

## 2008 General Conference Delegate Survey

Prepared by the Connectional Table and  
The General Council on Finance and Administration, Office of Analysis and Research

**“Becoming a Global Church”** is the most important issue facing General Conference according to delegates who participated in a survey by the Connectional Table and the General Council on Finance and Administration. Denominational identity/unity, homosexuality/human sexuality, the church budget/finances, and the clergy ordination process rounded out the top five issues for General Conference.

The 2008 General Conference Delegate Survey marks several firsts in the history of the survey. It is the first year the survey has been made available online and the first time that central conference delegates have the opportunity to participate. Survey responses were provided by 454 jurisdictional delegates and 116 central conference delegates.

Survey data indicates:

- Nearly 43% of respondents are attending General Conference for the first time, while nearly 19% have attended 3 or more conferences.
- Approximately 29% of respondents are taking vacation time from work to attend General Conference: 39% of lay respondents are taking vacation.
- Over 37% of respondents attend a church with 1,000 or more members, while 17% attend a church with fewer than 200 members.
- Nearly 90% of respondents have been members of the UMC for more than 20 years; over 74% have been life-long UMC members. Among respondents who are not life-long members, more come from the Baptist tradition than any other religious affiliation.
- Over 38% of respondents believe the UMC has ideas, but no clear vision, goals or direction. More than half believe the UMC is always ready to try something new: 71% of respondents are excited about the future of the UMC.
- While 65% of all respondents have a good idea of where they stand on issues, nearly 75% of all respondents expect to learn more at General Conference; over 81% plan to study the issues and vote their conscience.
- Half of respondents regularly tithe 10% or more of gross income; an additional 26% regularly tithe 10% or more of net income.
- Approximately 33% of respondents believe they were elected because of their specific opinions on key issues, while over 83% believe they were elected because of their leadership skills, knowledge and experience in the UMC.

The full report will be available after General Conference through the General Council of Finance and Administration's Office of Analysis and Research. For more information contact [research@gcfa.org](mailto:research@gcfa.org).

## Major Issues Identified by Survey Respondents

<b>Most important issues facing the 2008 General Conference</b>		
<b>2008</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2000</b>
Becoming a Global Church	Church Finances	Connectional Process Team/Restructuring
Denominational Identity/Unity	Homosexuality	Homosexuality
Homosexuality/Human Sexuality	Restructuring	Church Finances
Budget/Church Finance	Diversity/Inclusivity	Evangelism/Missions
Clergy Ordination Process	Membership Loss	Diversity/Inclusivity

<b>Most important societal issues facing the UMC</b>		
<b>2008</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2000</b>
Hunger/Poverty	Homosexuality	Hunger/Poverty
Homosexuality/Human Sexuality	War/Violence	Homosexuality
Global Health/Healthcare	Racism	Racism
War and Peace	Poverty	Violence
Diversity/Inclusivity	Engaging a Changing World	Abortion

<b>Most important denominational issues facing the UMC</b>		
<b>2008</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2000</b>
Denominational Identity/Unity	Church Finances	Homosexuality
Declining US Membership	Homosexuality	Church Finances
Becoming a Global Church	Church Restructuring	Evangelism
Evangelism/Making Disciples	Membership Loss	Restructuring
Structure/Polity	Denominational Unity	The Church's Mission

### Total household income by General Conference year with US comparisons (US respondents only)

Total Household Income	US Population 2006*	2008 General Conference		US Population 2004*	2004 General Conference	
		Lay	Clergy		Lay	Clergy
Below \$50,000	51%	18%	8%	55%	24%	6%
\$50,000-99,999	31%	38%	39%	30%	43%	58%
\$100,000 or more	18%	44%	53%	15%	35%	36%

*\*Source: US Census Bureau, 2004 and 2006 American Community Surveys  
(Note: 2004 and 2006 dollar values are not adjusted for inflation)*

## Church Size Attended by Respondent UMC stats comparison

Church Size (Members)	Respondents	% of UMC Churches*	% of UMC Membership*
1-199	16.67%	68.86%	23.96%
200-499	25.27%	20.65%	27.75%
500-999	21.06%	7.16%	21.05%
1000 or more	37.00%	3.33%	27.24%

*\*Source: General Council on Finance and Administration, 2006 Local Church Statistics (US only)*

## Community Size by Respondent

Community Size	Respondents
Rural or open country	9.77%
In or around a town or village of less than 10,000	12.79%
In or around a city of 10,000 to 49,999	22.38%
In or around a city of 50,000 to 249,999	26.11%
In or around a city of 250,000 or more	28.95%

## Age Group of Respondents

Age Group (as of 2008 birthday)	Respondents
Under 30 years	4.69%
30-39 years	3.43%
40-49 years	20.04%
50-59 years	36.64%
60+ years	35.20%

## Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

Race and Ethnicity	Respondents
Asian or Asian American	4.10%
African American, Black, African	23.71%
Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish origin	2.32%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.07%
Pacific Islander	0.00%
White/Caucasian	67.38%
Multi-racial	0.36%
Other race	1.07%