

## **Laity Nominated by the Council of Bishops:**

Laurie Day (WJ)

Laurie Day, lay member of Fremont UMC (Portland, Oregon), earned a bachelor's degree from Willamette (1999), master's degrees from Iliff (2006), and Regis University (2014). She is Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop (Oregon-Idaho) and served in finance and program positions with the Mountain Sky Conference. Laurie's been a missionary on three continents, board member for Church and Society, Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry, and jurisdictional committees.

Laurie understands the importance of context, working in community, and that multiple opinions can be held simultaneously. Her diverse experience and faith will bring a needed perspective to the Judicial Council.

Lidia Romão Gulele (Africa CC)

Lídia Romão Gulele, member of the Southern annual conference of Mozambique,

Elected as the Judicial Council member in 2016

Served on the Commission on Religion and Race before her election in 2016.

As Lawyer and Master in Labor Laws, she is working with disadvantaged people, in the areas of Land, Family, Estate, and Labor Laws at Association of Christian Lawyers, established in Mozambique in three Provinces, and was recommended by the UMC letter.

Worked as Coordinator of Maputo. Now working as Treasurer at the three Provinces and legal Assistance.

Member of the board in Association of Women in Legal Careers.

Raymond Hamill (NEJ)

Judge Hamill is a forty plus year member of the United Methodist Church. Served the local church as Chair of Administrative Council, of SPR, and Long Range Planning; Bethel Bible Study student and teacher; Disciple Bible student; led course of Race and Race Relations; and Three Simple Rules by Bishop Job.

Served as Conference Lay Leader, District Lay Leader, Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, member of first Connectional Table, five time member of General and Jurisdictional Conference.

Nominated and elected Judge by both Democrat and Republican Parties. Chancellor for Bishop Jeremiah Park.

Erin Hawkins (WJ)

- Laity, California - Pacific Annual Conference
- Executive Director of Connectional Ministries Cal-Pac 2020-present
- Served in multiple roles at the local, conference and general church levels
- Past General Secretary, General Commission of Religion and Race 2007-2020
- Current member General Board of Higher Education and Ministries
- A lifelong United Methodist committed to a new future in the UMC, I offer my understanding of the polity of the church and of governance issues to the application of the constitution in matters that will shape the future of our beloved denomination.

Edwin Larida, Jr. (Philippines CC)

#### CREDENTIALS

1. Former Regional Trial Court Judge (18Years), Supreme Court of the Philippines
2. Former Public Prosecutor, Department of Justice, Philippines
3. Long-Time Professor (Philippine Christian University and other Philippine colleges and universities)

4. Lawyer and Attorney-at-Law (Members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines)

#### MINISTRIES IN CHURCH

1. Chairperson, Committee on Rules of Order and Organization (CPORO) Philippine Central Conference.
2. Member, Philippine Central Conference Coordinating Council
3. Member; Committee on Episcopacy Philippine Central Conference.
4. Executive Vice President, United Methodist Men of the Philippines.

Vice-Chairman, Board of Trustees, Philippine Christian University

Thomas Lee (SEJ)

Tom Lee has practiced government relations and high-profile dispute resolution in Nashville for nearly 30 years. An outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion, Tom is legislative counsel to the Tennessee Pride Chamber, pro bono counsel to RMN, and recently represented the Memphis Conference against a breakaway congregation. This spring, his lobbying stopped a discriminatory bathroom bill and legislation to ban Pride flags in public schools. A lifelong United Methodist, Tom is a member of West End UMC, a certified lay speaker, director of lay servant ministries, and the former district chancellor for the Nashville District, Tennessee Conference.

Pamela Liston (SCJ)

Pam Liston is an attorney with 30 years of legal and judicial experience. She served as Chancellor of the North Texas Annual Conference from 2012 to 2022 and was the first woman President of the UMC Chancellors Association. As a member of the GC Legislative Review Panel, she gained key insight into the BOD, Constitution, and Social Principles. Pam is a Texas judge and a Commissioner on the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health. Her judicial acumen emphasizes voice, neutrality, respect, and understanding. Pam and Paul Liston have been married for 29 years, have four grown children, and one grandchild.

### George Mhlanga (Africa CC)

Born on the 7th August 1977 George was admitted as a Legal Practitioner, Notary Public and Conveyancer by the High Court of Zimbabwe on the 26th September 2001. He has been in private practice since his admission as an attorney, becoming a partner in the established law firm of Messrs Chihambakwe Mutizwa & Partners in January 2005 to date.

George's area of practice is civil law majoring in commercial law, labour law and general litigation. George's over 20 years of practice has seen him representing a broad spectrum of clients in the High Court and Supreme Court of Zimbabwe.

### Thomas Starnes (NEJ)

I am the son, brother, and uncle of Methodist preachers. I followed a different path, but have devoted much of my legal career to representing United Methodist institutions. Alongside serving as Chancellor of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, I have represented GCFA, GCORR, the Northeastern and Western jurisdictions, and the Greater New Jersey, Mountain Sky, North Texas, and Virginia conferences. I was appointed to serve on the Council of Bishops' Disaffiliation Task Force and on GCFA's Committee on Legal Responsibilities. I have frequently appeared before the Judicial Council, often as *amicus curiae*, and advocating for outcomes that ensure fidelity to bedrock principles of Methodist polity.

### Deanell Reece Tacha (SCJ)

Deanell was elected to the Judicial Council in 2016. A member of Lawrence, Kansas First UMC in the Great Plains Conference, she has held numerous leadership positions. She graduated from the University of Kansas and the University of Michigan Law School. She taught law at the University of Kansas until her appointment to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit where she was Chief Judge. Deanell served on the Connectional Process Team for the UMC and was on the Board of Saint Paul School of Theology and later became Dean of Pepperdine University Law School.

Andrew Vorbrich (NCJ)

Nominee for Judicial Council

Chancellor of Michigan Conference since 2010; attorney since 1990; worships at Kalamazoo First.

Loves representing the legal issues of the church and its missions. Serves as President of the Chancellor's Association, on UMC BSA Bankruptcy Committee, on GCFA Committee on Legal Affairs, on Disaffiliation Task Force, and served 10 years as Trustee at Garrett.

Traveling to 4 continents, 20+ countries, and all 50 US states, Andy has exposure to people and issues around the world. Favors regionalization and inclusion. Will work with the Judicial Council to make UMC efficient, offering salvation worldwide. Committed to finding creative solutions that preserve relationships.

Bill Waddell (SCJ)

Bill has served the UMC at all levels, including his local church's lay leader, chair of church council and staff parish relations committee, church chancellor, Sunday School teacher, conference lay leader, VIM coordinator, conference chancellor and conference trustee. Since 2009, Bill has served as chancellor for the Council of Bishops. Bill and Patty are lifelong United Methodists and have three daughters, one serving as an ordained deacon. He will faithfully apply the Discipline to issues presented to the Judicial Council in a spirit that gives witness to the fullness of the truth and grace of Jesus Christ

## **Laity Nominated from the Floor:**

Solomon Christian (SEJ)

Although I was an Alternate, I have become a seated-voting delegate. I have served on Judicial Council, GBCS, UMVIM-GBGM and was President of Medical

Fellowship, UMVIM-SEJ. I am involved in VIM work since 37 years now, providing dental care throughout the World. With the help from GBGM and UMVIM-SEJ, I have started a Dental Nurse Practitioner program in Liberia and established clinics in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

I was born, raised in a Methodist family and educated in India. I serve God with my time, talent, testimony, and tithe-and-more. I believe in making disciples for Jesus through our UM connections.

Kent Fulton (SCJ)

Kent Fulton, a lay delegate from the Oklahoma annual conference, is an attorney who has practiced law and worked for the U.S. Department of Justice. Kent has 28 years of work as a Judge in the Oklahoma and United States governments. He was elected second laity alternate to Judicial Council in 2016 and has since served on the Judicial Council when needed including most recently on the Fall 2023 docket at Africa University. He has also served as Chancellor of the Oklahoma annual conference since June 2018, and helped navigate the conference through a very challenging disaffiliation season.

Prosper Tunda Kasongo (Congo CC)

I am Prosper TUNDA KASONGO LUKALI, male, adult, married to Joséphine Maondo, Black, Congolese. Laity from East Congo annual conference. Member Of GC, since 2016. Former head Of delegation, member to standing Committee and chair Of health board in East Congo episcopal area. National Deputy as effective member of DRC Parliament since 2018 up to day.

Molly Hlekani Mwayera (Africa CC)

I am Hlekani Molly Mwayera, an adult African woman. Laity Delegate of the Zimbabwe Annual East Conference (ZEAC) and a professing member of the United Methodist Church, who has served and is still serving the church in different leadership positions including being a Conference Lay-Leader . I am a seating Supreme Court Judge of the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe. I am a registered legal practitioner, a holder of the Bachelor of Law Honors (HBL) and

Bachelor of Law degree (LLB), also a member of the International Women Judges of Association. I have 32 years experience as a Judicial Officer.

Easmon Nathaniel Ngakui (West Africa CC)

A SIERRA LEONEAN born and bred in Sierra Leone. A holder of a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws with Honours from Fourah Bay College University of Sierra Leone and an Utter Barrister Degree law School of Sierra Leone. A Barrister at law and Solicitor of the superior Courts of judicature Sierra Leone with Twenty one years plus superior Courts of judicature Sierra Leone with Twenty one years standing since October, 2002. A practicing Christian and a member United Methodist Church Sierra leone annual conference since my elementary school days till date. Conference chancellor of the Annual Conference of Sierra Leone since 2009.

Harriett Jane Olson (NEJ)

Harriett was CEO/General Secretary of United Women in Faith until retiring in May 2023. Previously, she was Vice President/Editorial Director at The United Methodist Publishing House (1996-2007). A Harvard Law School graduate, prior to working full time for the church she practiced environmental law in New Jersey and had various leadership roles in the previous Northern NJ Annual Conference, now part of GNJ, including serving as a General Conference delegate in 1988, 1992 and 1996. Her local church is Morristown UMC, Morristown, NJ.

Kenneth Pembamoto (Congo CC)

Kenneth is a third generation lifelong Methodist from the South-Congo Annual Conference, with over 50 years of active participation in several activities of various local churches, and 25 years of university teaching both in DRC and the States. He brings a wealth of experience that bridges both cultures. As an experienced change agent, Kenneth is committed to improving organizational systems and processes for efficiency and effectiveness on social justice and sustained development. As Dean of Applied Sciences and Secretary General for Research at the Methodist University of Katanga, Kenneth is committed to excellence in quality of education.

Warren W. Plowden, Jr (SEJ)

Warren Plowden currently serves as one of the members of the Judicial Council. As a member of Vineville UMC (which did not vote on disaffiliation) he has served as Chair of the Admin, Board and the PPR Committee. He served as Chancellor of the S. Ga. Conference for 28 years and is now Emeritus. Warren graduated from Davidson College in 1965 and Mercer University in 1968 where he was awarded the LL.B. degree, *magna cum laude*. He served two years in the US Army (one year in Vietnam) and began the practice of law in Macon, Ga. in 1971.

Jéthro Muyombi Tshimbu (Congo CC)

#### QUALIFICATIONS

- Good relations in my native country and abroad;
- Extensive managerial experience in large companies;
- Good networking and communication skills;
- Good knowledge of the financial balance sheet and analysis of large financial tables;
- Good knowledge and interpretation of Congolese legislation;
- Computer skills (Microsoft package, Internet applications, SAP, CRM, CS& amp;A tools, R3, BPS, SIRAS);
- Open-minded and scientific researcher;
- Expertise in Mediation and Conflict Management for Peace and Justice

#### EDUCATION

- Master's Degree in Criminology, majoring in Peace-Governance and Conflict Resolution at the University of Lubumbashi;
- Law Degree. Majoring in Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Lubumbashi.

Jessica Vittoria (SCJ)

Jessica Vittorio is a young adult and attorney, who serves as Senior Vice President of Legal for a publicly traded technology company. Throughout her



career Jessica has worked to dismantle oppressive systems both in the courts and in institutions, and champion systems focused on justice that is both accessible and equitable. She has handled a variety of constitutional cases on topics including religious freedoms, women's rights, immigration, and housing. With her extensive experience as a senior leader in positions related to legislative bodies, the courts, and corporate organizations, she offers a unique and vital perspective to the Judicial Council.

## **Clergy Nominated by the Council of Bishops:**

Angela Brown (WJ)

My relationship with God and the church was nurtured in my home United Methodist Church, where I was given leadership roles and responsibilities.

I have served the church on the Local, District, Conference, and General Church levels.

At the 2008 General Conference, I was elected to the Judicial Council, resigning in 2016, when my status changed to clergy. I was ordained a Deacon, 2016, in the California-Nevada Annual Conference

My education, profession, (Assistant District Attorney), and ministry have made me uniquely suited to serve the Church in this capacity at this time in the church's history.

Tim Bruster (SCJ)

Dr. Tim Bruster retired in 2022 after nineteen years as Senior Pastor of First UMC in Fort Worth, TX, and currently serves as the Central Texas Conference Director of Finance and Administrative Services. He holds degrees from Centenary College of Louisiana and SMU.

Bruster has served on various boards and councils, including GCFA. He has been the lead clergy delegate to the past four General Conferences and serves in that capacity at the current General Conference.

Elected first clergy alternate to Judicial Council at the 2012 and 2016 General Conferences, Bruster has participated in 82 Judicial Council decisions.

### Kate Croskery-Jones (NCJ)

Judicial philosophy: All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Love God and love your neighbor). (Matt 22:40)

Lead Pastor: Wauwatosa Avenue United Methodist Church, Wauwatosa, WI (A Reconciling Congregation), [www.WAUMC.org](http://www.WAUMC.org) 2022-present.

- Practiced law 10 years before entering ministry;
- Served small, medium and larger churches in urban, suburban and rural settings;
- District Superintendent 2015-2022; cabinet dean 2019-2021;
- Jurisdictional delegate, First reserve general conference delegate;
- Counsel for the Church 2022-23;
- GCFA Committee on Corporate Governance and Legal Responsibilities 2016-Present;
- JustPeace volunteer/staff;
- Education JD, 1988; MDiv, MA (Pastoral Care & Counseling), 2002; PhD (Clinical Social Work) 2016.

### Taylor Walters Denyer (Congo CC)

Taylor Walters Denyer (white, female, Rev. Dr.) is a pastor (North Katanga) and missiologist specializing in addressing toxic beliefs, structural oppression, and traumas that undermine relationships. Having lived in eight countries, she facilitates friendships between United Methodists across the globe. Born a UM preacher's kid and serving in The UMC at all levels since her youth, Taylor has a deep understanding of the denomination and its history, as evidenced by her published writings.

[www.taylorwaltersdenyer.com](http://www.taylorwaltersdenyer.com)

Degrees: BA/MA in International Development, MDiv, and ThD in Missiology

Appointment: Bishop Mande's Executive Assistant, Adjunct Faculty at MTSO (Missiology and UM Studies)

Mark Grafenread (SCJ)

Mark C. Grafenreed is an Elder in the Texas Annual Conference. He has served on the Boards of Church and Society and Ordained Ministry. Grafenreed is a Ph.D. Candidate in Religion and Culture through the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at Southern Methodist University. Grafenreed holds a B.A. in History '98 from SMU, M.Div. (summa cum laude) '18 from Perkins School of Theology, and a J.D. (magna cum laude) '03 from Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Grafenreed has been a licensed Texas attorney since 2003, and owned his practice, The Grafenreed Law Firm, PLLC, from 2010-2020.

Øyvind Helliesen (Northern Europe and Eurasia CC)

Current member of the Judicial Council since 2016. Member and secretary of Norway AC. Appointed as a Hospital Chaplain and a professional Mentor/Supervisor. Former DS and dean of the cabinet. Graduated from UMC Seminary, MF Norwegian School of Theology, and University of Oslo. A delegate to General Conference 3 times. Former member of The General Council on Ministry, The Connectional Table, The European Methodist Council, The Northern Europe Conference Council and the Steering Committee of World Methodist Council. One of the editors of the adapted BOD for NECC. Has visited and worked with UMC in Zimbabwe, Liberia and Angola.

Susan Henry-Crowe (SEJ)

Susan Henry-Crowe, Ordained Elder, member of the South Carolina Annual Conference is a retired General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society. Previously, served on the Judicial Council (President 2008-2012). She has served at all levels of the UMC. As a pastor in 3 appointments, the

Director of Connectional Ministries, Dean of the Chapel for 23 years at Emory University, Trustee of Claflin College, and on numerous boards and agencies of the UMC. Taught polity for many years. Life-long commitment to diversity and full inclusion.

Erica Robinson Johnson (NEJ)

Serving as assistant to two bishops since 2013, I am quite familiar with the Discipline and the complex nature of our UM systems. As a skilled administrator I can make difficult decisions, listen and learn from multiple perspectives, and apply just and equitable treatment for all. Currently, Chief Administrative Officer of Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences, overseeing complaints, cabinet member, assisting leaders in interpreting the Book of Discipline; 2013-2021 Assistant to Bishop/Director of Connectional Ministries, New England; 1992-2013 served churches in the Chicago and Boston areas. Leadership: Board of Ordained Ministry, COSROW (Chair), Adjunct Faculty, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Amy Lippoldt (SCJ)

Rev Amy Lippoldt, in her 22nd year of local church ministry, serves as the senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Wichita, Kansas. She is the current president of the Council on Finance and Administration for the Great Plains Annual Conference as well as chair of the South Central Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee. She previously chaired the Great Plains Board of Ordained Ministry. Amy is a four-time delegate to General Conference and has been a part of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters since 2016. Amy loves Jesus, her husband, coffee, and her bicycle. In that order.

Beverly Wilkes Null (NCJ)

Endorsed by Illinois Great Rivers Conference

*Relevant Experience*

General Conference Delegate: 2000, 2004, and 2020

Connectional Table NCJ Rep

2004 to 2012

NCJ Court of Appeals Chair 2016 to Present

District Superintendent 2002 to 2009

*Previously Served As*

Human Relations Officer, EEOC for City of Decatur IL

Military Police MO National Guard Army

I humbly request your support as I respond to the call to serve on the Judicial Council. I view our Book of Discipline as a book of grace, it is our covenant, and our book of law.

Paul Perez (NCJ)

Paul Perez is a Deacon in the Michigan Conference serving as Lead Minister at Detroit: Central UMC. He served as a Michigan Conference staff person with a portfolio of mission, justice, and young adult ministries and as Director of Connectional Ministries. Paul is a founding leader of Immigration Law & Justice Michigan and After the Storm Michigan. Past church experience: director of General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and 2004 General Conference delegate. Current church experience: director of General Board of Church and Society, co-chair of Michigan's 2020 General Conference delegation and member of the NCJ Committee on Episcopacy.

Timothy Riss (NEJ)

University of Rochester (NY) and Colgate-Rochester-Crozer Divinity School taught me Psychology and Mathemaics. I combine a deep understanding of people with logical thinking, which has served me well. My ministry has spanned 41 years in rural, suburban, and urban ministries (pastor and district superintendent). It has been my honor to be first alternate to General Conference in 1996 and a delegate to every General Conference since (co-

chair in 2016). I served eight years as a director of GBGM, chairing their Policy, By-Laws & Legislation Committee for four. I focus on the actual disciplinary text but also consider evidence of intent.

Elizabeth Sanders (SEJ)

Beth Sanders, NGA ordained elder (2006) currently appointed as a District Superintendent. She holds a B.A. (Emory University, English and Philosophy); J.D. (University of Georgia); M.Div. (Candler); and D. Min. (Garrett-Evangelical). Beth practiced law (civil litigation) for seven years before ordination. She has served on NGA's CF&A and Trustees. Relevant judicial experience: Counsel for the Church; Member, NGA Committee on Investigation; and Chair, SEJ Committee on Investigation. I was raised in the church and called from a local congregation. I believe the role of the Judicial Council is not simply to mediate disputes but to create reconciliation so that all may serve well.

Luan-Vu Tran (WJ)

Reverend Lui Tran is a member of the Judicial Council since 2016. Born in Vietnam and raised in Switzerland, he was a lawyer for the Swiss Government before serving as missionary in Africa. Ordained in the California-Pacific Annual Conference, Lui has been in ministry for over twenty years and is senior pastor of Garden Grove UMC, a growing multicultural and inclusive congregation in Southern California. Lui is fluent in Vietnamese, German, French, and English, graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Bern, Harvard Law School, Claremont School of Theology, and holds a Ph.D. in Constitutional Law from McGill University.

Jonathan Ulanday (Philippines CC)

Ordained Elder (2000), East Mindanao Philippines Conference. He was a member of the Philippines Central Conference's Judicial Court (2016-2022). Served as senior pastor of 6 churches, district superintendent, assistant to the bishop, adjunct seminary faculty, and national person-in-mission for labor advocacy and solidarity. Served on the board of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, and the Commission of Churches for International Affairs - World Council of Churches. He earned the following

academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts, University of Mindanao (1994), Master of Divinity, Union Theological Seminary-Philippines (1998), Juris Doctor, Mindanao State University College of Law (2020).

## **Clergy Nominated from the Floor:**

Gary Graves (SEJ)

Rev. Gary W. Graves is serving as Secretary of the General Conference. In this role, he has authored numerous briefs for consideration by the Judicial Council and participated in multiple oral hearings before the Council. Prior to his election, he served as Petitions Secretary for every General Conference since 2004 and has served on the Secretarial Staff since 1992.

Gary has served as annual conference secretary, parliamentarian, and member of various annual conference boards and committees, including the Board of Ordained Ministry. He is a clergy member of the Kentucky Annual Conference and resides there with his wife, Jennifer.

David Horton (SCJ)

Rev. David Horton is the senior pastor of Faith UMC in Spring, Texas. David is the author of seven briefs to the Judicial Council, six of which are in accordance with Judicial Council decisions, including the landmark rulings of JCD 1444 and 1449. See <https://twmbo.org/briefs>.

David, 33, has a B.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill, an M.Div. from Duke, and, effective May 2024, a D.Min from Emory. He is an elder in the Texas Annual Conference with ten years of full-time pastoral ministry experience and lives in Houston with his wife, Rev. Brandi Horton, and daughters, Caroline and Amelia.

Esther Jadhav (SEJ)

Throughout her career Esther D. Jadhav, has served across a variety of commissions, councils, and boards to bring about mutuality, redemptive social action, and grace-filled reconciliation.

From General Board of Church Society to the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion of the Consortium of Christian Colleges and Universities, she has elevated the critical role of theology in activating cultural responsibility, and cultural humility as an institutional distinctive. A clergy member of the Kentucky Annual Conference, Esther serves as the Associate Vice President for Intercultural Affairs and Spiritual Development at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky.

Jeffrey Taylor (NEJ)

Jeff Taylor is the President of the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to creating a culture of generosity. Jeff received his undergraduate (B.S.'83) and law degrees (J.D. '86) from West Virginia University. He received his seminary education from Methodist Theological School in Ohio, where he currently serves on the Board of Trustees.

Jeff is a member of the Board of Trustees of the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation, and serves as a clergy delegate to General Conference from the West Virginia Annual Conference. He is Chairperson of the West Virginia Order of Deacons.