

Oregon-Idaho Conference Lay Leader Nomination Form

Please complete this form to be considered as a candidate for election as the next lay leader of the Oregon-Idaho Conference. Information about the position is listed below.

If you choose to print the blank form to write on, please add extra space as needed for your answers before you print.

Name: Paul Nickell

Local Church: Portland First UMC

District: Columbia

Occupation: Retired.

Editor, *Oregon State Bar Bulletin*, 1989-2017.

Editor, [Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference] *United Methodist*, 1985-1989.

Publisher, [Canyonville/Myrtle Creek, Ore.] *Canyon Creek Current/Umpqua Free Press*, 1980-1985.

Reporter, [Grants Pass, Ore.] *Daily Courier*, 1979-1980.

Editor and reporter, [Redmond, Wash.] *Sammamish Valley News*, 1975-1979.

What gifts and graces would you bring to this position to move these strategic priorities forward among the laity in the Oregon-Idaho Conference?

As a lifelong (third-generation) Methodist and United Methodist, I have been involved in the church nearly my entire life, and the spirit of the church has always dwelled within me.

From attending and then teaching Sunday School, to confirmation; from active participation in Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF, the precursor to UMY), to active leadership in youth conference leadership; from leading community CROP walks, resourcing early reconciling ministries in a non-urban UMC, and bearing witness to the church's exclusion, to accepting leadership roles in the local congregation and annual conference – the United Methodist Church has been both my home and my inspiration.

I take seriously my baptismal vows, which I reconfirmed upon my confirmation in April 1968 (incidentally, just weeks before the founding general conference that created the United Methodist Church): "Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?"

I do!

What other relevant experience in the UMC would you bring to this position?

Here are some relevant highlights of my experience in the local church and beyond:

- Lay leader, Portland First UMC (2002-2005; and 2012-2015).
- Chair and member, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Portland First UMC (four times, various from 2002 to present, twice as chair).
- Chair, Administrative Board or Parish Conference, Portland First UMC (four times ca. 1992 to 2015).
- Archivist and historian, Portland First UMC (2018-present).
- Attendee and volunteer page, teller or candidate sponsor, Western Jurisdictional Conference (Seattle, 1972; Portland, 2008; Scottsdale, 2016).
- Lay member, Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference (four terms, various, 1995 to present).
- Member, Oregon-Idaho Conference Communications Committee (2002-2004).
- Recipient, Jason Lee Award recipient for communications excellence (1989).
- Annual conference staff member (1985-1989).
- Interim editor of *United Methodist* (with Faye Fellers, ca. 2004).

Suffice to say, I know my way around our hymnals, Scripture, the Discipline, the Social Principles, and our annual conference's wide bounds – to say nothing about navigating the always interesting but often challenging floorplans of local churches. (I love local churches! And potluck!)

What other relevant experience in your community would you bring to this role?

In addition to being a longtime advocate for inclusion in the local church, especially for the LGBTQ and BIPOC communities, I have been involved in advocacy for homelessness/houselessness solutions for many years (Burnside Advocacy Group, 1990s) and others, including the Portland Homeless Family Solutions shelter housed at my own church home in Portland for 25 years. I have also been a leader in the local business communications sector (International Association of Business Communicators, Oregon-Columbia chapter; member; 1989-2017; event organizer and board member, 1996-2000; president, 2001).

Do you have any specific goals or dreams for the work of the laity in the Oregon-Idaho Conference?

I strongly endorse the Bishop's six-point agenda for the Greater Northwest Area (fighting COVID-19; dismantling racism; discerning the future of the UMC; responding to the need for year-round disaster response; uplifting the work of innovation and vitality; deepening our inclusion, innovation and multiplication work; and being a fully inclusive United Methodist Church).

Among these, allow me to emphasize two of them.

First, I aim to give special emphasis to the goals of diversity, inclusion and equity. I cannot think of any greater imperative for our church and for this time. Being married to a Black man, I learned long ago that it is not enough to “not be a part of the problem,” but instead “to be a

part of the solution.” (If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.) In the U.S., as an historically white and culturally nondiverse denomination, we in the United Methodist Church have work to do. It will be difficult, and it will likely challenge some of us to our very core. Let us not shy from this essential task. I not only want to be present for this conversation, I want to actively help us go forward in creating a Beloved Community where diversity, inclusion, and equity are equivalent to our learned pattern of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

Second, in focusing on innovation and vitality, allow me to remind us all that the majority of the church is, obviously, laity. One essential role of a conference lay leader is to bring witness to this truth at every meeting and at every level of the church organization. Enabling and empowering laity to lead, to be present, and to witness – in every situation, local charge, district, annual conference, jurisdiction, and globally – is vital to our mutual mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

At the risk of stating the obvious: The world is our parish. And in that world, the laity is essential.

Conclusion. It is an extraordinary honor to submit my name for consideration as Conference Lay Leader for the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference. The peace of God, and of our Sovereign, Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit be with you! Amen.