Guide for Lay Leadership

OPEN HEARTS

OPEN MINDS

OPEN DOORS
An Introduction

You are so important to the life of the Christian church! You have consented to join with other people of faith who, through the millennia, have sustained the church by extending God’s love to others. You have been called and have committed your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to a position of leadership. The office of Local Church Lay Leader is one of the most important positions in the church. This handbook was created to help the Local Church Lay Leader learn the duties of the position in the United Methodist Church quicker and easier. The handbook points out the important part they play in the connectional system of our church. It lays out in simple language the tremendous responsibility he or she has in keeping the local church ministries and the congregation working together. The Local Church Lay Leader is generally chosen because they have already served in many important positions. However, the position is not just an honor – it is the workhorse job in the Local Church. It is your job to keep the Laity involved, trained, and responsible to their Church, their Pastor, and the great connectional Church, which seeks to serve the world for God through Jesus Christ, Our Savior. God’s Church needs your understanding and commitment to all the responsibilities as explained herein. Whatever fruit grows from the harvest of your dedication to the basic tasks will be to His Glory!
My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is an honor and a joy to have this opportunity to express gratitude on behalf of the entire New England Conference to each of you for your ministry as lay leaders. I celebrate your partnership with our clergy and laity and give thanks to our Creator God for your witness, service, sacrifice and commitment in response to the amazing gift of salvation we have been granted through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Your leadership and witness are key to making the church a dynamic and thriving movement. As our United Methodist history proves, a strong lay witness is essential in making disciples for Jesus Christ within our communities. Thank you for all you do and all you are. You are truly a gift to our conference and denomination. Please know that you are always in my prayers.

In Christ’s love,

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

SD:bb
Dear Local Church Lay Leader,

Greetings to you in the name of our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ!

As Conference Lay Leader, it is a special privilege to serve with you in the New England Conference. My position calls for me to be constantly alert to the concerns of the laity of the Conference, determine the best possible response, and work to that end. Likewise, your role as Lay Leader in your local church mirrors that task as it applies to the life of your congregation and to the way you work with your pastor. This guide has been developed to provide you with information regarding the resources that are available to assist you in working toward the goals of your local church, the New England Conference, and The United Methodist Church.

To quote The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, “there shall be elected by the charge conference a lay leader who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church...” [BOD ¶ 251]. I cannot express strongly enough the seriousness of the responsibility this role places on the person elected to the position of Local Church Lay Leader. That individual essentially becomes involved in nearly everything that affects the function of the local church and sets an example of spiritual faithfulness as well as devotion to ensuring that the needs of the laity are addressed.

Obviously, without the laity, the local church does not exist. As a leader, this places you in a unique position of service with the people who sit in the pews. You are key to ensuring that the congregants are offered opportunities to serve so that they, too, may participate fully in the life of the church. Thus, the Lay Leader must come to know the people in the church and be willing to listen to any concerns, struggles, or suggestions laity may have, and be ready to share them appropriately, including consulting with the pastor to determine what specific things would enhance the roles lay people may assume in leadership--whether in worship, or in administration, or in fellowship.

You have accepted an incredibly valuable position. The hope of the Board of Laity in preparing this manual for you is that it will assist you with accomplishing and raising up the best for your congregation. Please know that you are remembered in prayer for your courage, dedication, and faithfulness as you serve God and your congregation.

May God guide you and richly bless you,

Rene Wilbur

New England Conference Lay Leader
Mission Statement of the United Methodist Church:
The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World. Local churches and extension ministries provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs. BOD ¶120

Who are the people of the United Methodist Church?  http://www.umc.org/who-we-are
The people of The United Methodist Church are part of the second largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Our worldwide connection includes approximately 12.8 million members. Below, you will find a brief list of some of the distinctive characteristics of our denomination:

Global: Today we speak many languages and live in many countries—with different cultures, ethnic traditions, national histories and understandings of Christian faith and practice.

Connectional: Every United Methodist congregation is interconnected throughout the denomination via a unique, interlocking chain of conferences. The United Methodist Church practices representative democracy in its governance. Conferences elect delegates who are authorized to act and vote.

Inclusive: All persons are welcome to attend our churches and receive Holy Communion, and are eligible to be baptized and become members.

Grounded in Scripture: United Methodists welcomes free inquiry in matters of Christian doctrine. Our faith is guided by Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. Of paramount importance, however, is Scripture as the witness of God’s creating, redeeming and sustaining relationship with God’s people.

Wesleyan: The United Methodist Church has a Wesleyan heritage, and as such, places an emphasis on mind and heart (knowledge and vital piety) and putting faith and love into practice (life).

Concerned about social justice: For more than 200 years, The United Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies have expressed concern for God’s children everywhere — the poor, the orphaned, the aging, the sick, the oppressed and the imprisoned.

Mission-oriented: Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In uncomplicated terms, this means we strive to nurture followers of Christ who then spread the word about the love of Jesus through words and action.

Ecumenical: United Methodists consider dialogue and missional cooperation between United Methodists and other Christians as a valid witness to the unity of the body of Christ.

Constitutional Structure  http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/constitutional-structure
The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. Duties are divided among bodies that include the General Conference, the Council of Bishops and the Judicial Council. Each of these entities is required by our Constitution, a foundational document, to be part of our structure, and plays a significant role in the life of the church.

General Conference: The General Conference, the primary legislative body of The United Methodist Church, is the only body that speaks officially for the church. Meeting once every four years to determine legislation affecting connectional matters, it is composed of no fewer than 600 and no more than 1,000 delegates.

Council of Bishops: The Council of Bishops gives general oversight of the ministry and mission of the church and spiritual leadership to the entire church connection. Composed of all active and retired bishops, the council meets as a group at least once a year. Bishops are elected by Jurisdictional Conferences and assigned to a particular area, made up of one or more annual conferences. Each bishop provides oversight of the ministry and mission of annual conferences in his or her area and appoints all clergy to their places of service.

Judicial Council: As the denomination’s highest judicial body or "court," the Judicial Council interprets church law and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. Its nine members, made up of laity and clergy, are elected by the General Conference and normally meet twice a year to consider whether actions of the various church bodies adhere to the constitution and follow the rules outlined in the Book of Discipline.
Organization: The Church as Connection
http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/organization-church-as-connection

United Methodist leaders often speak of the denomination as “the connection.” This concept has been central to Methodism from its beginning. The United Methodist structure and organization began as a means of accomplishing the mission of spreading scriptural holiness. Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability and developed what he called the “connexion,” an interlocking system of classes, societies, and annual conferences. Today, our denomination continues to be organized in a “connectional” system, which enables us to carry out our mission in unity and strength. Every local church is linked to an interconnected network of organizations that join together in mission and ministry, allowing us to accomplish far more than any one church or person could alone. Within the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church, conferences provide the primary groupings of people and churches for discernment and decision-making. Wesley described Christian conferencing as a spiritual discipline through which God’s grace may be revealed. At every level of the connection, church leaders and members come together in conversation, or conferencing, to discuss important issues and discover God’s will for the church. The word, conference, thus refers to both the assembly and organization of people as well as the process of discerning God’s call together.

1. **General Conference** - As the primary legislative body, General Conference is the only entity with the authority to speak on behalf of the entire United Methodist Church. The General Conference meets every four years to consider the business and mission of the church. An equal number of lay and clergy delegates are elected from United Methodist bodies around the world to decide matters of policy and procedure for the denomination.

2. **Jurisdictional Conferences** - There are five geographic jurisdictions, or regions, in the United States, which are comprised of 8 to 15 annual conferences each. In the United States, there are five Jurisdictional Conferences as follows: Southeastern, South Central, North Central, Northeastern and Western. New England is part of the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

3. **Central Conferences** - In Africa, Europe and the Philippines, there are seven geographical regions, called "central conferences."

4. **Annual Conferences** - The annual conference is a geographical region (comprising districts), an organizational body (made up of elected lay and clergy members), and a yearly meeting.

5. **Districts** - Each congregation in the United States is part of a district, which is an administrative grouping of approximately 40 to 80 or more churches in a geographic area.

6. **Charge Conferences and Local Churches** - As the visible presence or body of Christ, the local church is the place where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world.

**New England Conference**  http://www.neumc.org/aboutus

The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God. 800-601

**Our Vision** - Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust, we will boldly proclaim Christ to the world.

**Our Mission** - To equip, connect, and support local, regional, and global ministries to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and to serve all in his name.
Our Five Critical Values:

- **Spiritual Life** – We are a people who yearn for God and seek healing and spiritual life through Jesus Christ in order to be united in trust and mission.
- **Evangelism and Church Growth** – As a people who yearn for God, we recognize that others yearn with us, and we will reach new people with the Gospel of Christ.
- **Area Diversity** – As a people who yearn for God, we recognize that racism and all forms of discrimination undermine our ability to further the ministry of Christ.
- **Equipping Leadership** – As a people who yearn for God, we will equip our churches, clergy, and laity for unabashed pursuit of effective ministry.
- **Stewardship** – As a people who yearn for God, we will be connected and accountable to God and to each other in the ways all our resources support the shared ministries of our congregations, our conference in New England, and our Church throughout the world.

The Annual Conference: This is the basic body of the church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote on all constitutional amendments, on the election of clergy and lay delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences, on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members and on the ordination of clergy. Once a year clergy and lay representatives from each pastoral charge meet for an Annual Conference meeting. The Bishop presides at the meeting. During this event, they worship together, share Bible study, hear stories of ministry and determine the programs and direction of ministry for the Annual Conference for the next year. They also make business decisions necessary to support the ministry of the Annual Conference and its churches. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay members. As listed in the roles and responsibilities, one of the Lay Leaders’ responsibilities is to serve as an interpreter of the actions and programs of the Annual Conference and the General Church. Whether you are the Lay Member of Annual Conference or not you will find Annual Conference beneficial and spiritually rewarding. It will help acquaint you with the work of the church. You will be proud you are a United Methodist.

The Episcopacy - Bishops are elected by the Jurisdictional Conference in the United States and by the Central Conference in other parts of the world. The conference then, on recommendation of its Committee on Episcopacy, assigns the bishop to a residence. The College of Bishops of the Jurisdictional or Central Conference assigns the bishops to residential and presidential supervision over one or more Annual Conferences, which assignment is known as an “Episcopal area”. The Bishop, with the assistance of the district superintendents, makes all pastoral appointments in the conference.

The Superintendency - The task of superintending in The United Methodist Church resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendents, with each possessing distinct and collegial responsibilities. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The purpose of the superintendent is to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry. Those who superintend carry primary responsibility for ordering the life of the Church. It is their task to enable the gathered Church to worship and to evangelize faithfully. See BOD ¶ 401 for more detail.

The Conference Lay Leader - The conference lay leader is the elected leader of conference laity and will have responsibility for fostering awareness of the role of the laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission of the Church and enabling and supporting lay participation in the planning and decision-making processes of the annual conference, district, and local church in cooperation with the bishop, district superintendents, and pastors. BOD ¶ 607.1

The Cabinet - The cabinet under the leadership of the bishop is the expression of superintending leadership in and through the annual conference. It is expected to speak to the conference and for the conference to the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region encompassed by the conference. The cabinet is thus the body in which the individual district superintendents are held accountable for their work, both for conference and district responsibilities. The bishop and all district superintendents make up the cabinet. BOD ¶424.2 & .3
**District Superintendent** - The district superintendent, appointed by the bishop, shall establish working relationships with staff/pastor-parish committees, clergy, district lay leaders and other lay leadership to develop faithful & effective systems of ministry within the district as provided in *The Book of Discipline* ¶ 417-424. The appointment is for a term of six plus extension of 2 years, with a maximum of 8 years.

**District Lay Leader** - The district lay leader is the elected leader of the district laity and shall be a professing member of a local church. The district lay leader shall provide for the training of local church lay leaders for their ministries in the local churches in relation to ¶249. The District Lay Leader shall have responsibility for fostering awareness of the role of the laity both within congregations and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission for the Church, and supporting and enabling lay participation in the planning and decision-making process of the district and the local churches in cooperation with the district superintendent and pastors. The district lay leader will meet regularly with the district superintendent to discuss the state of the district, the Church, and the needs for ministry both locally and globally. Refer to the rest of ¶ 660 for further details.  

**Districts in the New England Conference**  
Katahdin  
Many Waters  
Green Mountain  
Granite  
Commonwealth West  
Commonwealth East  
Seacoast

**Definition of a Local Church**  
The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.  

**The Function of the Local Church**  
The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

**Church Membership**  
The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection.  
The membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith. The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other local churches.
Local Church Organization
The basic organizational plan for the local church shall include provision for the following units:
Charge conference
Church council
Committee on pastor/staff-parish relations
Board of trustees
Committee on finance
Committee on nominations and leadership development
And such other elected leaders, commissions, councils, committees and task forces as the charge conference may determine. See BOD ¶ 244-259 for more detail information on these units.

The Pastor
A pastor is an ordained elder, probationary deacon (according to 1992 BOD), associate member provisional elder, or local pastor approved by vote of the clergy session and may be appointed by the bishop to be in charge of a station, circuit, cooperative parish, extension ministry, ecumenical shared ministry, or to a church of another denomination or on the staff of one such appointment. BOD ¶ 339

Responsibilities and duties of elders and licensed pastors:
1) The responsibilities of elders are derived from the authority given in ordination. Elders have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service and thus serve in the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ’s love and justice. Elders are authorized to preach and teach the Word, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops.
2) Licensed pastors share with the elders the responsibilities and duties of a pastor for this fourfold ministry, within the context of their appointment. See BOD ¶ 340 for more details.

The Local Church Lay Leader
Out of the professing membership of each local church, there shall be elected by the charge conference a lay leader who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church and shall have the following responsibilities:

a) fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;
b) meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;
c) membership in the charge conference and the church council, the committee on finance, the committee on nominations and leadership development, and the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations, where, along with the pastor, the lay leader shall serve as an interpreter of the actions and programs of the annual conference and the general Church (to be better equipped to comply with this responsibility, it is recommended that the lay leader also serve as a lay member of annual conference);
d) continuing involvement in study and training opportunities to develop a growing understanding of the Church’s reason for existence and the types of ministry that will most effectively fulfill the Church’s mission;
e) assisting in advising the church council of opportunities available and the needs expressed for a more effective ministry of the church through its laity in the community;
f) informing the laity of training opportunities provided by the annual conference. Where possible, the lay leader shall attend training opportunities in order to strengthen his or her work. The lay leader is urged to become a certified lay servant.

In instances where more than one church is on a charge, the charge conference shall elect additional lay leaders so that there will be one lay leader in each church. Associate lay leaders may be elected to work with the lay leader in any local church. BOD ¶ 251.1
Ministry of the Laity
All of God’s people, in all places and at all times, are called to love and serve. Each person is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, and that ministry takes place in all aspects of daily life, in and outside the church. As a leader among the laity, your ministry is not just a “job,” but a spiritual endeavor. You are a spiritual leader now, and others will look to you for spiritual leadership. What does this mean? First, all persons who follow Jesus are called to grow spiritually through the practice of various Christian habits (or “means of grace”) such as prayer, Bible study, private and corporate worship, acts of service, Christian conferencing, and so on. Jesus taught his disciples practices of spiritual growth and leadership that you, as a disciple, are to share with others as they look to you to be a model and guide. Second, it means that you always keep your eye on the main reasons for any ministry—to help others grow to a mature faith in God that moves them to action on behalf of others, especially “the least” (see Matthew 25:31-46). This is an aspect of “disciple making,” which is the ultimate goal of all that we do in the church. We rejoice in God’s Call to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Claimed by baptism and nurtured by God’s redeeming love and grace, we are compelled to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are called to an every-moment ministry. As described in the Gospels, Jesus Christ calls all persons to do a variety of things. You are called to be in lay ministry as a Lay Leader.

Ministry of the laity is:
- Living faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in our everyday life.
- Responding to God’s gifts of grace and call to serve.
- Using our gifts and resources to serve others.
- Loving our neighbors.
- Living out the Gospels in all our relationships – at home, at school, at work, at play, in our communities and in our world.
- All of the above and more!

In our congregations, we act to:
- Empower one another to be in ministry where we live, work and play
- Equip and help each other with knowledge, skills and opportunities
- Support each other in the mission to which God sends us

Membership & Service of Church Lay Leader:
- Charge Conference
- Church Council Committee on Finance
- Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development
- SPRC Pastor Parish Relations Committee
- Lay member to Annual Conference (recommended, but not required)
- The Lay Leader is urged to become a certified lay servant

Understanding your role as a church lay leader (http://www.nyac.com/files/fileslibrary/handbookforlayleaders.pdf)
- Become a partner in ministry with your pastor by praying, visioning, sharing, and working together. This involves frequent communication no less than weekly. Listen to the congregation and provide objective input to your pastor. You and your pastor are a team and teaming means sharing responsibilities. Know your pastors schedule and when your pastor is not available to the congregation, help make sure the ministry of the church continues and worship services are led by another clergy or lay servant. Work with your pastor to actively promote, plan and implement Laity Sunday to assure laity involvement and that the church is educated on the many lay ministries in your church and throughout the Conference and the General Church. Make yourself available and share responsibilities and events with your pastor, such as assisting in visiting the sick, homebound, and visitors to your church. Don’t be territorial and remember your pastor’s and your ministry are about God and Jesus Christ—not about us. Your pastor has a responsibility to make sure the congregation knows you are partners and a part of a team working to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

July 1, 2020
➢ Become a partner with your congregation, communicate with them and make sure they know you are there to help them and the church. Listen to congregational concerns and issues and communicate those to the pastor, while providing information to the congregation that may alleviate their concerns. If your church has more than one service and different type services, such as traditional and contemporary, consider having an Associate Lay Leader to assure a Lay Leader is attending all services and each service is aware of their Lay Leader.

➢ Be involved in your church’s stewardship emphasis and assure the emphasis is ongoing throughout the year. Promote giving by keeping the congregation educated on all the ministries involved in your church and our connectional system. Learn and educate your congregation on how their mission shares are used in ministry throughout the world. Help identify your congregation’s gifts and graces and allow those with a passion to serve to fulfill their ministry without facing bureaucratic obstacles and roadblocks. Encourage new ministries and outreach to triumph. Let nothing stand in the way of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

➢ Educate yourself on the United Methodist Church, the connectional system, and the New England Annual Conference. It is recommended the Lay or Associate Lay Leaders be the representative for your church at Annual Conference. Become familiar with the training and ministries available to your church and laity through the General, Jurisdictional, and Annual Conference and ensure your church takes advantage of them. Learn how delegates to General and Jurisdictional conferences are elected, identify those in your congregation that have a passion to be delegates to those conferences, and help them nominate themselves for that service. Identify people in your congregation that have a passion to serve in ministries of the Conference and provide the necessary information to your District Lay Leader to nominate them.

➢ Continue your Christian education and leadership skills and encourage your church laity to do the same. Become involved in cluster groups such as Disciple, Emmaus Walk (or similar) and take courses through the Lay Ministry Program. Look for leadership training which promote outreach and discipleship.

➢ Promote the use of teams in your church to identify new ministries and areas of outreach and as that ministry is implemented allow teams to move on to other new areas. While many of our committees are necessary for the operations and functions of the church they sometimes get too involved in the operational element and lose sight of our vision.

➢ You are a voting member on the charge conference and the church council, the committee on finance, the committee on lay leadership, and the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations. It is recommended that you or the Associate Lay Leader be present at each meeting, along with your pastor, to serve as an interpreter of the actions and programs of the annual conference and the general Church—a good reason for the Lay Leader/Associate Lay Leader to be the Church Lay Member of Annual Conference.

➢ Promote effective relationships between you and your pastor, which begins with open minds and mutual respect. This starts with an understanding that the Church is God’s Church and only by His Grace and Love we can be a part of this great ministry. Congregations respond in a positive way to Pastor-Lay leadership when they see that both are spirit filled and working in harmony for effective ministry. This kind of partnership ministry, with the whole congregation involved, becomes very important when pastoral leadership changes.

➢ Identify and work with those laity that are called to licensed or ordained ministry. You, your pastor and the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee have an awesome responsibility to identify and work with those laity that are called to licensed or ordained ministry. This may be the most important job you have as a Lay Leader, which is to help others heed God’s call, and you are encouraged to be aware of that job and the process involved.

➢ Actively support the work of the United Methodist Men, Women, Youth, Children, and other organized lay groups.

➢ Serve with love, with joy, and with enthusiasm, with courage to move as God directs; and with guidance from the Holy Spirit through daily prayer. Length of service for Lay Leaders is recommended to be three years. However, many churches have specific and different requirements which may warrant a change to the three year rule and that may be determined by each church.
You can always get help to better perform your role and responsibilities by contacting your District Lay Leader, Conference Lay Leader, referring to the Book of Discipline, and most importantly, by the partnering relationship you have with your pastor.

**Responsibilities of the Lay Leader:**
- Functions as the primary lay representative of lay people in the congregation.
- Engages in spiritual practices that build a relationship of attentiveness to God’s will and directions.
- Continuously looks for ways to build the awareness of the role of laity as Christian disciples within the congregation and through activities of daily life.
- Collaborates with other church leaders to find ways within the community of faith to recognize the ministries of laity in worship, in communication, and in other programs.
- Advises the church of the opportunities for ministry that will improve the quality of life in the church and in the community.
- Meets regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the opportunities for ministry.
- Represents laity on the church leadership team and other committees (teams) of the congregation such as the finance committee, pastor-parish relations committee, lay leadership committee.
- Is accountable to the charge conference through the church leadership team.

**Opportunities to Grow as a Lay Leader**
- Servant Leadership
- Lay Servant Ministries
- Certified Lay Minister
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Spiritual Gifts

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP**
When you accepted the position of Lay Leader you accepted a call to be a Servant Leader. All persons called to Christian spiritual leadership are called to servanthood. So, what exactly is Servant Leadership? The Apostle Paul tells us, “You serve Christ the Lord! Whatever you do, do it heartily, from the soul, as unto the Lord rather than for men. It is the Lord whom you serve.” A Servant Leader is first a servant and then a leader. This style of leadership is unselfish and humble. It does not covet prestige or power. It gives away power and control. It is about the concern that others’ needs are being served, thereby unleashing the potential in others to serve, to encourage and develop the gifts of ministry and mission within others following the example of Jesus Christ. It leads by example, listens deeply, heals, is determined and persistent. It is about “power with” and “power within”, not “power over.” It is willing to do whatever is needed and right to attain the objectives of ministry. Seek to find your calling within God’s plan.

**Lay Servant Ministries**
Lay Servants are to serve the local church or charge in any way in which their witness or leadership and service inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship. This includes the interpretation of scriptures, doctrine, organization, and ministries of the church.

A Lay Servant is:
- An active supportive member of a United Methodist Church.
- Eager to serve through the church.
- Well-informed on the Scripture, the doctrine, heritage, organization, and the life of The United Methodist Church.
- Committed to witnessing through church and community leadership, care-giving ministries, and spoken communication.
- Willing to improve his/her skills for service.
Certified Lay Minister
A certified lay minister is a certified lay servant, certified lay missioner, or equivalent as defined by their central conference, who is called and equipped to conduct public worship, care for the congregation, assist in program leadership, develop new and existing faith communities, preach the Word, lead small groups, or establish community outreach ministries as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergyperson. A certified lay minister is assigned by a district superintendent in accordance with ¶419.2.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, encouraged everyone to practice what he called the means of grace, those practices that open the way for God’s grace in our lives. He believed these practices should be a part of daily life. He did not see the disciplines as church laws but as a way of discipleship. Today, Christian leaders must cultivate a relationship with God in order to lead others in spiritual growth. Spiritual leadership comes only from the overflow of our relationship with God. As a spiritual leader, you have the opportunity to model spiritual maturity and discipline. The practice of Wesley’s means of grace would include:

➢ Prayer
➢ Bible reading
➢ Fasting
➢ Holy Communion
➢ Christian conferencing
➢ Worship
➢ Devotional time
➢ Acts of compassion, justice and mercy.

Spiritual Gifts
God gives each believer certain abilities and gifts to prepare her or him for ministry. These gifts enable us to make unique contributions to the church, our society, and the world. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Paul says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” Just as we were saved by grace, so God prepares us by grace and empowers us for meaningful service. All spiritual gifts are valuable and equally important, according to 1 Corinthians 12. Spiritual gifts are truly from God and are to be used for God’s glory. Remember that natural talents are not necessarily the same as spiritual gifts, but any talents and skills can also be used to glorify God. Various spiritual gifts are listed three places in the New Testament: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-28; and Ephesians 4:11-13. As you begin and continue in leadership, you will want to:

➢ use a spiritual gifts assessment tool to discover your gifts
➢ discover the area of ministry you are passionate about
➢ seek out ways to use your spiritual gifts
➢ thank God as you receive and/or recognize your spiritual gifts.

Lay Leadership beyond the local church

District Lay Leader’s Ministry
➢ Elected by the Annual Conference
➢ Member of the Annual Conference
➢ Member of the Conference Board of Laity
➢ Serve on the District Council on Ministries (in most districts)
➢ Serve on the District Superintendency Committee

Tasks include:
➢ Work with District Superintendent as partners in ministry.
➢ Listen to the laity and clergy of the district.
➢ Study and attend training and meetings related to your role.
➢ Participate in budget and planning activities.
➢ Assure that lay activities are supported.
➢ Share stories about successful activities of the laity in churches, in the District and with the Conference.
➢ Promote local churches’ Laity Sunday celebrations.
➢ Provide training for Local Church Lay Leaders by the District, and publicize training offered by the Conference and Jurisdiction.
➢ Be a consultant and resource for local church lay persons.
➢ Act as a liaison between churches, between the District and the local church, between the clergy and the laity, between the Conference and the local church, and keep open and effective channels of communication.

**Conference Lay Leader’s Ministry**

➢ Elected by the Annual Conference
➢ Member of the Annual Conference
➢ Chairperson of the Conference Board of Laity
➢ Member of the Executive Committee
➢ Member of Conference Connectional Ministries
➢ Serve on Conference Committee on Nominations
➢ Serve on Committee on Episcopacy
➢ Serve on other boards as designated by virtue of office

**Tasks include:**

➢ Work with Bishop as partners in ministry.
➢ Advocate for the role of the laity in the life of the church.
➢ Work to enable and support lay participation in the planning and decision-making processes of the Annual Conference, the Districts, and the Local Church by working with the Local Pastors, the District Superintendents, Conference staff and the Bishop.
➢ Foster awareness of the role of the laity within the congregation as well as in their homes, work places, communities, and the world, in accomplishing the mission of the church.
➢ Relate to the organized lay groups in the Conference (United Methodist Men, Women and Youth.)
➢ Attend Annual Meeting of the National Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders.
➢ Attend meetings of the Northeast Jurisdictional Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders.

**The Ministry of All Christians**  *(from UMC.org)*

¶ 126. The Heart of Christian Ministry—The heart of Christian ministry is Christ’s ministry of outreaching love. Christian ministry is the expression of the mind and mission of Christ by a community of Christians that demonstrates a common life of gratitude and devotion, witness and service, celebration and discipleship. All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment. The forms of this ministry are diverse in locale, in interest, and in denominational accent, yet always catholic in spirit and outreach.

¶ 127. The Ministry of the Laity—The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ’s outreaching love. Lay members of The United Methodist Church are, by history and calling, active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); every layperson is called to be missional. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and The United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission.

¶ 128. The Ministry of the Community—The church as the community of the new covenant has participated in Christ’s ministry of grace across the years and around the world. It stretches out to human needs wherever love and service may convey God’s love and ours. The outreach of such ministries knows no limits. Beyond the diverse forms of ministry is this ultimate concern: that all persons will be brought into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ and be renewed after the image of their creator (Colossians 3:10). This means that all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free.
129. Ministry as Gift and Task—This ministry of all Christians in Christ’s name and spirit is both a gift and a task. The gift is God’s unmerited grace; the task is unstinting service. Entrance into the church is acknowledged in baptism and may include persons of all ages. In baptism, water is administered in the name of the triune God (specified in the ritual as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) by an authorized person, and the Holy Spirit is invoked with the laying on of hands, ordinarily in the presence of the congregation. In this sacrament the church claims God’s promise and the seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). Baptism is followed by nurture and the consequent awareness by the baptized of the claim to ministry in Christ placed upon their lives by the church. Such a ministry is confirmed by the church when the pledges of baptism are accepted through profession of faith, and renewed for life and mission. Entrance into and acceptance of ministry begin in a local church, but the impulse to minister always moves one beyond the congregation toward the whole human community. God’s gifts are richly diverse for a variety of services; yet all have dignity and worth.

130. Faithful Ministry—The people of God, who are the church made visible in the world, must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvincing. There can be no evasion or delegation of this responsibility; the church is either faithful as a witnessing and serving community, or it loses its vitality and its impact on an unbelieving world.

131. The Unity of Ministry in Christ—There is but one ministry in Christ, but there are diverse gifts and evidences of God’s grace in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-16). The ministry of all Christians is complementary. No ministry is subservient to another. All United Methodists are summoned and sent by Christ to live and work together in mutual interdependence and to be guided by the Spirit into the truth that frees and the love that reconciles.

132. The Journey of a Connectional People—Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.

We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith, including Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (¶ 104); by sharing together a constitutional polity, including a leadership of general superintendency; by sharing a common mission, which we seek to carry out by working together in and through conferences that reflect the inclusive and missional character of our fellowship; by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.

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Scriptural Guidelines

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love…” (Ephesians 4:1-2 NRSV)

“So, my son, throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me—the whole congregation saying Amen!—to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2 The Message)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV)

“But whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10: 43b-45 NRSV)

“If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you’ll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment’s notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me.” (John 12:26 The Message)
"To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another he gives the gift of special knowledge. The spirit gives special faith to another, and to someone else he gives the power to heal the sick. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said." (1 Corinthians 12:8-10 New Living Translation)

Resources:

http://www.umc.org/
http://www.neumc.org/
http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/ministry-of-the-laity

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016

https://www.cokesbury.com/product/9781501829727/guidelines-ay-leaderlay-member/

Sources:

All Book of Discipline (BOD) notations are from the 2016 edition, unless otherwise noted.

Job Descriptions & Leadership Training for Local Church Leaders, 2009-2012

Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church lay leader/lay member

Connecting Your Congregation and Your Annual Conference
Sandy Zeigler Jackson General Board of Discipleship

The New York Annual Conference Handbook For Lay Leaders,

2014 Handbook FOR Local Church Lay Leaders, Memphis Conference The United Methodist Church

General Guidelines for Local Church Lay Leadership, North Alabama Conference
http://www.umcna.org/layleadershipguidelines

LOCAL CHURCH LAY LEADER MANUAL
The Vital Connection Between the Clergy and the Laity
The Board of Laity Western North Carolina Conference
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