

Tips for Engaging Youth Delegates in the Delegate Process

The Mennonite Church USA (MC USA) [bylaws](#) provide the opportunity for congregations, conferences, and Racial/Ethnic groups to send **youth delegates (ages 16-21)** in addition to their other delegates. Each congregation can send one youth delegate. Each conference can send two youth delegates. Each Racial/Ethnic group can send two youth delegates.

Each sending body is encouraged to nominate youth who show interest in ministry, leadership, or the broader church. Many youths have the interest and maturity to participate in delegate business. When they are given orientation and mentoring, they usually have a very positive experience. The presence of youth in the delegate assembly brings out the best in adult delegates, makes younger adults feel more like they belong in the assembly, and bring energy and hope to the adult delegates. Research shows that when youth are given real responsibility in church, they are more likely to stay in church over the long term.

Congregations, conferences, and Racial/Ethnic groups are responsible to orient their delegates, including youth delegates, to the delegate process and the resolutions that will be discussed. Resources for the 2022 special delegate session can be found on the [MC USA website](#). Schedule a meeting of all the delegates from an organization to review the agenda of the meetings, including the resolutions.

It is the responsibility of the sending body to provide supervision/support to these delegates during the special session. The sending body needs to ensure proper travel and accommodations are provided. Include them in the travel plans of other delegates. Make sure another delegate shares a hotel room with them or checks them into their own hotel room. Most hotels will not rent a room to anyone under the age of 23.

Check in regularly with the youth delegate before and during the sessions. They will likely have questions if this is their first time serving in this sort of role. The more comfortable they are with the process the more they will be able to engage the discussions. Introduce them to people during the sessions. Make sure the people at their table know their names and include them in the discussions.

Youth may not be familiar with the structure of MC USA. The MC USA Bylaws outline the structure of the denomination. The local congregation is the basic organizing body of members. Congregations determine the criteria for membership of persons joining their congregation. An area conference is an affiliation of congregations that join together in common life and mission. Congregations derive their membership in MC USA by being members in an area conference. [This webinar helps explain the structure of MC USA](#). **The delegate assembly (DA) is not a meeting, it is a denominational body representative of the constituency of MC USA.** The DA body consists of delegates from area conferences, congregations and officially recognized Racial/Ethnic groups.

MC USA is hosting a series of [informational webinars](#) in anticipation of the delegate sessions. **Encourage the youth delegate to join these webinars or watch them as they have time.** The information in these webinars will assist in orienting them to the delegate sessions.