

Paragraph 507 of *The Book of Discipline* states “Any organization, clergy member, or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference...” In doing so, it answers the age-old question – “What do I do if I want to change something about the UMC?” Perhaps you don’t agree with a resolution in *The Book of Resolutions*. Perhaps you have a great idea about how your church should be structured differently. Perhaps you would like to encourage a particular ministry and see it assigned as the duty of a particular local church committee or General Board or Agency.

Once you have decided to petition the General Conference to adopt your idea, there are several steps to take in the process. You must decide whether your idea is a petition which will require further action or a resolution which will be printed in *The Book of Resolutions* and make a political, social, or theological statement on behalf of the entire denomination. Petitions may seek to make changes in *The Book of Discipline* or may be non-disciplinary and address the work of the local church or any other level of church structure without a Disciplinary mandate. You must also decide whether your petition will have financial implications in the budget process of the General Conference.

Paragraph 507.2 states “Each petition must address only one issue if the *Discipline* is not affected; if the *Discipline* is affected, each petition must address only one paragraph of the *Discipline*, except that, if two or more paragraphs in the *Discipline* are so closely related that a change in one affects the others, the petition may call for the amendment of those paragraphs also to make them consistent with one another.” In other words, don’t send in one petition which addresses Global Warming, child care at the Annual Conference session, and voting rights at various stages of the Ordination process unless you are *extremely* creative.

As you write your petition or resolution, please be very clear about the words you would like to add or delete from the current (2004) edition of *The Book of Discipline* or *The Book of Resolutions*. Detailed instructions may be found at gc2008.umc.org.

Two significant changes have been made in the submission process. First, we are asking that all petitions and resolutions be submitted digitally. You may do so by e-mail, by use of a 3.5” diskette or CD, or through a link on the General Conference website. This speeds the processing of your material greatly. It also increases the accuracy of our completed materials by reducing the chance of typographical error or omission. In order to meet the needs of some of our Central Conference members, non-digital submissions (typed or legibly printed only) will be received until September 1, 2007. This should be an avenue of last resort, however.

The second change involves the printing of a rationale for the petition. Fifty (50) words will be allowed for each petition. This should eliminate the need to write a petition in the form of a resolution with several “Whereas” sections explaining why everyone should agree with you.

Please remember that all items must be postmarked by October 26, 2007, if being submitted through a national postal service. All items submitted by any other means must be received by October 26, 2007.

While the street address used for commercial overnight carriers has not changed, there has been some confusion in the assignment of the Post Office box number used for the receipt of petitions. All items submitted via the United States Postal Service should be mailed to:

Gary W. Graves, Petitions Secretary
United Methodist General Conference
P.O. Box **188**
Beaver Dam, KY 42320-0188

The local Post Office has assured that they will do their best to catch any items which come in with an incorrect earlier address, but if an item is returned to you, please re-submit it to the above address prior to the October deadline.

Please take this opportunity to be involved in the decision-making life of The United Methodist Church. One of the first steps of Christian conferencing is the prayerful offering of an inspired idea. As we receive and process those offerings from around the world, we begin to move toward an exciting time together in the presence of God.

Rev. Gary Graves
Petitions Secretary

Instructions for Petitions to the 2008 General Conference The United Methodist Church

“Any organization, clergy member, or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference...” (§507, *The Book of Discipline*)

Format for Petition Submissions

1. All petitions must be submitted digitally by: e-mail, 3.5-inch diskette, CD, or through the General Conference website.
2. Petitions must be typed, double-spaced. Microsoft Word or any other software that allows files to be saved as rich-text format (RTF) may be used.
3. The top of each page of the petition should read as follows:
Page Number: (i.e. – “Page 1 of 4”); Suggested Title: (i.e. – “Establish Quorum”); *Discipline* Paragraph or Resolution Number: (i.e. “*Discipline* No. 506”); Financial Implications: (i.e. – “Financial Implications: ‘None’ or ‘Yes’”)
4. The bottom of the final page of the petition should include:
Date; Signature of the Petitioner; Identification of the Petitioner: (i.e. – “Member of Local Church”; “Secretary of Annual Conference”); Phone; Fax Number; E-mail Address

“Each petition must be signed by the person submitting it, accompanied by appropriate identification, such as address, local church, or United Methodist board or agency relationship.” Telephone numbers must also be included. “Each petition submitted must identify the individual submitting it, accompanied by identification as above, and must contain a valid digital mail return address by which the submitter can be reached. Electronic signatures will be accepted in accordance with common business practice. (§507.3, *The Book of Discipline*).

Content of Petition Text

To Amend or add to the *Book of Discipline* or *Book of Resolutions*:

5. “Each petition must address only one issue if the *Discipline* is not affected; if the *Discipline* is affected, each petition must address only one paragraph of the *Discipline*, except that, if two or more paragraphs in the *Discipline* are so closely related that a change in one affects the others, the petition may call for the amendment of those paragraphs also to make them consistent with one another.” (§ 507.2, *The Book of Discipline*)
6. State action desired, i.e., “Amend ¶ No. ___”; “Add new sub-paragraph after ¶ ___”; “Delete ¶ ___ and substitute the following...”; “Add new paragraph...; etc.”
7. Use **bold** for proposed additions and ~~strike through~~ for proposed deletions. If more convenient, double underlines may be used for proposed additions and single underlines for proposed deletions. Do not submit petitions that have been prepared by using the "track changes" feature.
8. “All petitions submitted to the General Conference, except those submitted by individual members of The United Methodist Church and local church groups, which call for the establishment of new programs or the expansion of existing programs will be invalid unless accompanied by supporting data that address the issue of anticipated financial requirements of the program.” (§507.4, *The Book of Discipline*)
9. Rationale for the petition may be included and may not exceed fifty (50) words for each petition.

Sending Petitions to the Petitions Secretary

10. Petitions may be sent to the Petitions Secretary beginning **May 1, 2007**. “Petitions must be postmarked by a national postal service no later than 180 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference.” (§507.5, *The Book of Discipline*) This date is **October 26, 2007**. “If petitions are transmitted by a means other than a national postal service, they must be in the hands of the Petitions Secretary no later than 180 days prior to the opening session of the General Conference.” (§ 507.6, *The Book of Discipline*) This date is **October 26, 2007**.
11. Petitions should be submitted within the General Conference website or by email to petitions@umpublishing.org
12. Petitions (3 hard copies required and 3.5” diskette or CD) may also be submitted via:

U.S. Postal Service to: Gary W. Graves, Petitions Secretary United Methodist General Conference PO Box 85 Beaver Dam, KY 42320-0187	Overnight Carriers (Federal Express, UPS, DHL) to: Gary W. Graves, Petitions Secretary United Methodist General Conference 302 N Lafayette Street Beaver Dam, KY 42320
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