



**Requests from African Delegates Attending the 2020 General Conference**

4 March 2024

**To:** Ms. Sara Hotchkiss  
Business Manager  
The United Methodist General Conference  
1908 Grand Ave, Nashville, TN 37212  
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**CC:** African College of Bishops, UMC

The Council of Bishops, UMC

Mr. Gary Graves  
General Secretary  
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**From:** Rev. Dr. Jerry Paye-Manfloe Kulah, Head of Delegation, Liberia Episcopal Area  
On behalf of African Delegates attending the 2020 General Conference

Dear Ms. Hotchkiss:

We have the honor to present our compliments, and to thank you, Rev. Gary Greaves, General Secretary of the General Conference, the Commission on General Conference, and all who ably made presentations at the just ended orientation. On behalf of the African delegates to the General Conference, we would like to make the following requests of you, aimed at facilitating our full and active participation in the 2020 General Conference.

**Request for letters of invitation for delegates and alternate delegates.** Please send letters of invitation to African delegates and alternates who are still waiting on you for their letters. This is very urgent if African delegates must be fully represent at the General Conference. We requested of you to kindly send letters of invitation to alternate delegates, you have not done so yet, and time

is running out. In addition, please work with your embassies around Africa to solicit their support in granting American visitor's visas to African delegates and their alternates elected by their annual conferences to participate in the 2020 General Conference taking place in Charlotte, North Carolina, from 23 April to 3 May, 2024.

We are both shocked and dismayed by the massive denial of US Visas to African delegates by some American embassies, including Liberia. This has not happened during past general conferences. For example, the American Embassy near Monrovia has denied more than five official delegates of the Liberia Annual Conference to the 2020 General Conference. Many of them report that the consular did not provide them the opportunity to explain fully the purpose of their visit. Upon hearing that they would be attending the UMC General Conference, the consular asked no further question, but simply denied them. The embassy has also denied some alternate delegates who have attempted sitting interview to attend the General Conference. Some of these delegates have made previous visits to the United States; some have studied there and returned to serve the church. We do not understand what is going on. If this situation continues, many African delegates may not make it to the 2020 General Conference, and this may hinder inclusivity in the deliberations at General Conference. We request for your timely intervention.

**Request for a worship space on Sunday, 28 April 2024.** We would like to request of you a space within the Convention hall of the General Conference to conduct a worship service for as many delegates that would like to attend, including African delegates. Given that, Sunday, 28 April is free on the General Conference Calendar for worship; we would like to experience worship and fellowship with our fellow delegates from around the globe. Thank you in advance.

**Request for African Delegates to purchase their own tickets to General Conference.** We would like to kindly request that, the thirteen episcopal areas within Africa receive from the General Conference funds for tickets so that we purchase our own tickets to the 2020 General Conference, as before. We find that the Commission on General Conference's plan to purchase delegates' tickets, restrict when they arrive into the United States for the General Conference, and when they return to their home countries is very burdensome for many of them, if not all. This is in light of the fact that it takes a minimum of about twenty-six (26) hours for an African, delegate to travel from Africa to the United States. Besides, there are about six to nine hours difference in time change between most African countries and the US. It would therefore be very painful and exhausting for African delegates to compel them to arrive on 18 April and participate in orientation from 19-21 April, before commencing the activities of General Conference on 23 April 2024. If you insist on purchasing tickets for African delegates and compelling them to arrive on 18 April, their participation in the orientation activities and in the General Conference proceedings will be very unproductive.

Therefore we kindly request that you release funds for the purchase of the tickets for African delegates to their episcopal areas. To reduce travel jetlag, we will endeavor to arrive few days before the commencement of the general conference orientation, at our own expense. In addition,

your plan for us to conclude the business of General Conference on 3 May and return to Africa on 4 May would be harmful to our ministry in Africa. By purchasing our own tickets, we will have the opportunity to extend the time of our visit to the United States for about a week or two to visit some of our ministry partners and have some strategic engagements before returning to Africa. We therefore request for your kind reconsideration of your plans to purchase our tickets.

**Kindly provide our daily food stipend, rather than cook for African delegates.** We kindly request that, as before, you provide to African delegates our daily food stipends, instead of taking the burden of cooking for us. Many delegates have raised many dietary and health issues, associated with your plans to cook for African delegates. Some are on medications and maintain highly restricted diet, and would prefer receiving their food stipends and spend it according to their own diet restrictions. We therefore plea with you to kindly discontinue your plans to cook for African delegates, as they will not eat the food you will cook. Instead, give each delegate his or her daily food stipend. We ask for your sensitivity to the dietary needs of African delegates attending the 2020 General Conference.

Your assistance in reviewing and implementing the recommendations above will ensure inclusivity and full participation of African Delegates in the deliberations of the 2020 General Conference, scheduled for 23 April to 3 May 2024. Please be aware that, the strange delay in sending out letters of invitation to many African delegates and alternate delegates is counterproductive to their full participation in the ensuing General Conference. Furthermore, many African delegates consider these new measures by the Commission on General Conference to cook for African delegates, purchase their tickets and restrict the time of their arrival into the United States and departure, following the end of the General Conference, unacceptable. Given these unhealthy arrangements, many African delegates share the impression of a deliberate ploy by the leadership of the General Conference events to be divisive and hinder their full participation. Some also feel a sense racism perpetrated against them, something that should have not place within the connectional polity of the United Methodist Church. We therefore request your timely intervention. Thank you.