

Critical Questions for Delegates

Dear Delegate:

Your work at General Conference will set the future course for mission and ministry in The United Methodist Church and around the world. The questions below may help direct your thoughts as you consider proposals concerning our policy and practice, structure and participation, ministry and outreach.

1. In what ways does this petition/proposal/resolution/amendment move the Church closer to who God calls us to be and what God calls us to do in the world? In what ways might it hinder what you discern is God's will for our church?
2. Who is proposing this petition/proposal/resolution/amendment? Who supports it and why? Who is opposing it and why? Are there any "other" agendas behind this proposal?
3. Who will benefit most if the proposal is adopted? Who may be adversely affected? How?
4. How does this legislation affect the empowerment and full participation of women in the Church? Laity or clergy? People of color in the United States? Those who live in poverty? Youth and young adults? Older adults? Central Conference members? Others?
5. Does this proposal address/correct existing patterns of inequality in our Church's structures, functions, financial allocations or decision-making? How does it affect/shift the power balance within our Church?
6. What will this proposal cost? What ministries will go undone be done if this proposal is funded/adopted? If no funding is requested, how will the Church support this proposal?
7. Who will be the decision-makers over this particular program? How will the voices of those who will be most affected be included in the decision-making? Is the global nature of our Church reflected in this proposal?
8. If this proposal were approved, will it enable more United Methodists to be effective in ministry and mission? Who will be enabled and how? Does this proposed resolution/petition address an important social justice issue sufficient to enable us to take prayerful and considered action?
9. What is the overall effect of this proposal? Does it propose a significant departure from past pattern, practice, theological doctrine or Social Principles? If my perspective differs from the "folks at home," how will I explain/interpret my rationale for supporting—or opposing—it?
10. During the debate over this proposal, did I demonstrate respect for those whose opinions differ from mine? How? Are there groups or individuals who have dominated the discussion/debate? Did I seek input from key person/groups who have not been heard?
11. Have I prayed for discernment, wisdom and guidance in making this decision? Have I prayed for and with those who disagree with me, or have I dismissed them as "unchristian" or "misguided"? Have I prayed for those who will be affected by this proposal if adopted?

Another way to consider each proposal you vote on is to ask yourself:

"If this petition/proposal/resolution/amendment were the ONLY program/statement/priority that existed about The United Methodist Church, what would be revealed about to the nature and mission of the Church?"

Adapted from guidelines developed by Pat Callbeck Harper for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women Orientation for Women Delegates, 1996.