

MISSOURI DELEGATES for 2012 GC/JC: PRINCIPLES FOR DISCERNMENT

As leaders and elected delegates from the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church, we believe that the 2012 General and Jurisdictional Conferences should focus upon a few key principles in positioning the church to be effective in its mission during the coming years. We believe that God is doing a “New Thing” in and through the United Methodist Church; something that will involve new ways of doing things, perhaps even a new paradigm for the way our church works. A renewed movement of Methodism can be God’s Spirit at work, and we can help if we’re open to it. Likewise, as leaders in the Wesleyan tradition, we should remember God’s grace is for all and embrace both vital piety and works of mercy. We should advocate our scripturally-based doctrine and spiritual growth within communities of support, as well as actions that reach out beyond the walls—practices that form Disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world.

Below are listed key Principles that we believe are most important for consideration as we prayerfully approach General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 2012:

1. **Focus upon the Mission of the Church.** Primary focus should be upon our Mission: Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World. We must align the church’s programs, priorities, and resources to strengthen congregations in carrying out this mission;
2. **Emphasize Congregations.** The focus for ministry should be through congregations that are growing, fruitful, and vital in their communities. Planting new congregations, strengthening existing ones with potential, and reaching a more diverse population must be priorities at all levels of the church and its boards and agencies;
3. **Develop Leadership.** Effective pastoral leadership is crucial, so we must improve our processes for identifying, developing, supporting, and holding accountable pastoral leaders. We must also improve our processes for equipping leaders among the laity and promote effective, supportive clergy / lay partnerships in congregation ministry. All leaders are expected to be Christ-centered, fruitful, seekers of excellence, collaborative, and accountable to one another and to the church;
4. **Reach Younger Generations.** We must seek to reach youth and young adults with the timeless truth of the Gospel in ways that are culturally relevant and life-changing. Proposals, including changes in structures and programs, should be evaluated for their impact on reaching younger generations so that they may know Christ and grow to live as disciples;
5. **Recapture the Movement.** Methodism began as a reform movement within the Church of England. Now, as then, laity and clergy must work together to lead a new movement based upon mission and purpose, using the many strengths of our connection while being willing to discard old habits to embrace Jesus Christ – The Way, The Truth, and The Life – for today.

Our hope and prayer: General and Jurisdictional Conferences can permit issues to divide us and overshadow our common mission – it has happened in the past. While this may be difficult to change, we strongly encourage lay delegates to the 2012 Conferences to purposefully: 1. Consider issues based upon their alignment with the mission (making disciples of Jesus Christ), keeping the mission primary; and 2. Move forward in those crucial areas that will lead our church toward life, growth, and fruitfulness.

May God lead and inspire us all with the discernment we need in these important decisions.