



Laity

delegates interested

in being elected to

General and Jurisdictional

Conferences

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Robert Aderholt

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Kenesaw United Methodist

White

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Prairie Rivers District

Male Age: 76



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

In my service to our Great Plains Conference, Prairie Rivers District, and my local church (Kenesaw UMC), I have been fortunate to witness how connectional we are as a church, district, and conference. The Uniting Conference, held in Salina, KS, brought three viable United Methodist conferences together as ONE. Being part of that unification process made me proud to be a member of the United Methodist Church. I look forward to the opportunity to serve as a delegate of the General Conference and/or the South-Central Jurisdictional Conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Great Plains Conference Director for Lay Servant Ministries - June, 2013 to present; Prairie Rivers District Ministry Team - 2011 to present; Association of Conference Directors for Lay Servant Ministries Education team - 2012 to present; Great Plains Rural Advocate Executive Committee - 2013 to present; Kenesaw UMC Church Council Chair - January, 2015 to present; Kenesaw UMC Lay Leader - January, 2008 to December, 2014; Nebraska Conference Table - 2010 to 2013; Prairie Rivers District Disaster-Relief Coordinator - 2010 to 2013; South-Central Jurisdictional Conference (Lay Servant Ministries) Legal team member - 2010 to 2013

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The challenge of encouraging both men and women to serve our local churches is an immediate need. Our small membership churches need assistance in developing local leadership to help these churches fight the dwindling membership battle as well as the reduced finances, needed to keep them open and functioning in their community. The General Church is hearing new voices and they need to be heard, recognized, and honored.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Steve Baccus

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1st United Methodist Church, Minneapolis, KS
white

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Salina District

Male

Age: 65



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I have recently retired from full time employment and although I've been involved with my church it hasn't been to the level I would like. I now have the time to commit to increasing my involvement. I've been involved in politics at the state, national and international level for many years and would like to bring some of that experience to work in the church. I have a keen interest in how the church functions and would like to help represent the interests of the smaller, rural churches in decision making.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I have no involvement in the church beyond the local level. Locally, I have served as chair of Finance twice and once as chair of SPPR. I've also served on Nominations as well as Administrative Council. I also was our representative on the Kansas Wesleyan board of trustees for six years a while back.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Our pastor has two charges. Our church has about 100 in attendance on Sunday and the other charge has 7. Many of the other churches in our community of 1700 are struggling to maintain membership and finances as well. All the churches, not just the Methodist Church need to critically examine the role they play in growing or at least maintaining smaller rural communities. To many people their church is an integral part of that community, but the church can and must do better. I can't speak for the larger, urban churches but in rural America the very real threat of losing your church due to declining membership and financial resources is very real. These challenges can be opportunities to create a situation in which the church is more involved in the community and more involved in the lives of those living in those communities. Too many times the church sits back and waits for people to come to them. No more. There isn't time for that. We have to devise a system where the church becomes more proactive and we can do that!

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Dixie Brewster

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Milton United Methodist Church
White

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Wichita West District
Female Age: 49



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I love the United Methodist Church and its people and want to be a part of the General Church as a General Conference Delegate. I want to make a difference in the attitude of the church and recognize the positives we have in our great connectional system.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Milton UMC Worship Chair, PPR Chair, Lay Leader/Lay Member, Youth Sunday School Teacher, UMW President, Organist, Past Kansas West Conference Lay Leader (2000-2008), Camp Horizon Board Member, Wichita West District Nominating Committee, and KWC Nominations Chair. I served as a Kansas West Conference General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegate (2000-2012) and on the South Central Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Sharing Christ is an honor and opportunity for our denomination and all Christians. I want to be a part of shaping our witness and mission of making disciples. Without challenges, growth cannot be maximized. Social challenges and church authority are overshadowing our church's mission. My hope and prayers are that these issues will not divide our denomination, but that we can be in unity and follow guidelines set before us through the United Methodist General Conference. The challenge of commitment to the local church is a major challenge as well. A busy world is taking our time and loyalty away from the church. More and more, I see the popular hands-on approach to mission gaining ground while corporate worship, bible studies, and small groups dwindle in attendance. We need both and we need to combine the two so that we not only provide water, but living water as well.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Mary Brooks

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Lyndon UMC

Caucasian

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Five Rivers District

Female Age: 60



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

As a delegate to the 2012 General Conference for the first time, I found the process to be fascinating. There are issues facing the church that have long term consequences for the health and vitality of our denomination. There are diverse opinions on those issues and finding common ground is not going to be easy, but if we listen to each other and to God's call to be the church in the world, I believe we can find a way forward that will not tear us apart. I have been a Methodist my entire life and desire to see the church I love strong and vital into the future. I have two daughters and two granddaughters active in the church, so I represent three generations of voices.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I currently serve as chair of the worship team in my local church, as UMW President and have been Lay Leader previously. I serve on the District Leadership Team, am a member of the Conference Personnel Committee and am a member of the Executive Board for Mt. Sequoyah, our Jurisdictional Retreat and Conference center. I served as a member of the 2012 General Conference Delegation as an alternate.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

As we see the world become more and more polarized, the world needs the love of Jesus Christ more than ever. We are struggling to figure out how to be inclusive of all, yet understanding the diverse cultures the church encompasses. Our Book of Discipline must undergo radical changes if we are to have something that will keep the integrity of the faith while meeting the needs of all United Methodists throughout the world. Perhaps our biggest challenge is how to stay brothers and sisters in the community of faith and not let the issues splinter us. Together we are so much stronger than we are apart from each other. We can accomplish great things when we work together in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Barbara Jo Burns

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308-539-4088

First UMC, Kearney

White

barbara.burns48@yahoo.com

Gateway District

Female Age: 60's



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

God has been very good to me. I have been graced with a General Knowledge of the United Methodist Church and I've taken opportunities to cultivate that gift. I am devoted to making decisions for our church both in areas of leadership and policy. I am humbled and thankful for the possibility that serving as your delegate would allow me. Through consultation and prayer I am hopeful my votes would reflect the wishes of the Great Plains Conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Locally: I have chaired: Finance Committee, Missions Committee, Evangelism Committee, Social Justice Committee, Discipleship Making Document Committee, Staff Parish Relations Committee. I have been active in UMW and have served on the Church Council, for forty years as the Lay member to Annual Conference of the local church. I have taught the Social Principles component of the Confirmation curriculum. District: I have served as: District Lay Leader for 12 years, District UMW office, District Council. Conference: I have served on: Board of Laity and Discipleship, Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry (during the time I was on the local advisory board of UNK Campus Ministry), Board of Church and Society, Commission on Equitable Salary. I have chaired: Commission on Status and Role of Women, Restorative Justice Committee. I am currently serving on the Board of Ordained Ministry. I have held offices in Conference UMW. I was Dean of the Schools of Christian Mission (now Mission U) and I taught in the Schools. I have been on the Board of Directors of Epworth Village in York, Neb. and served as their finance chair. I was elected to Jurisdictional Conference delegation twice. For a number of years I worked in the Conference offices housed in North Platte, Neb. working with the Vitality Challenge, then Stewardship and during that time I kept all Lay Speaking Records.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The challenges we face are the divisions in our church.....in idea, theology and priority. The opportunity we have is to allow Christ to be the BRIDGE.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Steve Fenster

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Healy UMC
White

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Hays District
Male Age: 60's



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

Representing our size of church and Western Kansas values in words and vote.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Trustee, Usher, Sunday School Treasurer, Memorials Committee, Lay Delegate for 3 Years, Communication Committee.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Bringing new disciples to church in a small community.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Charles File

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Beloit 1st UMC
caucasian

ckfile1863@yahoo.com
Salina District
Male Age: 65



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

Fulfilling the Great Commission in my life. Stepping out as a measure of faith and yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Sunday School teacher for over 10 years, held various UMM offices, delegate to Annual Conference for 12 years, Salina District President UMM 4 years, Southwest Regional President 1 year, Vice president UMM Great Plains Conference 1 year, Promise Keeper Leader 12 years, lifetime member of Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship, Steven's Ministry several years, and Organizer of Salina District Men and Boy's Rally 5 years,

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Holding true to the doctrines of the church from its origin over 2000 years ago, and faithfully proclaiming it in society of today.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Courtney Fowler

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Manhattan--College Avenue

Native American

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Flint Hills District

Female Age: 40+



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

We're doing great things here in the Great Plains and I would be deeply humbled to represent the great laity and churches we have here at General Conference. The opportunity to participate in the greater body and connection of the UMC is privilege, a wonderful learning opportunity and a chance to grow deeper in my Christian faith. In addition to the many issues arising at General Conference that will require study and prayer, it is also a great place to witness God's transforming grace and I know I would be inspired by the wide variety of people attending, the stories shared and the worship experiences designed to unite us as one body. I would love that very much!

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I currently serve as the Great Plains Conference Lay Leader. I also serve on the executive team of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders. In my Flint Hills district, I serve on the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. In my local church, I currently serve on the Outreach team and as a member of Church Council.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The changing landscape of the "church" as we have traditionally known it is much different in 2015. Our denomination has been declining in the U.S., but is a growing movement elsewhere in the world. It's a great opportunity to see where God is at work in the world and how we can be part of the work that God is blessing. Our diversity in the UMC church is a strength, and one we must learn to build on. We can "be the change in the world" and it starts with each of us. God's grace abounds!

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Carol Garwood

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St. Paul United Methodist Church, South Sioux City NE

Caucasian

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Elkhorn Valley District

Female Age: 52



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I have been the Lay Delegate to Annual Conference from our church for the past several years. I am striving to become more involved in my local church, the Elkhorn Valley District, and our Annual Conference. My Volunteer In Mission work as well as my attendance at various conferences have helped me to form new friendships with other United Methodists across the nation and I am interested in working within our denomination on a national level.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

In my local church, I have been involved in several capacities - Sunday School Teacher, Sunday School Superintendent, Member of the Choir, Chairperson of SPPRC, Chairperson of Administrative Council, served on the Finance committee and the Visioning committees. I am currently a Certified Lay Servant and am currently the Chair of the Lay Servant Committee for the Elkhorn Valley District. I have presented programs to various congregations and groups about my trips to Israel/Palestine. I have participated in 3 Volunteer In Mission trips to Israel/Palestine and am currently preparing to be a co-leader for a Study Tour which will take place in February of 2015. In preparing for these trips, I have worked with the United Methodist missionaries in the Holy Land. I have also serviced as a Board Member of the Boys and Girls Home of Nebraska for the past several years.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

One of the challenges that we face within the United Methodist Church today is the issue of the LGBT community. We also are in dialogue regarding the Death Penalty, Immigration, Gambling and many other Social Justice issues. Technology affords us great opportunities to reach young adults and youth in order to spread the word of God and the love of Jesus Christ. I believe that there are many avenues that we may be able to make more/better use of in order to reach the younger generation in order to make more disciples of Jesus Christ. We need to be willing to meet and engage in respectful dialogue in order to discern the path of the United Methodist Church in the future.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Wesley Gately

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White

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Flint Hills District

Male

Age: 19



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I love the United Methodist Church and I am deeply committed to our connectional ministry. Nowhere is the diversity of our denomination more evident than General Conference. I was honored to serve as a member of the Kansas East Delegation in 2012. The United Methodist who gathered in Tampa were an inspiration. There were youth, young adults, older adults and the elderly. There were Lay and Clergy from across the country and around the globe. There were liberals, moderates and conservatives from virtually every walk of life. Despite these differences we were able to worship the triune God and work together as one church in the name of Jesus Christ. The work was not always easy, in fact many of the conversations were quite difficult, but the conversations are important and need to take place. As a young adult I have much at stake because I intend to be an active member of this denomination for many decades to come. The delegation from the Great Plains Annual Conference needs to include young persons and I am both willing and excited to help discern how the United Methodist Church will grow into the future.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I have been very involved in United Methodist Church my entire life. I have served on local church committees and I am currently teaching children Sunday School. As a youth I was extremely active on the Conference Council on Youth Ministry and I served as a leader for the high school camp "Institute." I also traveled on church mission trips and on conference trips to Washington D.C., New York, and the Holy Land. As a college student I have attended Exploration and Next, two events that the UMC put together for college students, both were transformative experiences. I have been active at the Campus Ministry at Washburn University as a student associate. In the fall I will transfer to a different school where I intend to continue my involvement in Campus Ministry. I plan to attend a Lay Servant course before the 2015 Annual Conference. After graduation from college I plan to attend a United Methodist Seminary in preparation for ordination in the United Methodist Church. My parents are both United Methodist Clergy and I sometimes my calling as "Going into the family business."

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Our greatest challenge is the very thing that makes us great, the diversity of our connection. The incredible diversity of our church is a blessing because it brings many ideas and perspectives that differ from our own and yet these differences have a tendency to create friction. Much like our national political system, our church is being pulled apart by differing views on a few hot button issues. If we only focus on our differences, we can lose sight of our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. There are some who call an amicable separation between the more progressive and more traditional elements of our church. While a church split may sound like a quick and easy resolution to our differences I suspect that a separation will not be quick and certainly not be amicable. Rather than schism I would like to see the church in the United States granted some freedoms similar to those exercised by the central conferences. Surely there is a way for us to insure that the church in the United States can remain culturally relevant while allowing the church in Africa and around the world to minister appropriately in their contexts as well. The truth is we need traditionalist and progressives, conservatives and liberals, evangelicals and those committed to social justice. What brings us together is our common faith in a God of love and grace. When UMCOR responds to a natural disaster no one cares about our divisions. When we baptized children in the church no one doubts that God loves them exactly as they are. When we helped to reduce the number of malaria deaths by half no one asked if we would tear our own denomination in two. Our incredible diversity can be our greatest strength or it can be our greatest challenge. The choice is ours.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Oliver Green

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Asbury Mt. Olive

African American

oliverdeck@aol.com

Topeka District

Male Age: 60+



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

Let me begin by sharing a little about myself. I grew up in the Quayle Church in Salina, Kansas raised by a UMW mother and aunt. Up until the merger in 1968, that church was a part of the Central Conference of the Central Jurisdiction, the jurisdiction for the Black Methodist churches. In 1960 prior to the merger when I was 15, I was elected to my first 'connectional' position in the church. I was elected the second vice president of the Salina sub-district of the Salina district of the UMYE. Though I had no inkling of what a second vice-president role was, I felt honored to have that position. I have never forgotten how the church (the youth) fifty-five years ago made the decision to be inclusive before it was required to do so. I am a graduate of Kansas Wesleyan University. After a brief educational venture at Washington University (graduate degree in Education) in St. Louis and during that tumultuous time in our nation's history, I returned to Salina and later moved to Topeka with my wife and daughter. We transferred our membership from Quayle to Asbury Mt. Olive UMC in 1978. I say all that to say the Methodist Church has been a major part of my life since I can remember. I am a lifelong United Methodist. I believe the God I love and revere is way bigger than the voices of divisiveness and defeat that plague the church today. I believe I have been called to lay ministry and I have a willingness and desire to serve God and His church in any way that will further his beloved kingdom. We are called to go and make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, not to bemoan the struggles and divisions in our church community. I believe I am prepared and ready to serve our conference as a representative/delegate to the 2016 General Conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

In the local church I have served on or chaired numerous work areas: Church Council, Christian Education, PPRC, Finance Secretary, Stewardship, Mission and Outreach, Sunday School Teacher, Youth sponsor, After School Program tutor, UMM, Lay Leader, Lay Member to Annual Conference, and choir. I served as the Topeka District lay Leader. At the Conference level (Kansas East) I have chaired the Nomination Committee, served on Sessions and Rules, Youth Ministries, Extended Cabinet, Church and Society, Episcopacy Committee, and was the Conference Lay Leader. I have been honored to be a delegate to three General and Jurisdictional Conferences. I served as a director of the General Board of Church and Society for eight years and was a original member of the UMG AIDS Committee, serving on it for eight years. I served on the Executive Committee of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders. I have been blessed to go on an educational mission trip to Honduras and Nicaragua. I have visited our Haitian partnership, attended the world AIDS Conference in Vienna, Austria and the World Methodist Council and Conference in Durban, South Africa. I have had the opportunity to serve as the Kansas Area representative to the World Methodist Council. I served on the Transition team and currently serve as one of the Conference Associate Lay Leaders. I serve on the Extended Cabinet, Great Plains AIDS Committee, Haiti Task Force, and Vital Congregations. I chair the Ethnic Minority Local Church Committee. I am a member of the Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy. I retired from working thirty-three years in Public Welfare for the state of Kansas and was blessed during that time to be able to be involved in the church at that level. I have been very blessed to have the support of my wife, Johnne' and our two daughters and now granddaughter.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The church faces many challenges and at the same time has tremendous opportunity to be the church we are called to be. How do we be the church in the 21st century. Our society has moved away from a time when the church was the activity on Sunday to where it is one of many if that today. The demographics are changing, populations are shifting, technology is advancing our society and the church. The church is growing in areas of the world with limited financial resources. Yet we have great need in our own backyards. Our church community gets stuck on whose in and whose out when we all have fallen short. There are no simple answers to the array of challenges facing the church nor that will face the church in the years to come. The church has a rich history. Sometimes we didn't get it right sometimes we did. However through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit I believe we can transform the church to be the church we are compelled to be. I must remind myself as Bishop Job wrote 'do no harm, do good and stay in love with God'.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Esther Hay

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Waverly First United Methodist
Caucasian

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Blue River District
Female Age: 60-70



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

My years of experience as a member of United Methodist Women and as a Girl Scout Executive have prepared me to be open-minded and forward thinking in discerning what it is that God is calling his beloved children to be and do in today's world. My personal goal is to make the world a better place for all God's children. On one level that means that I do it one person and one action at a time on a daily basis in my personal life. However, I also recognize that to make it happen on a global scale, requires joining together with others in order to share God's love and make the world a better place for all God's children. That is one of the important roles of General Conference – joining together to enact legislation that helps us fulfill our mission of making disciples who transform the world.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I am President of the Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women and co-lead a Disciple Bible Study group. I am a certified lay servant. I have been an active member of the United Methodist Church for over 40 years in churches in the New Mexico, Kansas West, Kansas East, Nebraska and the Great Plains Conferences. I've served in the church at the local, district and conference levels in Christian Education and in United Methodist Women. My first active role was as a Sunday school teacher. Christian Education was first a volunteer role and then a profession for several years as I worked with children, youth and adults in four denominations. Some roles in the local church have included: Lay Member of Annual Conference, secretary of the church council, chair of mission committee, member of nominating and equipping and staff parish committees, children's coordinator, choir member, co-coordinator of the community food pantry, and leading a breast cancer support group, etc. I have participated in several national learning opportunities and this is a way to use my learning on behalf of the entire church.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The biggest challenge and also opportunity of the United Methodist Church today is to be the positive presence of God in the world. If we focus on that, then we offer the best hope for the transformation of personal lives and the world. We need to focus on what unites us and let go of our need to "play God" and judge other people. We are called by God to love the world, not judge the world. Much of what divides us as a denomination is our individual personal interpretations of what is right – only God can make that determination. Our job is to love one another. I cannot possibly personally know all that may have happened or be happening in another person's life; what's right for me in my relationship with God may not be the same as what's right for someone else. Love of God and Loving one another is the only power that can overcome division and enable us to do what God is calling us to do. If we are true to what God is calling us to do, then we will fulfill our mission of making disciples who transform the world.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Joey Hentzler

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785-580-3875

New Church Lawrence

Caucasian

whentzler@gmail.com

Five Rivers District

Male Age: 21



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

As a recent college graduate and young professional, I believe I will best be able to represent the young adults in the Great Plains Conference. But I am committed the Wesleyan principle of doing good for all of the conference and not just one demographic or region. I have experience lobbying state legislators in Topeka and Kansas' US congressional delegation in Washington D.C. I would be honored to advocate for our community of Christ here in the Great Plains and in the world beyond!

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Since middle school, I have represented youth on boards at my local church in Topeka. At the University of Kansas, I have been an active member of Wesley KU sitting on its board. I have represented my campus ministry at annual conference in Lincoln and the uniting conference in Salina. Though I was new to the process, I spoke several times on issues important to me and those my constituents had informed me were important to them. I collaborated to amend the founding document of the GPUMC for greater young adult representation. For the past year, I have been a part of New Church Lawrence, the exciting new hybrid of community church and campus ministry. I was one of three people who began the Launch Team in the summer of 2014 and the only young adult. In spring of 2015, I will have traveled to Haiti with other GPUMC leaders for training on how to lead small groups back to the island country in the future.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

We are at a crucial time in the United Methodist Church. We do not yet face the death of the church, but something far more ominous. Our church and faith communities risk becoming irrelevant in today's world. This is distressful if not alarming. While the UMC has so much to offer in spiritual growth, mission, and community, we are pushing new generations away with our actions and inactions. I cannot imagine anything worse for our church than to become a community of people who call themselves disciples, but who have become removed from the society and culture in which they strive to emulate Christ. We cannot afford to alienate anyone from our churches because we will in turn alienate ourselves from everyone. But we have the opportunity to stop doing harm. Through my involvement New Church Lawrence, I have been able help shape something truly amazing. We have raised literal tons of food for those who need it most in our community. We have created a welcoming, affirming space for all peoples of all walks of life in which Christians can be together in community and strive to stay in love with God.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Randall Hodgkinson

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Topeka-First

White

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Topeka District

Male Age: 45-50



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

When I attended General Conference with the Kansas East delegation in 2012, I was convinced that the UMC is facing issues of long-term unsustainability. While the 2012 General Conference was unable to resolve those issues, they have not gone away. I hope that the 2016 General Conference will continue to grapple with these issues and hopefully make some bold decisions regarding our structure and polity that would allow the UMC to see a more fruitful future. Failure to address these issues head-on will be a choice—a choice for a slow but sure decline. I would like to be part of a delegation that will work to choose a more vibrant future for the UMC. My work as a lay member of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry has also raised my awareness of the importance of constantly reviewing and revising the process by which the UMC recruits and credentials clergy, which is a primary topic at General Conference. We must constantly balance (1) the need to create a culture of call that allows us to successfully recruit and support young (and not-so-young) persons to lead our local churches with (2) the need to make sure that when we name someone a United Methodist pastor, we can be confident in his or her call and competence. As an attorney and law professor, I think I have many gifts that would be useful to the Great Plains delegation. In 2012, delegates at General Conference spent several hours at the beginning just debating the rules that would govern the Conference. These rules and procedures are used help to decide what issues will be considered and how those issues will be considered. Not everyone is necessarily engaged or gifted in the minutiae of procedural rules or constitutional interpretations, but it is right in my wheelhouse. Although it is not glamorous, a lot of the work of the General Conference is a legislative process of “perfecting” petitions. My background and experience could help our delegation in this process.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Local Church (Topeka-First): Currently serve in chancel choir, as a WAFFLE volunteer (elementary school late-start program), and on Venture Crew Committee. I have served my local church as lay member of Annual Conference, member of Finance Committee, member of Lay Leadership Committee, member of Board of Trustees, and Chair of Staff-Parish Committee. District: Topeka District Lay Leader (Jan. 2013-present). Conference: Connecting Council (as district lay leader) (2014-present); Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (2007-present) (BOOM parliamentarian 2011-present); Certified Lay Servant 2004-present (KEC Commissioned Lay Speaker); UNDC Spring Break Study trip adult leader 2013. General Church: Reserve Delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conference, 2012 (KEC).

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Challenges: (1) We have a deep divide in the UMC on some social issues, especially inclusiveness of GLBT persons in our ministries and as clergy. I hope that in response to this challenge, General Conference will adopt legislation that is driven by (1) love of neighbor and (2) desire to focus on making disciples of Christ. In furtherance of this hope, we should at least be able to agree that the UMC and maybe even our own local churches are honestly divided. But, in our Wesleyan tradition, I hope that General Conference will pass legislation that will at least allow us more flexibility to “think and let think” on that issue instead of forcing many to act either contrary to the Book of Discipline or against their honestly-held beliefs. (2) We have a polity structure that makes it very difficult to have our larger church respond quickly and effectively to our increasing unsustainability. I hope that General Conference will consider and pass major changes that will allow for a more nimble and fruitful UMC. (3) In many places, we have entrenched views of what a local church and a congregation look like, and those views hamper our efforts to reach unchurched persons. I hope that we can encourage structural changes in the Book of Discipline that will allow for different-looking ministry (less building and committee focus). I think such changes could offer the opportunities for additional transformative ministries. Opportunities: Our connectional system provides opportunities for mercy ministries on both a local and worldwide level and for justice ministries on both a local and worldwide level. While many criticize our new world of social media, I think a tech-savvy world demonstrates (1) a need for more and varied opportunities for fellowship and relationship, both virtual and in-person and (2) opportunities for reaching unchurched persons in new ways. Over the Church's history, new technology has always given the Church new opportunities to spread the Word. If we embrace technology in our ministries, I think the UMC has tremendous opportunities to reach church and unchurched people in new and fruitful ways.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Shayla Allyssa Raeanne Jordan

1513 N. Mars, Wichita, KS 67207

316-573-7388

Wichita Aldersgate

white

shaylajordan2015@gmail.com

Wichita West District

Female Age: 18



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I am interested in representing the Great Plains Conference at General Conference because I thoroughly enjoyed the discussions and different point of views while in the Philippines. I also loved having such a large voice and being a part of the Global church. I believe I have a good understanding of what the young people believe after my experience at the Legislation Assembly. I believe God moves in miraculous ways and will transform the church rather than dividing the church. The Global Church intrigues me because I know God works outside of my boundaries; furthermore, I would love to be given the opportunity to continue learning and voting in the way God is guiding my heart.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Within my local church I am a member on the Ministry Planning Team, the Staff Pastor/Parish Relations committee, as well as an active member in my youth group. I have been elected from the West Wichita District to the Conference Council on Youth Ministries for three years and an active member on my District Council on Youth Ministries. I was the president of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries for two years and the Co-President for the past year. On the Conference Council on Youth Ministries I have been involved in planning Annual Conference and The One Event. Two years ago I was chosen to attend the Youth Jurisdictional meeting and was elected to be a representative from the South Central Jurisdiction to the Global Young People's Convocation in the Philippines in 2014.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The United Methodist Church has a few challenges in the near future and at General Conference. One being, finding common ground between all countries when speaking about social and political issues. I experienced some of these challenges while in the Philippines during holy conferencing. Not only was there a language barrier, but challenges arose when personal feelings were brought into legislation, considering everyone is coming from different backgrounds. One great opportunity that lies before the Methodist Church is not only proving finding common ground is possible, but also showing the world peace can be brought between the church even on hot topics. I believe the church at General Conference can make peaceful decisions and show God's grace when holy conferencing.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Steven Kirkeby

16241 Cambridge Drive, Stilwell, KS 66085

913-209-5931

Stilwell United Methodist Church

Caucasian

steve.kirkeby@gmail.com

Kansas City District

Male

Age: over 65



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

The United Methodist Church faces a number of significant challenges that can fundamentally change how we move forward as Disciples of Christ. We must clearly understand and communicate the implications of these challenges and how we intend to embrace them. Missteps can hinder how our membership's acceptance and incorporates our approach into their church communities and their individual lives. I feel that my experience in examining and developing solutions to complex problems, as well as my acceptance of Christ's intention that I follow in his footsteps in his Kingdom here on earth, has prepared me to assist in developing decisions and communications that help our current and prospective members in understand, and accepting how we embrace these challenges as a church, an institution, and as members in the Body of Christ.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I have been active in missions and church activism most all my life, most recently as Finance and Church Council Chairperson for Stilwell United Methodist Church. I feel my grass roots experience is the right perspective to have in dealing with our denominations issues, having been intimately involved in listening to and addressing the concerns of our members.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

In no particular order: 1. The success and financial stability of our church congregations as they identify and prioritize the issues and needs of their congregations and their communities 2. Understanding and accepting Gays and Lesbians as members of the Body of Christ and His Kingdom on earth 3. Communicating the relevance of our denomination in the lives of our youth and young(er) adults 4. Following in the footsteps of John Wesley in aiding the poor and needy in our communities and the world, at large.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Lisa Maupin

8311 Karl Ridge Road #206, Lincoln, NE 68506

402-305-1967

Saint Paul UMC-Lincoln

Caucasian

lisamaupin45@gmail.com

Blue River District

Female Age: under 40



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

The decisions that are being made at General Conference and Jurisdictional are not just ones that affect the current church but lay the groundwork for the church we are going to be in the future and I feel it is important as a lay member to be a part of the decision making process. I believe that as a delegate I can be one that studies, listens, discerns and makes a decision not based on solely ones own personal beliefs but on behalf of the Great Plains Annual Conference and the United Methodist Church as we map out the future. It is about understanding that these are decisions that affect the entire connectional system from the local church to the missionaries serving around the world.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

2012 First Lay Alternate to General Conference (Nebraska) 2012 Lay Delegate to Jurisdictional Conference (Nebraska) Local Church: Lincoln Southgate UMC Youth Group Assistant, United Methodist Women local unit, Lay Speaker, former Omaha Dietz AC Representative, former member of the Omaha Dietz Administrative Council, former member of the Omaha Dietz Staff Parish Relations Committee, former chair of the Omaha Dietz Finance Committee Conference: Great Plains UMC Communications Coordinator, member of the Great Plains AC Planning Team, Great Plains UMW Mission u Planning Team, Great Plains UMW Transition Team member, former Nebraska VIM Coordinator, former Nebraska UMW Communications Coordinator General Church: former General Board of Global Ministries Church and Community Worker

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The United Methodist is at a critical time in its history as we are faced with numerous decisions that will affect our future as a denomination. Many of these decisions are extremely divisive. The are not easy ones and have created a negative dialogue but are going to be decisions that determine where we are headed as a denomination including our structure, financial decisions and membership decline. However within in these tough decisions lies an opportunity for us to remember our heritage and history. To listen to each other and find our common ground on what makes us love the United Methodist Church so fiercely. This is our opportunity to remember that we are a denomination that provides a place for diversity, a place for questions and unique perspectives, a place to grow and study our faith and a place that remembers to care for those in the far corners of the global with love and dignity. It is our challenge and opportunity to set the course for the United Methodist Church to continue to answer the call and strive to be who we want to be.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Carolyn May

1128 Terrace Drive, Colby, KS 67701

785-460-3655

Colby UMC

Caucasian

carolyncollinsmay@yahoo.com

Hays District

Female

Age: 68



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I was born and raised in this denomination with parents who lived their lives actively in service to Christ. As Christians, not only are personal spiritual disciplines and our actions important, but the Discipline of the United Methodist Church is also important in giving us structure and direction. I would like to prayerfully represent the Great Plains Conference as your delegate.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Currently, I visit residents in nursing homes regularly, am involved in several spiritual growth small groups, organize World Day of Prayer as the UMW Church Women United officer, serve as a member of the Colby UMC Administrative Board, and intentionally serve others informally through Christ. I am involved in clean-up day at Camp Lakeside, certified as a lay speaker, chair of the Great Plains Conference Angie Newman Award selection committee, member of the Great Plains Conference extended cabinet, and associate conference lay leader. In February, 2015, I attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Conference Lay Leaders. The theme was Conflict Transformed. In the past four years, I had been the Colby UMC missions chair, taught Immigration and the Bible at UMW Mission u, taught Discover Your Spiritual Gifts at lay servant school, was the Hays district lay leader, Kansas West Conference lay leader, and a volunteer in mission. I was baptized at thirteen days old and have been active in serving Christ throughout the years, including president of the Kansas City District MYF.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Sadly, the United Methodist Church is declining in membership. I believe that lives are transformed one-by-one through the Holy Spirit and through the actions of each of us as the hands and feet of Christ. There are United Methodist churches today who are vital congregations involved in the mission to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” I believe, as stated in the mission statement, that, “Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.” I am excited about the opportunity to help enable United Methodist congregations to increase the number and commitment of persons who are transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Carl Nord

1449 Autumn Valley Circle, Mulvane, KS 67110

(316) 777-1217

Mulvane United Methodist

white

Carl4ksu@aol.com

Wichita East District

Male

Age: 60+



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

It provides an opportunity to voice support for legislation that will enable the United Methodist Church to continue to be a leader in the Christian community. It also provides an opportunity to identify and support those who will lead us in the coming years of our conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

At the local church level I have been involved in leading mission work outside of the church, serving on committees within the church, participating and leading Bible studies and small groups and am a certified lay speaker. At the conference level, I have participated and chaired the conference board of pensions (8 years), the committee on finance and administration (15 years) and currently chair the Great Plains committee on finance and administration (CF&A). At the General Church level I served on the General Board of Pensions for 12 years. I have also served as a jurisdictional delegate on three previous occasions.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Statistics show that we are an aging church based on the average age of both our constituency and clergy. We are in the process of evolving into a new church that some might call revitalization but we know that we cannot continue to be the same church we have been for the past several decades. Our conference has made steps to look to our future and identify missional priorities that are vital to our future. The challenge is before us and it does afford the opportunity to do ministry in new ways so that we can continue to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Some of those challenges are to identify effective leadership at both the conference and local church levels. Areas such as church camps, clergy support, and new church starts are examples of ministries that require our serious attention. We also need to continue to understand who we are as Christians and our Wesleyan values and not sacrifice those values for the sake of growth. I believe the ministry of the United Methodist Church will be vital in the future but it is imperative that we continue to examine our methods.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Keith Olsen

PO Box 356, Grant, NE 69140

Cell: 402-440-3401. Home: 308-352-2132

Grant United Methodist Church

White

kolsen@gpcom.net

Great West District

Male

Age: Over 65



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

My main interest in being a delegate is to represent all participants in the United Methodist churches of the Great Plains Conference, especially the small churches such as the one that I am a member of. Because of travel, I attend a large United Methodist church in Lincoln several times a year. I have gotten to know the pastors and a number of the members well. I feel that I can represent all Nebraska United Methodists. If elected to be a delegate, I will commit myself to fulfilling my responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Most of my involvement in the United Methodist Church has been in my local church. I have served on most committees and the Administration Board. I have served as a Sunday School teacher first teaching junior and senior high classes. For the past twenty five years or more, I have taught an adult class. I am currently a lay delegate to Great Plains Annual Conference. I have been a Certified Lay Speaker for over twenty years. I served full time as the president of a large farm organization in Nebraska for over nine years. This commitment prevented me in taken a larger role in my church, especially at the district and conference levels.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The challenge of dealing with the social issues that our church is facing is presenting us with the opportunity to work together. We will not agree with each other but we can love each other in Christ's name. We must accept the fact that we as professing Christians will not always see things in the same manner. We need to encourage young people to enter the ministry. Maintaining small vital churches is a challenge. There is a tremendous opportunity to grow our United Methodist Churches in our larger communities and cities.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

NM Patton

900 N Locust, Peabody, KS 66866

316-772-8048

Peabody United Methodist Church

Caucasian

nmp@thebankcollector.com

Hutchinson District

Male

Age: 68



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

Peabody United Methodist Lay Delegate

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

Local Church

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

Lack of commitment and selfishness of all People and not keeping the pledges we make as Christians. We have all of the opportunities that we can believe and have the faith to follow through. We must do it as a group and not be individuals.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

John Reimer

2253 Frontier Road, Galva, KS 67443

620-654-3188

McPherson FUMC

White

jandjreim@att.net

Hutchinson District

Male

Age: 75



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I have attended many Annual Conferences as a delegate due to being UMM Conference President, as a Lay Member from my church and as an observer. I have often considered trying to be a delegate to a General or Jurisdictional Conference. I have been in both the Kansas East and Kansas West Annual Conferences and believe I have a good background to represent the Great Plains Conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I have been involved since 1985 with the UMC when we joined the Shawnee Heights UMC. I have served in many of the local church areas. I served eight years on the Conference Committee on the Episcopacy. Was Lay Member to Annual Conference. Served on Conference Committee on Camping, served as local, District and Conference President of United Methodist Men in the Kansas East Conference and treasurer for the Kansas West Conference UMM after moving to the Kansas West area. As president of the Conference UMM I was automatically on several conference committees. I am now serving as the local president of McPherson FUMC UMM. I have always been intentional in fulfilling the responsibility of any church office I have held. It was my privilege to be president of the Board for forming a successful preschool and served on the Board for several years. I also completed the Disciple Bible study and was on the Walk to Emmaus. I served on a number of Emmaus walks and was chairperson of the Sunflower Walk to Emmaus Board of Directors.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

I believe we are faced with unique challenges as we try to reach out to the ever growing number of unchurched. We cannot be like a ship at sea without a rudder and sail to and fro. I believe we need spiritual guidance for each level of membership (new to long time committed Christians). We have placed a lot of emphasis on youth ministries which is needed but the church is in a situation where we are finding United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men are rapidly becoming a historical relic. These used to be the mainstay of the church. The biggest challenge is how to encourage commitment to the church.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Harrietta Reynolds

1514 N 12th St., Beatrice, NE 68310

308-940-0147

Beatrice Centenary

Caucasian

hreynolds@epworthvillage.org

Blue River District

Female Age: 65+



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I would use this opportunity to be a voice for the very ones Jesus reached out to; those vulnerable ones among us and around the world who are left out and do not know themselves to be loved and a child of God. The church of Jesus Christ is alive and not buildings, plush surroundings, ease and plenty. I would use every opportunity to ensure that “all God’s children (and creatures) get a place in the choir!”

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

*Baptized at 16, accepted and have grown to know God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Have been an active member throughout my life. *Pastor’s spouse at 22. *Commissioned as a United Methodist Missionary in 1977. *Served in 8 states and the Virgin Islands - United Methodist agencies. *Serve in leadership roles on every level - from the local church to the National level - General Board of Global Ministries.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The UMC has opportunities “galore” to reach out in the name and spirit of Christ to a broken world. Broken nearby and around the globe. The challenges include: 1.) How do we reach out? 2.) How do we see and realize ourselves as individuals and the connected United Methodists to be the hands, feet, and heart of Christ - today right where we live? 3.) How do we become a “servant church?” 4.) How do we use our wealth, skills, gifts to reach out to a hungry hurting world? 5.) What is involved in “taking up our cross?”

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Elvin (El) Siebert

3215 Belvedere Blvd., Omaha, NE 68111

402-453-9088

St. Paul Methodist - Omaha

Caucasian

elsiebert@cox.net

Missouri River District

Male Age: 76



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I am an active member of the Methodist church since 1971. I follow, study and review our statements of faith and practices. These statements and practices are then voted on by the delegates at General Conference. I want to be a part of that process.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I attend St. Paul Church in Omaha and participate as a choir member, Stephens Ministry, United Methodist Men, Sunday School and Mercy and Justice committee. I participate in a book study group at a coffee and book store. I visit Methodist churches wherever I camp during summer months. I represented the Nebraska Conference, one time, at the Ecumenical Advocacy Conference in Washington D.C. I attend laity workshops and am a lay servant.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

1. How do we represent Jesus Christ to our members and the public in ways that will invite them to participate? 2. How do we deal with the issues of present day? In example, immigration, gay and civil marriages, homosexuality, climate change, death penalty, racial and religious injustice. 3. The Methodist Church has a big umbrella with a focus on the love of Christ.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Sandy Simmons

2412 Spring Garden, Leavenworth, KS 66048
913.306.2000
Leavenworth First United Methodist
caucasian

ssimmons7@kc.rr.com
Kansas City District
Female Age: 60-70



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I feel this is the right time for me to offer my voice and passion to help make a positive impact on the future of our denomination. Being a member of the Great Plains Conference delegation, with its unlimited potential, would provide this opportunity. I feel I have the skills needed to be part of a large decision-making body as we move into the next four years! I know we have much work to do, and I would be honored to help formulate our plan of action. I believe the laity voice from our local congregations is critical to the work of the United Methodist Church.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

LOCAL: After being asked by my then six-year-old why we didn't go to church I took my first step into church at age 40. And she is now clergy. Thus began my spiritual journey at Leavenworth First UMC. I have served my local church in many ways. I was UMW President for six years and a member of the Education Committee. I also served as the Co-Chair of a major Stewardship Campaign Committee for our 500+ member church. My first BIG leadership role came when I served as Chair of the Board of Trustees for four years. What an education that was! I learned SO much about facilities, finance and people. I treasure those years on Trustees; it's a great place to serve and learn. But when I was elected as Chair of our Mission/Outreach team about eight years ago, I found my true 'calling'! During my time on Mission we have established an Advance Covenant Relationship with missionary Helen Sheperd, worked on five local Habitat for Humanity homes, and raised \$10,000 yearly for our local Backpack Buddies program that feeds 700 local children each weekend. I serve as the community Co-chair (Volunteer Coordinator) for that organization which is a joint effort of twenty-four churches working together to raise almost \$100,000 annually. Through our Mission Team, the congregation has become involved in a "Free Community Meals" program with about twenty others churches that provides a meal three times a week, serving an average of 350 per meal. I serve on the Steering Committee for Community Meals, and our church provides a meal each month as part of the program. We have also partnered recently with several other local churches in opening the Leavenworth Interfaith Shelter of Hope, which is a low-barrier overnight facility for the homeless in our community. Our church has 28 volunteers working at the shelter. I am serving on the Advisory Committee of the shelter. It is exciting to see our congregation embrace so many new outreach programs, and to be involved beyond our own walls, where we can truly make a difference for those in need! **DISTRICT:** I began serving on the District Committee on Ministry five years ago, at the request of our District Superintendent, and that opened a whole new world of Methodism to me! What an honor to be there at the start of each candidate's journey through the process, following their call to ministry. I enjoy serving and have learned a great deal about the work of the UMC through my involvement. **CONFERENCE:** Three years ago I was asked to serve on the Kansas East Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The following year we became the Great Plains Annual Conference and I was appointed by the Bishop to serve on the newly created Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) and am currently serving my second year as Laity member/Recording Secretary of the Board. Working with the Board has been some of the most rewarding work I have ever done in my life (second only, perhaps, to the 41 years I spent as a public school educator)! Being part of the final phase of each candidate's journey is an incredible experience. It is so affirming to see the quality of candidates who will lead our denomination into the future. It gives me great hope!

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

I believe our opportunities are limitless, our challenges great. We must continue our good works, but also move forward to embrace today's changing world. I feel we must become more inclusive and change our Disciplinary language to rid ourselves of discrimination in all forms, and we must continue to push ourselves to focus externally, not internally! I believe two areas of great opportunity are 'Clergy Excellence' and 'Mercy and Justice'. We MUST help shepherd our new clergy and support them as they pursue their call to ministry. Helping them become successful and fulfilled will strengthen each church and every member of the congregations they lead. We need to continue to involve ourselves in the candidates' long and demanding journey by refining/reforming the process. The path to living out their call must become more efficient for everyone involved. We must continue to support, follow and walk with them throughout their time in ministry and beyond! As we continue to challenge ourselves to become more outwardly focused, we are obligated as both Christians and Methodists to provide innovative, sustainable programs to improve life for the hungry, homeless, poor and marginalized in our communities and beyond! We have both a challenge and an opportunity to make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Brian Sutton

551 N. Terrace Drive, Wichita, KS 67208

316.683.4643

College Hill

White

brian.sutton@collegehillumc.org

Wichita East District

Male

Age: 50



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

I have been a part of the United Methodist Church since I was born. Growing up playing the piano and singing in the small Culver United Methodist Church, attending Kansas Wesleyan University and then for the past 25 years working in the United Methodist Church. John Wesley believed in inviting people to experience God's grace through Christian living by putting faith and love into action. As a United Methodist I want to represent the Great Plains Conference as someone who believes in putting faith into action and to continue to encourage and push the church to "Open their Hearts, Open their Minds, Open their Doors." It would be an honor to serve as a delegate of the Great Plains Annual Conference.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

As I said, I have been involved in the United Methodist Church my whole life. Here are some of the churches, boards and agencies I have served. Culver UMC – Pianist – 4 years (volunteer); Minneapolis UMC – Choir Director 2 years (part-time during college); Larned UMC – Choir Director and Youth Minister – 2 years; Trinity UMC, Salina, KS. – Director of Youth Ministries – 8 years; Kansas West Conference Office, Wichita, KS. – Asst. Dir. Of Youth, Young Adults and Camping Ministries – 7 years; College Hill UMC, Wichita, KS. – Director of Youth Ministries and Community Life, - 8 years; Perkins School of Youth Ministry, Dallas, TX. – Teacher and Board of Directors – 5 years; General and Jurisdictional Delegate 2008; General Board of Discipleship, Young People's Ministries, Nashville, TN. – 4 years; South Central Jurisdiction Mission Council – Vice President – 4 years; South Central Jurisdiction Mission Council – President – 4 years; Lydia Patterson Institute, El Paso, TX. – Board of Directors – 4 years; and Mount Sequoyah, Fayetteville, AR. – Board of Directors – 4 years

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

I believe one of the biggest opportunities facing the United Methodist Church is to be relevant and to engage the culture. If we are going to engage youth and young adults, the UMC must be relevant and understand that we live in a world that is changing every day. If we want to reach people for Jesus Christ and make disciples, our methods must change and grow, but our message stays the same. William Ralph Inge said "A church that marries the spirit of an age, becomes the widow of the next generation." We have an opportunity to be relevant, I hope we will. The United Methodist Church has been challenged for many years with the inclusion of our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender members and friends. We must find a way forward that honors and includes all in our church. There are several ways being introduced by many different churches, groups, agencies and individuals. There will be a lot to consider, but I believe until one and all are welcomed, included and celebrated in our church, we cannot be whole. One more opportunity I think the United Methodist Church has, is to teach people what it means to grow spiritually. It's about letting God change us and allowing God into all of our lives, not just Sunday mornings. It's about creating time and space for people to be fed spiritually and giving them the opportunities to do it. It's about understanding that our learning never ends.

Laity Delegate Profile

2015 Great Plains Annual Conference

Brian Young

2015 L St., Belleville, KS 66935

785-955-0594

United Methodist Church

White

eaglec42@yahoo.com

Salina District

Male Age: 51



Describe your interest in representing the Great Plains Conference as a delegate:

To see how the conference work and get more in lay speaking.

Describe your involvement in the United Methodist Church (include local church, district, conference, and general agency/board involvement):

I took the basic lay speaking course. On the leadership team and trustee team. Plus I teach Sunday School.

Describe the challenges and opportunities for the United Methodist Church today:

The main challenge is keeping young adult in church.