference
44. New Mexico Annual Conference
45. New York Annual Conference
46. North Alabama Annual Conference
47. North Carolina Annual Conference
48. North Georgia Annual Conference
49. North Katanga
50. North Texas Annual Conference
51. Northern Illinois Annual Conference
52. Northern Nigeria
53. Northwest Nigeria
54. Northwest Texas Annual Conference
55. Norway
56. Oklahoma Annual Conference
57. Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference
58. Oriental and Equator
59. Pacific Northwest Annual Conference
60. Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference
61. Rio Texas Annual Conference
62. South Africa Provisional
63. South Carolina Annual Conference
64. South Congo
65. South Georgia Annual Conference
66. Southern Nigeria
67. Susquehanna Annual Conference
68. Tanzania
69. Tennessee Annual Conference
70. Texas Annual Conference
71. Ukraine-Moldova Provisional
72. Upper New York Annual Conference
73. Virginia Annual Conference
74. West Congo
75. West Ohio Annual Conference
76. West Virginia Annual Conference
77. Western North Carolina Annual Conference
78. Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference
79. Wisconsin Annual Conference
80. Zambia