

Mark Holland

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Delegate # 2021

What has been your involvement in The United Methodist Church (include district, conference, and general agency/board involvement)?

I have been an alternate or delegate to Jurisdictional and General Conference in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2019. I have been a vocal advocate for full inclusion of LGBTQ clergy and for same-gender weddings in our churches. I made the motion at the 2016 General Conference asking the Bishops to lead us in a Way Forward on human sexuality.

1996-1999 Pastor at Elwood Community Church & Wathena United Methodist Church

1999-2018 Pastor at Trinity Community Church, A United Methodist Congregation, Kansas City, Kansas

2018-present Co-Founder & Executive Director, Mainstream UMC

Our work at Mainstream UMC was primarily to support the One Church Plan that the Bishops recommended. Moving forward we will work for a new path for full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the church.

Why would you like to be considered for election as a delegate?

I would like to continue the work that we have undertaken since 2016 in thinking about new ways to be the church. The One Church Plan offered a path where conservative churches could be conservative, and progressive churches could be progressive. This plan required a foundational willingness to serve in a church with others with whom we disagree. The U.S. delegates voted more than 2/3 in favor of the One Church Plan. More than 80% of the delegates outside of the U.S. imposed the Traditional Plan on all of us. We need to work towards a structural separation that allows all of us to be in mission and ministry around the world and for each of us to be effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in our own setting.

What unique skills, knowledge, and /or gifts would you bring to the delegation?

I am a founding member of the One Church Coalition that included Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists, Reconciling Ministries Network, and Methodists for Social Action. We coordinated our efforts over six months to pass the One Church Plan. We also worked the legislative strategy on the floor of General Conference 2019. While we were not able to pass the One Church Plan, we effectively filibustered the Traditional Plan so it would pass without the constitutional fixes required by the Judicial Council. This group is still working together to bring about the needed change in our denomination to allow the U.S. church to be tolerant of differences.

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In light of the 2019 special session of General Conference, how do you believe the church is called to move forward in fulfilling its mission?

The core issue is two-thirds of the U.S. church is willing to live with theological differences between churches and conferences. Another one-third of the U.S. and most of the international church insist on imposing a uniform, conservative view on everyone. Since we cannot tolerate differences, we must find a structural separation to allow all of us to be effective.

What do you believe are the challenges and opportunities facing The United Methodist Church today?

The United Methodist Church is at a generational crossroads. The crossroads is not about homosexuality, it is about grace. Are we willing to live with those with whom we disagree? I vote yes! The role of the church is not about enforcing Biblical purity. The role of the church is about inviting people into a saving/healing relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to emphasize the “inviting” over the “enforcing.” We need a delegation from the Great Plains that is willing to continue to push for graceful inclusion of all.