

LAY LEADERSHIP AREA

Purpose

Lay Leadership is one of the four areas within the South Carolina United Methodist Conference Connectional Ministries program. Lay Leadership serves to unite laity across the Conference and to encourage laity to be engaged in their local church and active in their districts. Laity of the South Carolina United Methodist Annual Conference play a pivotal role in the making of disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. From the smallest churches to the larger membership churches, we have a common purpose-to continue to share the Good News with others and to be a part of building the kingdom. The Conference Lay Leader serves as the Convener of this area.

Key moments

These last few years have been very different from what we came to be accustomed to in the past. Many gatherings and meetings were done virtually and surprisingly, we managed to continue our work without meeting many times in person. Ministry and mission continued throughout our conference, and we are happy to be meeting in person for Annual Conference 2023. We stayed connected during these last few years, but it will be nice to gather in person. Lay Leadership Area of Connectional Ministries continued to meet many times virtually. Our area is comprised of several lay lead groups that are such a blessing to our conference.

The United Women in Faith had a name change last year and we celebrate all the good and worthy projects they continue to share with others. They donated \$10,000 to the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign and celebrated their 50th Annual Meeting at First United Methodist Church in Myrtle Beach in October 2022 with over 200 in attendance. Their 2023 mission trip will be "The Asheville to Nashville Adventure" March 27-30, 2023.

Likewise, the United Methodist Men (Men in Ministry) continued to focus on gatherings that bring men together to worship and grow their faith. An event in February 2023 was held at Mt. Horeb UMC in Lexington and was very successful.

Lay Servant Ministries (LSM) Conference Co-Directors, Becky Green and David Salter have attended workshops to learn more about several new lay servant courses including training for Certified Lay Ministers and more. Lay Servants have been very active in Safe Sanctuary Trainer Training in hopes these lay servants will be available to go to local churches to present the Safe Sanctuary training.

Our youth held a one day Revolution event that saw many young people give their life to Christ. Immerse was held at Asbury Hills and again, a great event for the youth of our conference. Chris Lynch does a wonderful job along with his many volunteers to give opportunities for our future, our young people, to live out dedication to a Christian life.

We are blessed to have all of these wonderful lay led programs and groups here in South Carolina that enable the laity to serve God and others. Lay Leadership is as strong as we are because of United Women in Faith, United Methodist Men, Lay Servant Ministries, our amazing youth program and all the laity who serve in the local churches.

Objectives for the coming year include:

- 1) Continue our work to engage and equip laity across the Annual Conference with the resources and information needed to assist the local churches with their outreach and service.
- 2) Continue to encourage churches to have discussions within their local communities that focus on mission, ministry, and the response to racism and homelessness.
- 3) Continue to build lay and clergy partnerships.
- 4) Have District Lay Leaders work with local church lay leaders to advance the Four Priorities as a starting point for their local church's mission and ministry.

Action(s) required from the 2023 Annual Conference: None

If you take away nothing else from this report know this...

That laity is very important in the life of each local church, each district, and the SC Annual Conference. Laity working in partnership with clergy can impact our local communities, our state, and our entire world. Laity are called to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others. Let us all remember we all have a part in our church, our Annual Conference, and our denomination.

Narrative

These are extraordinary times in our church and world. As we navigate the future, let us be guided by a vision filled with action. We are all called to be God's servants wherever we may find ourselves. Let us love one another as God loves us. May we continue to be a witness to the world of God's grace and mercy. Jesus gave us the Great Commandment, to "love one another as I have loved you." May the world see us as ones who love and respect each other even though we may not all agree on certain matters. We are all called to be disciples and to live our lives in a manner that reflects the love of Jesus Christ.

Other ministry leaders

We are grateful for the District Lay Leaders (DLL) who give their time and talents to serve each district. We appreciate the support they offer to their respective District Superintendents and the laity in their district. If you do not know your DLL, take the time to get to know them and invite them to your church. Serving presently are Jeff Fogle, Anderson; Gillis McAllister, Charleston; Michael Jennings, Columbia; Tracy Johnson, Florence; Tony Watson, Greenwood; Chandra Dillard, Greenville; Sarah Johnson, Hartsville; Michael Toms, Marion; Shelia Shanklin, Orangeburg; Bob James, Rock Hill; and Rick Hammett, Spartanburg; and Wally Cole, Walterboro.

Special thanks to the Lay Leadership Advisory Board: Lisa Fusco, chair; Bob James, DLL representative; Michael Toms, DLL representative; Marlene Spencer, United Women in Faith representative; Herman Lightsey, Men in Ministry representative; Sylvia Greene, Lay Servant Ministry representative; and Tyler Cattenhead, young adult representative.

A word of thanks and appreciation to Rev. Millie Smith, Connectional Ministries Conference Director and the Connectional Ministries staff liaison to Lay Leadership, Tammy Fulmer, for their continued support and assistance to Lay Leadership.

Barbara Ware, Conference Lay Leader;
Jeff Fogle, Associate Conference Lay Leader;
Cassie Watson, Lay Leadership Secretary.
Rev. Joey McDonald serves as the Lay Leadership Area representative from the Cabinet.