

GCORR Equity Monitoring

Report No. 3

“Learning from others, especially people we do not know, is often difficult. We find it easier to give than to receive, to teach than to learn. This changes, however, as we enter the lives of others and come to know them well enough to see their strengths and weaknesses, their needs, and the wealth they have to offer.” Joetta Handrich Schlabach, **Extending the Table: A World Community Cookbook**

Around the world, much is learned in the experience of preparing or sharing a meal with a group of others. When that group is characterized by multiple cultures, languages, ethnic, and tribal identities, the richness of the experience expands. Yet, for those who are used to setting the table, determining the content of the meal, inviting the guests, and setting the rules of etiquette for the gathering, it can be challenging to accept a requested change at their table or to sit comfortably at a table set by someone else.

We were reminded by the official parliamentarian that the “purpose of our rules is to make certain that no one’s rights are violated.” The rules are in essence the etiquette for our global gathering. How leaders utilize the rules can greatly impact the equity of the process and the outcomes of the General Conference. As we acknowledge the extensive efforts and planning that make this gathering possible, there were areas of concern that delegates and participants communicated to us:

- While diversity was visible within Tuesday’s worship, it did not fully reveal the worldwide nature of the UMC at this seminal moment in our history. There were people among us who felt unrepresented, isolated, and unseen.
- An authentic land acknowledgement and official welcome from the historic Indigenous leadership of this land, either the Lumbee Nation or the Catawba Nation, was absent from the opening of General Conference and

viewed as disrespectful by some indigenous members. What acknowledgements need to take place in these settings?

- We received information that a lower percentage of Central Conference delegates that were able to attend General Conference 2024 is even lower than in 2016.

The body of delegates quickly acted on some of these concerns, which may indicate the willingness to learn from one another. A motion was made to amend the Rules by adding a new rule requiring that an Indigenous Person be invited to offer an authentic acknowledgment of land ownership. Following the adoption of the rules another motion was made that in part implored delegates from the United States to practice intentional listening so that voices from Central Conference Delegates would be given equitable opportunities to influence and impact process and content.

On Wednesday, morning we heard from our Youth and Young Adult representatives, Senesie Rogers and Alejandra Salemi. Mr. Rogers commented on the Wesley Quadrilateral as “an applicable art that can help us understand our inclinations towards our various cultural heritages.” Ms. Salemi urged us, when dividing up our assets, to “live outside the boxes of Conference Halls, Zoom Meetings, and Plans” and to seek “the magic of the Holy Spirit...shaking hands, eye to eye, and being in human connection together.”

As we prepare to today, we invite you to consider these questions:

1. What outcomes and expectations are desired from the proposed legislation you will be considering?

2. What factors and forces contribute to the outcomes and expectations?