What are your reasons for wanting to be a delegate? The United Methodist Church is currently at a crossroads. We will never again be the church that we have been. While some see this as a crisis and something to grieve, I also see it as an opportunity to become more than we have ever been before—a more faithful and just witness to the Gospel we proclaim and the Savior we serve. As a General Conference reserve delegate and Jurisdictional Conference delegate in 2012 and 2016 who traveled to General Conference with the delegation in 2016, I am familiar with the mechanics of General and Jurisdictional Conference and know how the system works. As someone who has lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Northern Ireland, and South Africa and either attended or pastored Methodist churches in those countries, I have experience engaging in dialogue with Methodists from other countries and contexts. And as a clergyperson with potentially twenty or more years of active ministry ahead of me, I have a vested interest in making sure that the mechanics of General Conference and our system of governance work to ensure a vibrant and thriving church that I will be proud to serve long into the future.

What are three areas crucial to The United Methodist Church's mission?

1. I believe the era of large, top-down initiatives is over for our denomination. In every church I have ever served or worshiped, there were pockets of potential for the explosion of the Holy Spirit. But because those pockets of potential were specific to the particular context that church was located in, they often were not able to fully utilize denominational resources, which can tend to be one-size-fits-all. The United Methodist Church must find ways to allocate financial resources and develop structures and programming that have a sound Wesleyan theological foundation but can easily be adapted to local contexts.

2. One of the significant initiatives that General Conference will consider is a global Book of Discipline, which would be thinner and more adaptable for a global church. Currently, the Central (non-US) Conferences are allowed to adapt many portions of the Book of Discipline to fit their context, but the portion of the UMC within the United States is required to have the entire General Conference debate and vote on every change. The global Book of Discipline would make it possible for those conversations to be had without wasting the time of delegates from other parts of the world, who are making similar decisions in other, more localized settings.

3. By 2020, determining what the unity of the denomination looks like will be one of the top concerns. At the point that I am writing this, it is hard to know exactly what that will look like, or how it will emerge. But it is imperative that Indiana elect a delegation of persons who love serving Jesus Christ through the United Methodist Church and desire to strengthen its mission and ministry.
What is your desire or hope for the future of The United Methodist Church? As we make our way through the rough waters ahead of us, we have the opportunity to examine ourselves anew as a denomination. We will find need to repent, and I hope we do that. We will find need to rejoice, and I hope we do that, too. We will find need to return to some practices and attitudes that have made us strong in the past, and to turn away from some practices and attitudes that have kept us from being the church that God is calling us to be. My desire is that we would not take the easy way out and avoid those conversations and self-examination. As a denomination, we have wrestled deeply with questions of what it means to be a church where all are welcomed and all are discipled. We must continue to seek justice and righteousness even as we seek unity. I believe that God is calling us to a time of renewal and revitalization as a denomination. And my deep hope is that we would be able to do that with as wide a spectrum of theological and political positions as possible. One thing that I love about the United Methodist Church is that I can engage in the act of spiritual discernment with people who think very much like I do, and people who think very much unlike I do, all in the same Conference or in the same congregation. It seems evident as I am writing this, even prior to the specially called General Conference, that there will be some of our brothers and sisters who choose to leave the denomination. But my hope is that we would retain as wide a spectrum of voices as possible. Because I believe that God is calling us to be a "big-tent" denomination, as much of a challenge as that is at times. And we need all of our voices in order to discern how to be the church of justice and righteousness that God is calling us to be.

Additional information you would like to share: As a reserve delegate to General Conference in 2016, I did a daily vlog (video blog) as I observed and participated in the proceedings. If you’d like to watch it and learn more about General Conference 2016 and my thoughts as a potential 2020 delegate, here are the links to each day’s vlog:

Day 1: https://youtu.be/qsLoBFfTK3w
Day 2: https://youtu.be/uZGjhRheAE
Day 3: https://youtu.be/U0IrBNV0G-M
Day 4: https://youtu.be/7YH1t56s06Y
(Weekend - no entries)
Day 7: https://youtube/BOsj7MYpmdU
Day 8: https://youtu.be/GQQN--FNYcI
Day 9: https://youtu.be/dvoLO8Zh1K4