



## 2022 Jurisdictional and Central Conferences Episcopal Elections Compiled Monitoring Report

The United Methodist Book of Discipline mandates responsibilities to the [General Commission on the Status and Role of Women \(GCSRW\)](#). Among those is the responsibility to monitor conferences for gender inclusion and report findings back to the conferences and to The United Methodist Church. The goal of monitoring is to help the denomination, its members, and leaders to hold the most inclusive sessions possible, where every voice is respected and given an opportunity to be heard.

Monitoring is meant to be a process where an outside observer notes dynamics of the conference and reports back to the Church. In that reporting, we celebrate where we model beloved community, take note of where and how improvements may be made, and become more aware of our conduct toward one another.

GCSRW has developed a standardized form for monitoring conferences and trains all monitors to note participation and leadership using these standard parameters. This form is available as a resource for annual conferences to use in their sessions.

This report highlights the five jurisdictional conferences in the United States and the Philippines Central Conference. As GCSRW receives information from other Central Conferences we will update this report.

Positive aspects and celebrations as well as challenges and suggestions for growth are listed below.

### Positives Aspects and Celebrations

#### *Across all Jurisdictional and Central Conferences*

- With few exceptions, planned worship and presentations cared for creating and encouraging diversity in a wide range of areas – including gender, race and ethnicity, worship styles, musical styles, and participation of leaders, speakers, and preachers.
- Wide range of participation in plenary sessions, with the notable exception of the presence of youth delegates.

#### *North Central Jurisdiction*

- Bishops requested people identify themselves as laity or clergy and the conference they were a member of after monitors pointed out the need for clearer identification.
- Racial diversity consistently demonstrated at leadership table.

### *Northeast Jurisdiction*

- Wide range of participation was consistent throughout conference – including laity and clergy, gender diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, and ages (except youth).
- Worship demonstrated inclusivity of music leadership and inclusive language in songs/hymns.
- The conference passed a resolution to provide and fund the cost of childcare at all jurisdictional events.

### *Philippines Central Conference*

- For the first time in its history, the Philippines Central Conference elected a female (Bishop Ruby-Nell Estrella) to the Episcopacy.
- Leaders and delegates demonstrated self-monitoring by regularly expressing concern and care for equally representing the three Episcopal areas among conference leadership, committees, Episcopal candidates, etc.
- The conference offered hospitality to all attendees and helped participants clearly understand the roles of all participants – including seating areas, voting procedures, and allowing for Episcopal nominations from the floor of the conference.

### *South Central Jurisdiction*

- Male, female, and non-binary voices heard and respected throughout plenary sessions.
- Openness to address questions to bishops and for bishops to receive and respond to questions.
- Confidential voting format used throughout conference.

### *Southeast Jurisdiction*

- Gender of presenters and participants in floor discussions was evenly balanced.
- The conference created a task force to fully examine and alleviate racism and bias in the Episcopal election process.

### *Western Jurisdiction*

- Participants had a high awareness of the need to self-monitor and showed corrective conversation and behavior, including paying special attention to all voices – even when some needed more encouragement to speak.
- Hospitality and orientation were well-designed to ensure all delegates and guests understood logistics and how to request assistance if needed.
- Conference leadership demonstrated diversity in gender, ethnicity, and lay/clergy status – even helping delegates to learn pronunciation of people's names.

## Challenges and Suggestions

### *Across all Jurisdictional and Central Conferences*

- Require all speakers to identify themselves when speaking – general lack to identify status and conference membership.
- A few requests were made for “standing votes” when not all delegates were able to stand.

### *North Central Jurisdiction*

- Leadership table referred to the “gals” on the technical team when help was needed with voting machines – said respectfully, but better terminology could be used.
- All plenary sessions except one had a male bishop presiding. When the female bishop presided, she was questioned repeatedly and asked the same questions repeatedly. Most of these questions were posed by male participants. This level of questioning was not observed when male bishops presided.
- Worship leadership could visibly include more deacons, particularly in filling traditional deacons’ responsibilities – such as assisting at the communion table, reading the Gospel passage, and during the sending forth (deacon)/blessing (elder) portions of the benediction.

### *Northeast Jurisdiction*

- Closed captioning was sometimes difficult to read from the back of the room. However, on the second day attempts were made to make the wording more visible and readable for everyone.
- During the conference, the election process helped to highlight the intersectionality between racism and sexism. Continued work on the intersectionality of oppression must be addressed for the church to continue living into the beloved community God calls the Church to be.

### *Philippines Central Conference*

- English was the dominant language and was oftentimes spoken rapidly. Some delegates who were not as comfortable speaking English may have needed additional time to mentally translate and be able to participate in the conversation.
- Most often speaking roles in worship were divided between clergy men and lay women, with fewer clergy women or lay men involved.

### *South Central Jurisdiction*

- Opening worship leadership was all male, and language predominantly referenced God as male.
- Percentage of speakers during plenary session who are people of color was low.
- There were a couple instances of insensitive comments made at the microphone regarding persons with disabilities and challenges.

### *Southeast Jurisdiction*

- Presenters were more balanced toward laity, and those participating in floor discussions were weighted toward clergy and white contributors.
- Facilitation of schedule and process did not fully respect the LGBTQIA+ community and young adult panel participants.
- There was a lack of reporting regarding monitoring to the body, which hindered developing self-awareness and building the beloved community.

### *Western Jurisdiction*

- Accommodation – there were times when the group needed to be reminded to clear a path, provide a handheld microphone, or refrain from using “standup votes”. Changes were made when pointed out, but this could be better addressed during conference planning.
- Youth and young adult leadership did not reflect parity of youth and young adult participants and delegates (About 33% of delegates were under age 40. Only one key leader at the conference was under age 40).

**The numbers and percentages of female and male bishops serving across the denomination, in each Central Conference, and in each Jurisdiction are [available here](#).**

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women offers this report to The United Methodist Church as one way to reflect our commitment to diversity, welcoming and including all, and building God’s beloved community across the denomination.

### ***About the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women***

*The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women advocates for full participation of women in the total life of The United Methodist Church. GCSRW helps the church recognize every person – clergy and lay, women and men, adults and children – as full and equal parts of God’s human family. They believe that a fully engaged and empowered membership is vital to The United Methodist Church’s mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Learn more at [GCSRW.org](http://GCSRW.org).*