

Roy Koech

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Gender: Male

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Delegate # **129**

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

My involvement in the local church has been centered around volunteer roles, such as Vacation Bible School. My involvement in the conference began with attending Camp Comeca, Chrysalis, and Youth Annual Conference back in the Nebraska Conference days. I then attended Annual Conference as a youth delegate in both 2013 and 2014, and in 2017 I served as a Micah Corps intern and had the opportunity to attend Exploration in Portland, Oregon. In 2018 I served as an Ethnic Young Adult intern with the General Board of Church and Society, and I also attended the Global Young People's Convocation in Johannesburg, South Africa, as a voting delegate for the South Central Jurisdiction. In August of 2019, I will begin my term as a Global Mission Fellow, US-2, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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

I would like to be considered for election because, like many others, I am very passionate about the church. I am also interested because we will not just be discussing "challenges," we will be discussing people's lives. When we discuss our relationship with the LGBT community, immigration, pensions, or even our UMC affiliated colleges and universities, real people are affected by our words. These real people are my brothers and sisters, just as they are also me. I would like to speak for all of us who are considered "challenges" and have been previously spoken of as though we are not already an integral part of the church.

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

I come from many backgrounds — I am a 22-year-old natural-born Kenyan, a child raised by the many African aunts and uncles in the metaphorical village we have here in the Great Plains. I have lived in towns that are 1,000 people strong (Chappell, Nebraska) as well as 700,000 (Washington, D.C.). I have found my way by working on ranches, in grocery stores, and in office buildings. I have met with United Methodists from around the Great Plains in their home churches, and from around the world in many different settings. These experiences, which I find to be unique, allow me to readily put myself in other people's shoes, to be patient and understand that not everyone comes from the same background as me. I believe there are two things needed in the 2020 General Conference: representation and understanding. I am ready to bring both.

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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?

I believe that the church is, first and foremost, called to be a beacon of love, and that is how it should move forward. Throughout the history of the church, it has served as a safe place. It has provided education, stability, peace of mind, and refuge to many. Unfortunately, the church and the trust that it garners have also been used in negative ways, resulting in many being hurt mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This is an opportunity for the church to further separate itself from that negative history, to establish itself as a place of love for all. “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.” should not just be our slogan, it should be our truth.

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

One of the challenges facing the church today is the influence of those who are not actually in our church. It is easy to listen to those who are only saying things that reaffirm our private beliefs, making it difficult to hear our brothers and sisters who may have differing opinions and ideologies. It is essential that we open our hearts for discussion, regardless of the issue and the side that we take. Another challenge is the lack of representation of youth and young adults in the church. It has been noted that many young voices are not being heard, but I am telling you that we are here and ready to speak. Perhaps that is the church's biggest opportunity — the young people are ready, willing, and able.