



Frequently Asked Questions About the Special Session of Annual Conference

When and Where is this Special Session of Annual Conference?

The Michigan Annual Conference will meet in special session on Saturday March 7, 2020 at Goodrich Chapel on the campus of Albion College, in Albion, Michigan from 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Who are the members of this session of Annual Conference?

The members of this session of the Michigan Annual Conference will be all the clergy members of the conference along with the lay members or alternates who were last seated at the 2019 Annual Conference. If members elected by local churches or chosen by districts through the Board of Laity are unable or unavailable to attend, churches and districts may elect other persons to serve (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* ¶1602.5).

What is the purpose of the special session?

The sole purpose of this session of the Michigan Annual Conference will be to consider whether the Michigan Conference will send the legislation based on the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation to General Conference 2020 so that it might be considered by the delegates to the General Conference. The precise language of the petition to be voted upon will be released the week of February 17. No other business will be permitted at this session of annual conference.

Why is such action necessary?

By the rules of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, legislative petitions for General Conference must be received 230 days prior to General Conference. However, “exceptions to the time limitations shall be granted for petitions originating from an annual conference held between 230 and 45 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference” (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* ¶1507.6). The only way to ensure that legislation based on the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation will be considered by the delegates to General Conference is by having that legislation submitted by an annual conference or conferences. If the Michigan Conference approves the petition sending all the Protocol legislation to General Conference, that legislation will be debated, amended, and voted upon at General Conference.

What is the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation and why might Michigan want to forward its legislation to General Conference?

The Protocol was a negotiated proposal put forward by a carefully selected group of United Methodists working with a professional mediator. The group was diverse geographically, theologically, and socially. The Protocol proposes a separation as the means for moving through our long and increasing acrimonious debate about how LGBTQ persons will be included in The United Methodist Church. Given this background it seems that such a proposal would be worth consideration by the delegates to General Conference. Our conference rules provide that General Conference petitions are to be considered without amendment, allowing this legislation to be sent to the General Conference as it was written by the negotiating team. We are deciding whether or not to forward this legislation in order to aid the General Conference in its work.



Michigan Conference

The United Methodist Church

What authority does the bishop have to call a special session of annual conference?

A special session of the annual conference may be called by the bishop “with the concurrence of three-fourths of the district superintendents” and “shall have only such powers as are stated in the call” (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶603.5). Prior to calling for the special session, Bishop Bard consulted with conference leaders and with persons within the conference with diverse viewpoints on how LGBTQ persons might be included in the church. There seems broad support for the idea that the Michigan Annual Conference would serve the denomination by considering sending the Protocol legislation to General Conference.

Why Albion College as a location?

The Bishop, working with Conference staff and members of the Commission on Annual Conference Session explored approximately fifty sites. While a site more geographically central to the Conference was a high priority, no such sites were available or feasible when needed. Albion College, a United Methodist-related institution, is graciously offering us the space to meet.

Why can't this be done electronically, or why can't we have some remote locations?

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church defines a quorum as “members present and voting.” While Bishop Bard would have liked to have offered electronic meeting options for this special session, it is not clear that such a vote would be accepted, and this matter seemed too important to risk having the voting disqualified. We will live stream the conference so that those who are interested may watch.

What are some of the basic things I need to know?

- Registration for the special session will open on Monday, February 10, 2020 and closes on Monday, March 2, 2020.
- **Everyone must register online.** No on-site registration will be available. No late registration is possible after this three-week registration window.
- Registration and additional information can be found on our website 2020.MichiganUMC.org
- There will be a \$15 registration fee for clergy and lay members elected from churches. The registration fee is paid by the Conference for retired clergy members and lay equalization delegates.
- Members to annual conference will receive priority seating in Goodrich Chapel. Visitors must register in advance and may be observing the session in the connected Wesley Chapel at Albion First United Methodist Church. The event will also be livestreamed on the [Michigan Conference Facebook Page](#).
- Parking will be in college lots and on campus streets. Albion College shuttle vans will provide rides from vehicles to Goodrich Chapel. Early arrival is encouraged. Doors open at 12:30 p.m.
- Onsite childcare is available at Albion First United Methodist Church for member's children ages 6 months – 8 years. Select this during registration for the special session. Plan to arrive early to complete emergency contact and medical needs paperwork. Please bring a peanut-free snack for your children.
- Due to the call for the special session, registration for 2020 Annual Conference (May 28 – 31, 2020) will open one week later on Monday, March 9, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.