

**Survey of Delegates
to the
2000 General Conference
of
The United Methodist Church**

Prepared by

**The Office of Research
General Council on Ministries
The United Methodist Church
601 West Riverview Avenue
Dayton, Ohio 45406**

Craig This

Research Associate

Karen M. Smith

Graphic Designer

Maxine Clarke Beach

Associate General Secretary

C. David Lundquist

General Secretary

Survey of the Delegates to the 2000 General Conference

The General Council on Ministries, through its Office of Research, has conducted a survey of delegates to the General Conference for the past six quadrennia to provide descriptive information on these denominational leaders elected to determine the vision and future policies for The United Methodist Church. This report highlights major findings from the Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference.

The report of the Survey of Delegates also provides information on demographic characteristics, such as gender and ethnic background. It provides additional information on delegates' personal profiles, background, opinions, and important issues they see facing society, the denomination, and the General Conference.

Methodology

In October 1999, the 831 delegates from the United States to the 2000 General Conference received a survey instrument. Two weeks later, each of the 831 delegates received a reminder postcard. On December 1, 1999, when the survey was “officially” closed the number of delegates who had completed and returned a survey numbered 648 for a response rate of 78%. In 1996, the response rate was 79% with 988 surveys mailed to delegates in both the United States and the Central Conferences.

The lack of a complete and official mailing list for the Central Conferences prevented a mailing of survey instruments to those delegates for the 2000 General Conference.

Highlights from the Survey Results

The following lists the “highlights” of the survey results:

- ❖ The Connectional Process Team Report/Restructuring of the denomination was the most frequently cited issue that is facing the 2000 General Conference by the respondents. Four other most cited issues were homosexuality, church finances, evangelism and missions, and diversity and inclusivity of the denomination.
- ❖ Clergywomen continue to increase their participation at General Conference with 27.3% of the respondents reporting their ministerial status as clergywomen—up from 23% in 1996, and 8.9% in 1984.
- ❖ Clergy delegates are more likely to serve congregations with 1,000 or more members and live in cities with populations greater than 250,000, according to the respondents. While laity reflect this pattern, the representation from small churches and small communities is much greater among laity than clergy.
- ❖ The delegates, like the denomination, are aging with 70% of the respondents reporting an age of 50 years or older.
- ❖ Eight out of ten respondents have total household incomes of \$50,000 or more with 49% of the respondents living in households with incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- ❖ Eight out of ten respondents have been life-long members of The United Methodist Church or one of its predecessor denominations (the Methodist Church or the Evangelical United Brethren Church), with 65% of the respondents having become members before 1970.

Introduction

The 2000 General Conference will meet in Cleveland, Ohio, from May 2-12. As the official policy-making body for the denomination, the General Conference is the only group that officially speaks for The United Methodist Church. At its May session, the ministry and missional directions will be decided for the denomination for the 2001-2004 quadrennium and beyond. Statements for inclusion in the *Social Principles* and positions on other religious and societal issues will be adopted. The financial support for the general program and administrative ministries will also be established.

The Composition of the 2000 General Conference

Delegates to the General Conference are elected by their annual conferences in the year prior to the quadrennial session; thus, delegates elected to the 2000 General Conference were elected in 1999. The 2000 General Conference, the ninth since the establishment of The United Methodist Church in 1968, will have a total of 992 delegates. (The 1996 General Conference had 998 delegates.)

The number of delegates from each conference is determined by a formula taking into consideration the number of clergy members and the total church membership within each annual conference. The total number of delegates may not exceed 1,000 with an equal division between clergy and lay United Methodists as prescribed by *The Book of Discipline, 1996*.

As in previous quadrennia, the total number of delegates is near the allowable limit. Growth in church membership outside the United States has increased the percentage of Central Conference delegates from 6.8% in 1984, to 13.8% in 1996, to 15.3% in 2000. Likewise, a decline in church membership inside the United States has decreased the representation of four of the five jurisdictions.

Table 1
Distribution of Delegates
to the 2000 General Conference

	Number of Delegates	% of Total Delegates
Central Conferences	152	15.3
Concordat Churches	10	1.0
North Central Jurisdiction	182	18.3
Northeastern Jurisdiction	162	16.3
South Central Jurisdiction	160	16.1
Southeastern Jurisdiction	270	27.2
Western Jurisdiction	56	5.6
Total	992	100%

Source: General Council on Finance and Administration
* Column may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2
Numerical Change in Distribution of Delegates to the
2000 General Conference and 1996 General Conference

	Number of Delegates, 1996	Number of Delegates, 2000	Change
Central Conferences	138	152	14
Concordat Churches	10	10	Unchanged
North Central Jurisdiction	190	182	(8)
Northeastern Jurisdiction	168	162	(6)
South Central Jurisdiction	166	160	(6)
Southeastern Jurisdiction	264	270	6
Western Jurisdiction	62	56	(6)
Total	998	992	(6)

Source: General Council on Finance and Administration

(Table 1 displays the distribution of delegates and Table 2 displays the change in distribution of delegates between the 1996 and 2000 General Conference.)

Issues Identified by General Conference Delegates

The delegates were asked to identify what they believed to be the most important issues in three categories: (1) issues facing the 2000 General Conference; (2) issues facing the denomination; and (3) issues facing society. The delegates were asked to list these issues. They were not given a list from which to choose.

When asked what they believed to be the three most important issues facing the 2000 General Conference, the respondents, in total, identified 40 different "issues."¹ The Connectional Process Team Report/Restructuring of the denomination was the most frequently cited issue for all the delegates (368 respondents listed it as an issue). The next four frequently cited issues were homosexuality (281 responses); church finances, including the apportionment-

¹To facilitate comparisons, some of the similar issues listed were grouped under a generic heading. For example, homosexuality includes all listings of the word "homosexuality" as well as the issues of same-sex marriage and the ordination of homosexuals.

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

system, apportionments, and the Connectional Funding Task Force (231 responses); evangelism and missions (111 responses); and the diversity and inclusivity of the denomination (68 responses) (See Table 3). Other topics mentioned were clergy leadership, annual conference restructuring, and denominational unity and differences.

When the issues are assessed by lay and clergy categories, the laity respondents cited homosexuality more frequently than they did "CPT/Restructuring". Nevertheless, both the lay and clergy delegates cited the same five issues. This contrasts with the 1996 General Conference, where the delegates cited four of the same issues, but their "rankings" varied greatly between lay and

Table 3
Most Frequently Cites Issues Facing the
General Conference by Year of General Conference

2000 General Conference	1996 General Conference	1992 General Conference
CPT/Restructuring	Church Restructuring	Study of Homosexuality
Homosexuality	Study of Ministry	Study of Ministry
Church Finances	Homosexuality	Church Finances
Evangelism/Missions	GBGM Relocation	Study of Baptism
Diversity/Inclusivity	Study of Baptism	Organization and Structure of The United Methodist Church

clergy delegates. In 1992, the top five issues were nearly identical with the relocation of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) being cited by more lay delegates and church structure being cited by more clergy delegates.

Church structure, homosexuality, and church finances have been among the top five issues cited for every General Conference since 1992. Homosexuality was also cited among the top five issues since 1984, when it was the third most frequently cited issue.

Issues Facing the Denomination

When asked what are the three most important issues facing The United Methodist Church, homosexuality was the frequently most cited issue by the respondents to the Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference. The next most frequently cited issue was "church finances". Evangelism and restructuring had an equal number of responses and the issue of the "church's mission" rounds out the top five (See Table 4). A total of 33 issues were listed by the respondents.

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

When reviewing the issues cited by lay and clergy delegates, there is no difference on the top two issues cited—homosexuality and church finances. Lay and clergy, however, differ on the next three. The lay respondents cited membership decline more often than either evangelism or restructuring, while the clergy cited evangelism more often than restructuring or the church’s mission.

Table 4
Most Frequently Cited Issues Facing The United Methodist Church
by Year of General Conference

2000 General Conference	1996 General Conference	1992 General Conference
Homosexuality	Church Restructuring	Homosexuality
Church Finances	Ministry Study	Church Finances
Evangelism and Restructuring*	Homosexuality	Membership Decline
	Membership Decline	Evangelism
The Church's Mission	GBGM Relocation	Clergy Issues

*Equal number of responses

In 1996, the most frequently cited issues facing the denomination were church restructuring, the study of ministry, homosexuality, membership decline, and GBGM relocation. In 1992, the most frequently cited issues facing the denomination were homosexuality, church finances, membership decline, evangelism, and clergy issues.

Issues Facing Society

The most frequently cited societal issues facing the church were hunger and poverty (270 responses), homosexuality (264 responses), racism (170 responses), violence (153 responses), and abortion (67 responses). For the most part, these five issues have been the most frequently cited by General Conference delegates during the 1990s. (See Table 5.)

In 1996, the five most frequently cited issues were racism, poverty, homosexuality, violence, and the church’s role in society. In 1992, the five most frequently cited issues were poverty and hunger, homosexuality, abortion, drugs, and racism.

When the responses are separated by clergy and laity, there is very little difference in their frequencies. It is interesting to note, however, that for the laity in 1996 and 2000, homosexuality had a higher frequency of responses than racism.

Table 5
Most Frequently Cited Issues Facing Society by Year of General Conference

2000 General Conference	1996 General Conference	1992 General Conference
Hunger/Poverty	Racism	Poverty/Homelessness/ Hunger
Homosexuality	Poverty	Homosexuality
Racism	Homosexuality	Abortion
Violence	Violence	Drugs
Abortion	The Church's Role in Society	Racism

Characteristics of the General Conference Delegates

Examining the demographic characteristics of General Conference delegates allows for comparisons with past delegations. Since delegates are generally elected from the leadership of their annual conferences, they may vary significantly from the characteristics of the general membership of the denomination. Throughout this report, comparisons will be made between data from the 1992 and 1996 surveys of General Conference delegates.

Delegates Attending Their First Session

The number of respondents who reported that this would be their first General Conference was 38% and is five percentage points lower than the 43.7% of the respondents who reported attending their first session in 1996. In 1992, 42.5% of the respondents reported that would be their first General Conference, and in 1988, 33.8% of the respondents reported attending their first General Conference.

In viewing the responses of first time attendance at General Conference, there is little difference between clergy and laity respondents. In 2000, 40% of the laity respondents and 37% of the clergy respondents said this would be their first General Conference. In 1996, 44.2% of the clergy respondents and 43.1% of the laity respondents said this would be their first General Conference and in 1992, the lay reported 43.7% and clergy 41.2%.

Gender, Race, and Age: How Inclusive Is General Conference?

"The Mission and Ministry of The Church," *The Book of Discipline*, 1996, calls the church to inclusiveness, which enables all persons to participate in the life of the church. How inclusive is General Conference? And, does the leadership of the General Conference reflect not only the diversity of the church, but also that of society as well—in an attempt to reach out to various groups?

Gender

In the area of gender, the General Conference appears to be very inclusive and representative of both The United Methodist Church and society. The US Census Bureau estimates that, in 1999, the number of females in the United States was 138,945,660 (51.01%) and the number of men was 133,437,780 (48.99%) for the total residential population. According to the lay respondents, 52% of the lay delegates to General Conference are women and 48% are men, which almost reflects the national percentages. (See Table 6.) For the past three General Conferences, laywomen have held a steady, constant presence with 52% of the lay respondents in 1996, and 53.1% in 1992.

According to the clergy respondents, 72.2% are male and 27.8% are female. The 27.8% of clergy respondents reporting themselves as female represents a continued increase of clergywomen at General Conference: 9% (1984); 15% (1988); 18% (1992); and 22.5% (1996).

The clergywomen appear to have better representation at General Conference than they do across the denomination. According to statistics provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration, in 1997, 88.3% of the elders in full connection were male and 11.7% were female. The better representation of women at General Conference than across the denomination may reflect a commitment by individual annual conferences to ensure the inclusivity and representation of women in the denomination's highest decision-making body.

Table 6
Gender of Respondents by Ministry Status, with Comparisons to the U.S. Population and Elders in Full Connection

	All	Lay Delegates	U.S. Population*	Clergy Delegates	Elders in Full Connection**
Female	60.8%	52%	51.01%	27.8%	11.7%
Male	39.2%	48%	48.99%	72.2%	88.3%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Source: General Council on Finance and Administration

Age

Inclusiveness and representation of various age groups is not an area where the General Conference appears to be doing very well. For 1999, the US Census Bureau estimated that 41.97% of the total US population was under age 30; 15.5% were ages 30-39; 15.26% were ages 40-49; and 27.27% were age 50 and older. (See Table 7.)

Table 7
Age Groupings of Respondents by Ministry Status,
with Comparisons to the U.S. Population

Age	All	Lay Delegates	Clergy Delegates	U.S. Population*
Under 30 Years	3.09%	6.56%	0%	41.97%
30-39 Years	4.02%	2.95%	4.97%	15.5%
40-49 Years	22.87%	12.13%	31.87%	15.26%
Over 50 Years	70.01%	77.70%	63.16%	27.27%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Compare those figures with the fact that 70% of the survey respondents are age 50 or older, with 35% of the respondents falling in the 50-59 age range. Furthermore, 87% of the respondents fall in the age range, 40-69.

Three-quarters (77.7%) of the lay respondents are age 50 and older, with 37.25% falling between the ages of 50-59. Likewise, 63% of the clergy respondents are age 50 and older, with 42.3% falling between the ages of 50-59.

The age of the delegates to the 2000 General Conference seems to be suffering from "middle-age" spread. The number of respondents below the age of 40 represents 7.1% of the total, down from 9.4% in 1996. Likewise, in 1996, 17.5% of respondents between the ages 40-49 and, in 2000, that percentage had increased to 22.8%

Some caution should be used in interpreting the range of ages for the respondents of the Survey of General Conference Delegates. First for the laity, official church membership can begin as early as age 11 or 12 and does not end until death; thus, the age range is much greater than that of the clergy. Clergy have a mandatory retirement at age 70 and, because of the educational requirements, most clergy would not begin their "work" until age 24 or 25. Consequently, the range of ages is more compressed for the clergy than laity. Likewise for the laity, the age group 40 and under is not as responsive, historically, to surveys as the age group, 40 and over. Thus, the percentages reflect the age groups at General Conference, but may not be actual representations.

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

Nevertheless, the numbers do reflect, as other studies have shown, that The United Methodist Church along with other mainline denominations is aging. The “under-representation” of youths and young adults may be an issue that needs to be addressed if the denomination wishes to develop mission and ministry to reach out to this population in society.

Racial and Ethnic Background

The inclusiveness and representation of delegates based on race and ethnicity at General Conference is “good news/bad news.” The “good news” is that compared to the “official” statistics of the denomination, General Conference is very representative of racial/ethnic delegates, but the “bad news” is that when compared to the race and ethnicity of the United States, General Conference is lacking in some areas.

The “official” race and ethnicity data for The United Methodist Church, as compiled by the General Council on Finance and Administration from annual conference reports, reported the following percentages for each racial/ethnic group in The United Methodist Church in 1998: African-American (5%); Asian-American (1%); European American (93%); Hispanic American (0.7%); and Native American (0.2%). Based on the race and ethnicity reported by the respondents, the General Conference will be composed of the following: African-American (12.4%); Asian-American (3%); European-American (81.5%); Hispanic American (2.2%); and Native American (0.93%). Although the official statistics are incomplete and representative only of those congregations that reported, the respondents do show that the General Conference appears to be “representative” of the denomination as a whole. (See Table 8.)

Table 8
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents by Ministry Status, with Comparisons to the U.S. Population and United Methodist Statistics

Race and Ethnicity	All	UM Population**	U.S. Population*	Lay Delegates	Clergy Delegates	UM Clergy Population**
African American	12.40%	5.00%	12.19%	10.86%	13.90%	4.10%
Asian American	3.00%	1.00%	3.49%	2.63%	3.20%	2.40%
European American	81.50%	93.00%	71.87%	83.22%	79.90%	92.60%
Hispanic American	2.22%	0.70%	11.50%	1.97%	2.40%	0.90%
Native American	0.93%	0.20%	0.96%	1.30%	0.60%	0.30%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Source: General Council on Finance and Administration

The clergy respondents tend also to be representative of the racial/ethnic make-up of the denomination's clergy. Again, the "official" statistics collected by the General Council on Finance and Administration lists the following racial/ethnic percentages for clergy: African American (4.1%), Asian-American (2.4%), European American (92.6%), Hispanic American (0.9%), and Native American (0.3%). Based on the clergy respondents, the General Conference will have the following clergy racial/ethnic make-up: African-American (13.9%), Asian American (3.2%), European American (79.9%), Hispanic American (2.4%), and Native American (0.6%).

Likewise, except for two notable exceptions (Asian American and Hispanic American), the General Conference represents fairly well the racial/ethnic make-up of the United States. The 1999 Bureau of Census estimates place the race/ethnicity population of the United States at 12.19% African-American, 3.49% Asian-American, 71.87% European American, 11.50% Hispanic American, and 0.96% Native American.

Like the clergywomen, racial/ethnic groups have a better representation at General Conference than they do across the denomination. Again, this appears to reflect a concern by individual annual conferences to ensure the inclusivity and representation of racial/ethnic groups in the denomination's highest decision-making body.

Education, Income, and Occupation

In terms of their education levels, total household income, and occupation, the delegates to the 2000 General Conference continue demographic trends begun in the 1990s.

Education

Nearly nine out of ten respondents (89%) have a bachelor's degree or higher education. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the lay respondents have completed at least a bachelor's degree, which compares to 72% of the lay respondents in 1996. In 1992, 70% of the lay respondents reported having completed at least four years of college or more.

Couple these facts with 97% of the clergy having a master's degree or higher education, and this makes for a highly educated delegation to General Conference.

Income of Delegates

At the 2000 General Conference, eight of ten delegates will have total household incomes of \$50,000 or more. Nearly seven out of ten (67%) of the delegates to the 1996 General Conference had total household incomes of \$50,000 or more. (See Table 9.)

In 2000, 90.6% of the clergy report having total household incomes of \$50,000 or more, which compares with 77% of the clergy respondents in 1996. Likewise, in 2000, 71% of the lay respondents reported having total household incomes of \$50,000 or more, which compares with 57% of the lay respondents in 1996.

Table 9
Total Household Income by Year of General Conference,
with Comparisons to the U.S. Population

Total Household Income	U.S. Population, 1999*	2000 General Conference		U.S. Population, 1996*	1996 General Conference	
		Lay	Clergy		Lay	Clergy
\$49,99 and Below	67.73%	29.10%	9.38%	70.39%	43.00%	23.00%
\$50,00 and Above	32.27%	70.90%	90.62%	29.61%	57.00%	77.00%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Conversely, in 2000, 9% of the clergy respondents report having total household incomes of \$49,000 or less, which compares with 23% of the clergy respondents in 1996. Likewise, in 2000, 29% of the lay respondents report having total household incomes of \$49,000 or less, which compares with 43% of the lay respondents in 1996.

These total household incomes contrast with figures reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for 1999 that show only 32% of the households in the United States as having household incomes at \$50,000 or more. Slightly more than two-thirds of the households in the U.S. have household incomes at \$49,999 or below.

Occupation

As in the past, "retired" is the most commonly reported "occupation" for lay delegates, with 26% reporting this status in 2000. This represents a continuing increase from past General Conferences: 22% in 1996; 18.6% in 1992; 15.1% in 1988; and 15.2% in 1984.

The next two most commonly reported occupations are "business" and "education". Education, at 12%, is consistent with 1996—11%. "Business", with 22% of the respondents, easily replaced home-making (7%) which in the past had been the third most reported occupation. With the exception of "retired", a trend appears to be taking place in the occupation of lay delegates, away from the occupations of education and homemaking and to those of business and law.

Church Size and Size of Community: Where Do the Delegates Come From?

Church Size

The 1998 *General Minutes* reports that 67.1% of the congregations in The United Methodist Church have 199 members or less; 21.7% have 200-499 members; 7.9% have 500-999 members; and 3.3% have 1000 or more members. The denomination seems to be made up of small churches, yet a different story is told when percentage of membership is reported. Again, the 1998 *General Minutes* reports that churches with 1-199 members make-up 23.5% of the total membership of the church; churches with 200-499 members make-up 29.10% of the membership; the 500-999 member churches have 22.8% of the membership; and the 1000 or more member churches have 24.6% of the membership. Thus, the membership of the denomination is spread fairly evenly across the four church sizes. (See Table 10.)

While the clergy delegates do not seem to reflect this "equal" representation, the lay delegates are little more representative. One-third of the lay respondents attend churches of 1000 or more members. For the remaining church sizes, 17.6% of the lay respondents attend churches of 1-199 members; 26.4% attend churches of 200-499 members; and 22.5% attend churches of 500-999 members.

Table 10
Church Size Attended by Respondents by Ministry Status,
with Comparisons to United Methodist Statistics

Church Size	All	Lay	Clergy	Percent of UM Churches*	Percent of UM Membership*
1-199 Members	11.70%	17.60%	5.80%	67.10%	23.50%
200-499 Members	23.09%	26.40%	19.70%	21.70%	29.10%
500-999 Members	21.63%	22.50%	20.70%	7.90%	22.80%
1000+ Members	43.58%	33.30%	53.70%	3.30%	24.60%

*Source: 1998 *General Minutes*

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

The 33.3% of the lay respondents attending a church of 1,000 or more members is slightly higher than the 30% that was reported in both 1996 and 1992. Likewise, the 18% of the lay respondents who reported attending a church of 200 or fewer members is a slight increase over 1996 (16%) and 1992 (15%).

The clergy respondents tend to represent the churches of 1,000 or more members at the expense of the smaller congregations. Half of the clergy delegates (53.7%) responding report that they serve or attend congregations with 1,000 or more members while 5.8% serve or attend churches with fewer than 200 members. Clergy who serve or attend churches with 200-499 members represent 19.7% of the respondents and those who serve or attend churches with 500-999 members represent 20.7% of the respondents.

The 53.7% for the clergy respondents is much higher than the 40.5% of the clergy respondents reporting in 1996, but equal to the 53.7% reported in 1992. Likewise, while the 5% who attend or serve churches with less than 200 members is 5%, down from the 8.4% in 1996, it almost equals the 5.9% in 1992.

Community Size

The communities in which the delegates reside seem to reflect the national trend of migration away from the cities to "exurbia." The respondents to the 2000 General Conference report that 36% of the clergy and 27% of the laity live in cities with 250,000 people or more. In 1996, 42% of the clergy and 34.9% of the laity reflect reported living in communities of 250,000 people or more.

Likewise in 2000, 3% of the clergy respondents and 13% of the laity respondents reported living in rural areas of 5,000 or fewer people. In 1996, 8% of the clergy respondents and 22% of the laity respondents reported doing so. One-third of the delegates live in communities with populations of 10,000 to 49,999.

Membership in the Denomination

Eight of ten respondents are life-long members of The United Methodist Church, with 81% of both the lay and clergy respondents reporting. Interestingly, 65% of the respondents were members of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations before 1970.

Of the respondents who have been members of other denominations, over one-third have been a member of the "Baptist Family"—Baptists, Southern Baptists, American Baptists, and National Baptists. An additional 13% have been members of the "Presbyterian family"—United Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Church, USA. Other groups listed are Church of God, Church of Christ, Mennonite, Christian Science, Assembly of God, Pilgrim Holiness, and Roman Catholic.

**Service to the Church:
More Active in the Local Church and Conference
than in the General Church**

With the exception of being elected to General Conference, the majority of respondents are much more active at the local church, district, and conference levels than at the general church level. Only 141 (21.8%) of the respondents report currently serving as members of a general agency and 181 (28%) of the respondents report having done so in the past. This compares with 1996 when 208 of the respondents reported serving as members of a general agency. (The small number of delegates serving as members of general agencies may also reflect action taken by the 1996 General Conference to reduce the total membership of the general agencies from a maximum of 930 members to a maximum of 650 members.)

The lack of high levels of activity beyond the local church and annual conference is further re-enforced by the reported low levels of membership on jurisdictional and general church committees and task forces. Membership on jurisdictional committees and task forces was reported by 112 clergy respondents and 117 lay respondents. Membership on general church committees and task forces was reported by 83 clergy respondents and 78 lay respondents.

Nevertheless, the respondents are very active at the local church and annual conference level. Excluding the 178 clergy respondents who serve the local church, 102 clergy respondents are district superintendents and 47 clergy respondents serve extension ministries within the annual conference. Only 11 clergy respondents (3%) serve beyond the annual conference. Likewise, of the 45 lay respondents who reported that they are employed on a full-time basis by The United Methodist Church, 22.2% are employed beyond the annual conference.

Table 11
Committee or Task Force Served
by Respondents by Ministry Status

Committee/ Task Force	Percent of All Respondents	Percent of Lay Respondents	Percent of Clergy Respondents
Local Church	65.8%	87.4%	46.0%
District	67.6%	63.1%	71.7%
Annual Conference	93.6%	91.7%	95.1%
Jurisdiction	36.9%	39.5%	34.5%
General Church	26.6%	27.6%	25.6%

Furthermore, 229 of the clergy respondents serve on a district committee or task force and another 302 clergy respondents serve on a conference committee or task force. Of the lay respondents, 253 (87%) report serving on a local church committee, 182 (63%) report serving on a district committee, and 264 (91%) report serving on a conference committee. (See Table 11.)

The General Conference Delegate: Role Perception and How the Delegate Stays Informed

Role Perception

The Survey of Delegates presented the delegates with a set of statements about their role as a delegate. More than four out of five respondents agreed with the statement: "I expect to learn more about the issues at General Conference, which will influence how I vote." Additionally, 93% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "As a delegate, I will study the issues during General Conference and vote my conscience."

The freedom to "vote their conscience" is further reflected in the delegates' attitudes toward resolutions passed by annual conferences. Only 25% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "I feel obliged to support the resolutions passed by my annual conference." Additionally, 61% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Resolutions passed by my annual conference are only guidelines. I do not feel I have to support them."

The freedom to vote their conscience is reiterated further by their agreement (93%) with the statement, "I was elected as a delegate because of my leadership skills, knowledge, and experience in The United Methodist Church." Further, 29% of the respondents agreed with the statement, "I was elected as a delegate because of specific opinions and/or my position on key issues."

How Delegates Stay Informed

When asked what sources of information do delegates use to keep abreast of issues within The United Methodist Church, 96% of the respondents reported using annual conference publications and newspapers. Three-quarters (75%) of the respondents reported using *Interpreter* while an equal percentage (72%) reported using *Newscope* and general agency publications. Another 65% of the respondents use local church publications. (See Table 12.)

Other notable sources of information that garnered 50% of the respondents are more were local newspapers (61%), *Circuit Rider* (57%), *United Methodist Reporter* (56%), and national TV news (54%). *While the respondents were asked what were their sources of information, they were not asked to rate their influence.*

Table 12
Source of Information of the Respondents by Ministry Status

Publication	Percent of All Respondents	Percent of Lay Respondents	Percent of Clergy Respondents
Annual Conference Publications and Newspapers	96.6%	95.4%	97.6%
<i>Interpreter</i>	75.7%	68.9%	81.9%
<i>Newscope</i>	72.7%	64.6%	80.1%
General Agency Publications	72.2%	68.9%	76.6%
Local Church Publications	65.4%	68.9%	62.3%
Local Newspapers	61.7%	60.3%	62.9%
<i>Circuit Rider</i>	57.3%	26.6%	85.2%
<i>United Methodist Reporter</i>	56.4%	51.5%	60.8%
National TV News	55.0%	53.8%	56.1%

When asked what other sources of information they used to keep abreast of issues within The United Methodist Church, 86% of the respondents reported personal contacts with annual conference leaders. Over three-fourths (77%) reported using the opinions of other members of their annual conference delegation, while 74% reported using mailings from the general agencies. Almost two-thirds (64%) use the people at their local church and 59% use personal contacts with the bishops.

Delegates' Views of The United Methodist Church

The delegates were given a series of 29 statements about The United Methodist Church and asked to state whether they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement. The responses are listed below. To simplify the reporting, the categories "strongly agree" and "agree" were combined as were "strongly disagree" and "disagree."

- ❖ 83% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is currently broad enough to include multiple views in its decision-making."

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

- ❖ 48% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When someone criticizes The United Methodist Church, it feels like a personal insult." 26% disagreed, 25% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1% did not answer.
- ❖ 40% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is defined by explicit doctrine," while 43% disagreed. 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 95% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I talk about The United Methodist Church, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they.'"
- ❖ 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is guided by the Holy Spirit."
- ❖ 67% agreed with the statement: "When someone praises The United Methodist Church, it feels like a personal compliment."
- ❖ 68% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is defined by its democratic processes."
- ❖ 59% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "The United Methodist Church's successes are my successes."
- ❖ 85% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Its connectional mission makes The United Methodist Church unique from any other church."
- ❖ 78% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "I'm very interested in what others think about The United Methodist Church."
- ❖ Only 9% agreed with the statement: "I think The United Methodist Church is just another church." 76% disagreed with the statement, while 14% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 44% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "If a story in the media criticized The United Methodist Church, I would feel embarrassed." 24% disagreed with the statement and 31% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 13% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "I think The United Methodist Church sounds more like a political party." 70% disagreed with the statement and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "In general, others respect The United Methodist Church."
- ❖ 69% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "One of the strengths of The United Methodist Church is its theological diversity."
- ❖ 5% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "In general, others think that The United Methodist Church, of which I am a member, is unworthy." 79% disagreed with the statement and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Survey of Delegates to the 2000 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

- ❖ 85% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "One of the strengths of The United Methodist Church is its ethnic diversity."
- ❖ 16% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Most people consider The United Methodist Church, on average, to be more ineffective than other social groups." 59% disagreed and 24% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 74% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that regularly shares the Gospel."
- ❖ 82% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Overall, The United Methodist Church is considered good by others."
- ❖ 93% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that should be true to its Wesleyan heritage."
- ❖ 83% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of social justice."
- ❖ 48% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is middle-of-the-road." 30% of the respondents disagreed and 21% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "I think The United Methodist Church should be concerned with being a cutting-edge church."
- ❖ 54% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "In my opinion, The United Methodist Church relies on the Bible for decision-making." 23% disagreed with the statement and 22% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 23% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that is similar to a business." 51% disagreed with this statement and 25% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 54% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a local church." 24% percent of the respondents disagreed and 22% percent neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 23% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that relies on its general agencies for decision-making." 58% of the respondents disagreed with this statement and 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- ❖ 54% of the respondents agreed with the statement: "When I think of The United Methodist Church, I think of a church that regularly engages in evangelism." 27% disagreed and 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.