

Information and Formatting Instructions for Petitions to The General Conference of The United Methodist Church

An organization, clergy member or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference (¶1507, The Book of Discipline 2016)

General Information

What is a “Petition to General Conference”?

A petition is a document sent to General Conference. Petitions are nearly always intended to change the *Book of Discipline* or the *Book of Resolutions*. In rare cases a petition may ask to maintain something already written in one of these books. Most of the time, though, a petition seeks to revise church laws and/or policies. *Please note: even a proposed change to the Book of Resolutions is still called a “petition,” not a “resolution”.*

Who can write a petition?

Any member of a United Methodist Church, any United Methodist Clergy, any congregation, or any United Methodist group may submit a petition to General Conference. Annual Conference may also receive petitions to future General Conferences. This can happen when a person or group from the list above submits a petition to the Annual Conference Session and the Conference votes to send it.

How do I get my petition to the Annual Conference so they can vote to send it to the 2024 General Conference, scheduled for April 23 – May 3, 2024, at Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina?

The petition should be sent to the Conference Secretary via email. The author or someone the author selects may present it to the Annual Conference session for a vote. Petitions put forward by an individual instead of a group must have 10 signatures of clergy or lay members of the current Annual Conference.

Petitions should use the right format and follow all other rules for petitions. Send the petition to Rev. Candace Barron at candace.barron@arumc.org by April 1, 2023. Pursuant to changes to Par. 208.1 of our Conference’s Standing Rules as adopted at Annual Conference 2021 all resolutions and petitions must be included in the Pre-Conference Journal to be considered by the Annual Conference Session. The deadline for submission of Resolutions and petitions is April 1. Because the General Conference will want us to submit all petitions digitally, we ask that all petitions to be voted on at Annual Conference be sent to this email address in digital format.

It is the goal of the officers of the Conference to help you ensure your voice is heard. We are at your service as you navigate this process. The formatting rules and other rules for creating a petition are complicated. Please strongly consider sending your petition well before the April 1 deadline in order to receive all the assistance you need.

What does it mean to say a petition has or does not have “General Church Budget Implications”?

A petition that causes the need of increased funding (i.e. creation of new program, staff position, requirements of support work by staff, etc.) through the General church apportionment has “General Church Budget Implications” for the procedural purposes of General Conference. This requires a review by the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) to verify if the funding has already been included under the recommended quadrennial budget or if this requires new funding not currently in the proposed quadrennial budget. A petition that does not cause the need of funding, or that causes the need of funding from some other source (local congregation, district, annual conference, jurisdiction, etc.) than General church apportionment does not have General Church Budget Implications”.

What does it mean to say a petition has or does not have “Global Implications”?

A petition that causes a change to The Book of Discipline or The Book of Resolutions or otherwise takes some action or position for the entire denomination has “Global Implications” if it:

- o Is a constitutional amendment
- o Has a direct effect on the global work of general boards, councils, or agencies
- o Places requirements or expectations on all annual conferences, districts, or churches regardless of whether they are located in jurisdictions or central conferences
- o Speaks to universal societal concerns, regardless of the particular form of secular government or cultural differences

Tips to Keep in Mind

- Petitions deal with one paragraph of the *Discipline*. Sometimes changing one paragraph means others must be changed, and that is the only reason more than one paragraph can be changed.
- Many petitions are sent to General Conference. The number of petitions that will come up for vote is generally narrowed down. It is still possible it will be heard, not heard, or it might be amended in some way.
- Disciplinary and Resolution petitions must address material contained in the current *Book of Discipline* or *Book of Resolutions*, including any errata or addendum published by the United Methodist Publishing House. Earlier editions of either book may not be used. Non-Disciplinary petitions propose an action of the General Conference, but do not propose a change to either book.
- Due to the passage of legislative material by the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, an addendum may be found at <https://www.umofficialresources.com/updates>. These paragraphs replace what is printed in *The Book of Discipline 2016*. Petitions related to these paragraphs must reference the material in the Addendum. The Errata (corrections) for *The Book of Discipline 2016* are included at the end of the Addendum document and should also be considered in petition texts.

Formatting Instructions

1. All petitions should be submitted digitally by e-mail, USB drive, or through the General Conference website following the format below. Typed petitions without digital media will not be accepted. Handwritten or hand printed submissions will not be accepted.

2. Petitions must be typed, double-spaced. Microsoft Word files (.doc, .docx, .rtf) or any other software that allows files to be saved as rich-text format (.rtf) may be used. **Do not submit PDF (.pdf) or JPEG (.jpg) files.** 3. **Do not use “Track changes” at any point in the preparation of a submitted petition document. If the feature is used in the early stages of petition preparation by a group, the submitted document should be re-typed as a “clean” copy, not using “cut and paste” from the original document.**
3. Each petition must address only one issue if the Discipline is not affected; if the Discipline is affected each petition must address only one paragraph of the Discipline, except that, if two or more paragraphs in the Discipline are so closely related that a change in one affects the others, the petition may call for the amendment of those paragraphs also to make them consistent with one another. (§507.2, *The Book of Discipline 2016*)
4. State desired action, i.e. “Amend ¶ ____”; “Add new sub-paragraph after “¶ ____”; “Delete ¶ ____ and substitute the following...” “Add new paragraph...”; “Amend Resolution # ____”; etc.
5. Use single underline for proposed additions and strike-through for proposed deletions.
6. Do not use subscript or superscript, as is commonly used for footnotes and endnotes. Instead of footnotes and endnotes, use in-text citations as illustrated in the quote from *The Book of Discipline 2016* above.
7. The **top of the first page** of the petition (not every page) should read as follows:
Total Number of Pages:
Suggested Title: (i.e. “Establish Quorum”)
Discipline Paragraph or Resolution Number, if applicable: (i.e. “Discipline ¶506” or Resolution #42”)
General Church Budget Implications: (i.e. “None” “Needs New Funding” or “Needs a Budget Increase”)
Global Implications: (i.e. “None” or “Yes”)
8. The **bottom of the final page** of the petition (not every page) should include:
Date:
Signature of the Petitioner:
Identification of the Petitioner: (i.e. “Member of UMC”; “Secretary of _____ Annual Conference”; etc.)
Phone:
City, State, Province, Country:
E-mail Address:
9. The requirements of #7 and #8 above still apply if submitting through the GC2024 website and completing the required submitter information form. Do not use the header/footer feature to accomplish #7 and #8.
10. “Each petition must be signed by the person submitting it accompanied by appropriate identification such as address, local church, or United Methodist board or agency relationship.” Telephone numbers must also be included. Each petition submitted by fax or electronic mail must identify the individual submitting it accompanied by identification as above, and must

contain a valid digital electronic mail return address or return fax number by which the submitter can be reached. Electronic signatures will be accepted in accordance with common business practice.” (§507.3, *The Book of Discipline 2016*)

Supporting Material

1. Anticipated financial requirements are to be included as an appendix to the petition text and should follow the final page of the petition text in the petition text document.

“All petitions submitted to the General Conference except those submitted by individual members of The United Methodist Church and local church groups, which call for the establishment of new programs or the expansion of existing programs will be invalid unless accompanied by supporting data that address the issue of anticipated financial requirements of the program.” (§507.4, *The Book of Discipline 2016*)

2. Submitter may submit a rationale supporting the petition. Should the rationale be longer than the fifty (50) word limit, only the first fifty words will be printed in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate (ADCA) or available through the online legislation tracking website. The rationale is to be submitted as a separate text file and should not be included in the petition text file.

For questions or concerns, email the Conference Secretary at Candace.barron@arumc.org