

Lay Servant Ministries

Purpose:

Lay Servant Ministries is a program of lay leadership development. It is an equipping and empowering system which provides laity the opportunity to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ who then go and make other disciples. The primary focus of this ministry is formation of better equipped and excited disciples for service in His kingdom.

Key moments from the previous year:

The 2025 yearly Lay Servant Academy drew more participants than we have seen since COVID interrupted our time together in person. Toni Taylor, a layperson, presented the morning session on leading and teaching adults. Her session was well received and folks left wanting more. Therefore, we have invited her to present again at the 2026 Academy on August 1, 2026.

Bishop Kenneth Carder was present for the Academy and helped to lead along with Sandy Shaffer of the Greenwood District the afternoon session of Ministry with the Forgotten. Bishop Carder wrote both the textbook and leaders guide for this textbook.

Introduction to Youth Basic was facilitated by Pamela Goodwine-Glover. All afternoon overview sessions were well received.

Many of our districts have seen very successful lay servant schools this past year. One district had around 100 participants, and several others, 50+ participants. Again, the numbers are increasing once again.

Co-Director David Salter attended the 2025 CLM Networking and AACDLSM conferences. He was scheduled to attend the 2026 conferences in Nashville, but as of this writing it has been postponed due to the significant damage in Nashville from the ice storm of 2026. At these conferences, many ideas are shared from all over the denomination, and new courses for Lay Servant Ministries are introduced.

Many districts are beginning to offer more diverse Advanced Courses to better fit the needs of our local churches.

The Conference Committee meets via Zoom to connect with one another and share how the ministry is going in each district.

Objectives for the coming year:

A major objective in the coming year is to connect with more of our local church youth. Many of our districts are now offering the Youth Addendum as part of the Basic Course and are welcoming our youth into the program. We are striving to welcome greater numbers of youth into lay servant ministry.

There is need to increase the visibility of Lay Servant Ministries in the local churches. Many of our churches have no lay servants at all. An objective in the coming year will be to better educate clergy and laity on the purpose and value of lay servant ministries. Many folks still think of this ministry as lay speaking. Our objective is to increase awareness of how lay servants may serve in ways other than speaking.

Another objective is to not only educate clergy and laity about lay servant ministries, but to help clergy understand that these certified or local church lay servants should be incorporated into the local church to help in ministry. These folks have been trained in prayer, spiritual gifts, worship, United Methodist polity, United Methodist heritage, ministry with folks with dementia, and numerous other ministries. Lay Servants should be recognized and tapped for service. Clergy and Laity partnerships are important in the ministry of the church.

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference:

No official action, other than to help us make Lay Servant Ministries more visible in our conference, districts, and local churches.

If you take away nothing else from this report, know this:

If you take nothing else from this report, please know that Lay Servant Ministries is for ALL laity. The Basic lay servant course would make a great study for anyone entering into membership in The United Methodist Church. The Basic Class, which is the required first Lay Servant Class, is an overview of Wesleyan theology and practice.

We encourage you to find a Lay Servant School near you and try it out, you will never be the same.

Narrative:

Lay servant ministries originated in early Methodism. As the Methodist movement grew, there were more society meetings than there were clergy to serve them. John Wesley realized that laity could be effective leaders of these meetings. From this early movement, lay servant ministry continues today to equip laity in leadership in local churches, districts, conferences, and the general church. Lay servant ministry has grown into a discipleship program which helps to form better disciples of Jesus Christ. The motto is: Leading – Caring – Communicating.

Respectfully submitted,
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