



## GREAT PLAINS ANNUAL CONFERENCE of The United Methodist Church

REV. DR. RUBEN SAENZ JR., *Resident Bishop*

1207 SW Executive Drive  
Topeka, KS 66615  
877-972-9111  
785-414-4219  
[bishop@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:bishop@greatplainsumc.org)

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Dear Faithful Sisters & Brothers of the Great Plains Conference:

The grace of Jesus Christ be with your spirits.

The Commission on General Conference officially announced today the postponement of the August 2022 worldwide gathering of delegates to conduct the business of The United Methodist Church, until the regularly scheduled General Conference in May 2024.

The delay no doubt causes tremendous disappointment to people on all sides of our ongoing discernment regarding human sexuality, the marriage and ordination of LGBTQIA+ persons, and the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation.

The diligent work of the commission is deeply appreciated and to be highly commended. Their responsibility was to take necessary measures to assure the full participation of all General Conference delegates (BOD ¶ 511.4d). After prayerful discernment and thorough discussions, the commission determined that full participation of all delegates, especially those outside of the United States, was not possible at this time.

The reality is that we live in uncertain times. The COVID-19 pandemic and its surges have compelled us to adjust quickly as situations change and dangers to health arise. The commission examined numerous technology options to allow for an online meeting. However, many obstacles and concerns remain. Varied world time zones, availability and quality of internet connectivity, real-time language translation for debate, and voting in a hybrid online environment are only some of the concerns. Travel is still not allowed from some countries into the United States. And now, the ongoing military actions by Russia into Ukraine obstruct the ability of Eurasian delegates to attend. Together, these obstacles form a rather large justice issue if United Methodists from every part of our world do not have the same opportunity to participate as those of us living in the United States.

Amid the delays, disruptions, and disappointments of postponed general conferences, we'll stay focused on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In our tumultuous world, it's more important than ever that we love God and lead others to do the same; that we proclaim the good news and abundant life Jesus offers; that we serve others, especially the poor; and that we seek justice for those on the outskirts of society.

Delegates from around the world will one day gather at a General Conference to conduct the important work of The United Methodist Church. Until then, we in the Great Plains Conference will continue to focus on our Christ-given mission and work as vital and vibrant congregations in our communities. We will nurture, care for, and disciple our members, and we will move out into society to share Christ with the world. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will help people accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship to God.



As we enter this holy season of Lent, “Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Know that you are in my prayers, and I ask that you keep me in yours.

Peace.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruben Saenz Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr.