Lay Leaders:
What You Need To Know
Visions for Ministry: Leadership of a Local Church Lay Leader

Oklahoma Annual Conference Board of Laity

As a leader, you will be looked to as a resource and example for all the laity who serves in your congregation’s leadership. You are in a position to influence how well your congregation achieves its purpose to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Your role as Lay Leader is defined in the 2012 Book of Discipline, paragraph 251. This job definition includes participation as a member of several important church committees / teams. Also, the Guidelines booklet from Cokesbury, “Lay Leader / Lay Member,” can be helpful to you.

The Oklahoma Conference Board of Laity believes the following practical ideas can help you serve and lead in your congregation:

Spiritual Servant Leadership

A. Personal Life and Practices - First and foremost, the life of a church Lay Leader should demonstrate an intentional, measurable effort to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ, participating regularly in Bible study, prayer and other means of grace. A Lay Leader should practice spiritual disciplines as outlined by the membership requirements of a local United Methodist Church:

1. **Prayer**: pray regularly and faithfully for your church and its mission, its members, its pastors, its programs and your part in its leadership;
2. **Presence**: be present for worship and Sunday School every Sunday when possible;
3. **Gifts**: time, talent and wealth;
4. **Service**: serve in at least one ministry in your local church;
5. **Witness**: share your faith in Jesus Christ, in words and actions, to persons who have not heard the gospel message.

Finally, a Lay Leader should join with the pastor in practicing the “Five Expectations” for leaders and in promoting the “Five Practices” for congregations:

The Five Expectations for Leaders:

1. Christ-centered
2. Fruitfulness
3. Excellence
4. Accountability
5. Collaboration
The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations:
1) Radical Hospitality 2) Passionate Worship 3) Intentional Faith Development
4) Risk-Taking Mission and Service 5) Extravagant Generosity

B. Leadership – Partnering with your Pastor

a. Support your Pastor  
b. Pray for and with your pastor regularly.  
c. Meet with him / her regularly, at least monthly.  
d. Provide public support and private insight for your pastor.

1. Mission/Purpose  
a. Mission Statement – Work with your pastor to make sure that your congregation has an active, God-given, Christ-centered mission statement for YOUR congregation in this time and this place that is being used to guide the activities and ministries. This “alignment” is critical, helping to guide decisions on what ideas to pursue and what unfruitful ministries to stop doing. Remember the “Great Commission” that Jesus gave and the stated mission of the United Methodist Church to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”  
b. Strategic Planning – Work with your pastor to assure that it occurs, and that measurable goals / strategies are developed and reviewed monthly.

Remind others in lay leadership of the mission at every opportunity, to keep them focused upon the mission of the church. Again, coordinate with your pastor to assure a consistent message regarding the mission and strategic focus for the church.

C. Leadership Activities - While your actual work as Lay Leader will develop out of your individual gifts, calling and passion, here are some specific ideas to enhance your effectiveness:

1. Model a partnership with the Pastor, meeting regularly with him or her.  
2. Relate effectively to the congregation and other local leaders.  
3. Encourage teamwork between the pastor and lay leadership.  
4. Work to strengthen the relationship between the Pastor and the congregation.  
5. Communicate with the District Lay Leader periodically.  
6. Meet with Lay Leaders from other congregations and promote the sharing of good ideas.  
7. Attend at least 2 learning events in the district or state per year.  
8. Attend Training for Lay Servant Ministry.  
9. Support the United Methodist ministry in its stated mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”
10. Inspire and motivate the congregation to move in an outward, evangelical focus.
11. Promote good ideas with leaders of committees and teams.
12. Organize learning/spiritual events for laity, or see that they are organized.
13. Communicate the joy and synergism of serving Christ together.
14. Be positive and focused on the main thing (“the mission”), making disciples of Jesus Christ.
15. Focus longer-term to see the bigger picture.
16. Practice excellent communication skills—intuitive and analytical, spoken and written.
17. Help to create opportunities for people to serve.

D. Advocacy - The lay leader serves as primary advocate for and representative of the laity in the congregation and must be a professing member of the congregation. A prior part of this advocacy work includes the recognition that the lay leader should be a person of faith and integrity. As an “extension” of the congregation in the community, the lay leader also will need to be aware of the reputation the church has in the community and work either to enhance it or improve it. The lay leader is also an advocate for the needs of the community; to inspire the congregation to care for those beyond the walls and windows of the church.

E. Building Awareness - You build awareness of the role of laity within the congregation by the example shown by your leadership. For example, the lay leader can be physically present as co-leader with the appointed leader in meetings, worship, and the community. The lay leader encourages others to use their gifts to participate in leading the mission and ministry of the congregation.

    In addition, you will help to foster awareness of the ministry of the laity through their ministry in the home, workplace, community, and the world. For example, invite people of all ages to respond to how they have lived as faithful Christians during the past week, including in the workplace. They might share those answers in worship, small groups, newsletters, or bulletins.

    Recognize the steady ministry of groups and individuals who live out their faith in service by regularly volunteering in schools and the community. Encourage church members to use their skills—such as carpentry, plumbing, teaching, tax preparation, nursing and so on—to help each other or persons in the community and throughout the world. Encourage church members to discover and use their spiritual gifts to strengthen the church. Learn about spiritual gifts that are listed in the Bible in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28-30; and Ephesians 4:11-13.

F. Recognize and Celebrate the Ministry of the Laity - One of your tasks will be to find ways within the community of faith to recognize and celebrate all the ministries of the laity. Here are some suggestions.

    1. Observe Laity Sunday, annually, usually the third Sunday of October.
2. Invite community groups such as fire fighters, teachers or city workers to worship and recognize their work as ministry.
3. Be sensitive to interfaith issues in your community.
4. Recognize laity who have become lay servants/speakers and announce training events for all laity.
5. Prepare visual displays that celebrate the ministries of the laity within the walls of the church and in the world outside the building.
6. Regularly promote special opportunities for service and mission projects.

**G. Serve on Various Committees** - You will be busy! The lay leader is automatically a member of charge conference, church council, finance committee, nominations and leadership development committee and staff/pastor-parish relations committee. The lay leader represents and advocates for the laity in specific ways in each of these places.

1. The **charge/church conference** is the connecting link between the local church and the general Church and has general oversight of the church council. The charge/church conference is held annually at a time set by the district superintendent. The lay leader represents the laity by attending the charge/church conference and by submitting a report on the state of lay ministry in the congregation.

2. The **church council** is the group responsible for planning and coordinating the administrative and programmatic life of the congregation. The church council includes members of the church staff and laity who chair committees and task forces. Your role as lay leader at the church council is to bring a broad perspective of laity of all ages as you listen to the plans for implementing the mission and vision of the congregation. Ask questions and represent various constituencies. Be prepared to interpret the plans and decisions of the church council to the laity of the congregation.

3. The **finance committee** prepares an annual budget for the congregation to submit to the church council for review and adoption. The committee is responsible together with the stewardship committee (if you have one) for developing and implementing a plan for raising funds for the budget adopted by the church council. The committee administers the funds according to the instructions of the church council and guides the work of the church treasurer and financial secretary. Your role in this committee is similar to your role in the church council. You are to represent all the laity as the budget is prepared and as funds are administered and to interpret the finances of the church to the congregation.

4. The **nominations and leadership development committee** identifies, develops, deploys, evaluates, and monitors the Christian spiritual leadership of the congregation. As a representative of laity, your role is to bring suggestions to the committee of people who might lead particular ministries, encourage the committee to provide leadership training for the congregation, and assist in monitoring and evaluating congregational needs for leadership.
Remember that leadership development and deployment is dynamic, always changing as ministry needs change and as church members join or leave the congregation. Before 2000, this group was called the nominating committee. The new name better describes what they do.

5. The staff/pastor-parish relations committee reflects on the work of the pastor(s) and staff and assists them in assessing their gifts and setting priorities as they lead and serve the church. Members of this committee other than the lay leader and lay member to annual conference are divided into three classes with a new class elected each year for a three-year term.

This committee meets at least quarterly or more often when requested. See ¶258.2 in the 2012 Book of Discipline for more information on this committee.

H. Study - It will be important for you to continue to study and attend training to understand the church’s reason for existence and the types of ministry that will fulfill the church’s mission faithfully and effectively. Your attendance models the importance of continuing education for other church leaders. In addition, you have the opportunity through district and conference channels to inform the laity of educational opportunities provided by the annual conference and to participate in lay training. A lay leader is urged to become a certified lay servant in order to increase skills for leadership.

I. Assist the Council - Your role in helping the council with the internal workings of the church is already obvious. Your role extends beyond the immediate boundaries of the church building into the community. You can assist the council to look for and take advantage of opportunities to interpret the mission and ministry of the congregation to the community. In so doing, you can better attend to the unique ministry and mission needs in your community.

J. Communication Skills - One of the most difficult things to do is to listen. Active listening requires the full attention of everyone involved. Without listening, no communication takes place. The lay leader listens to many different voices.

In your role, you will hear from members of the congregation and from the pastor and staff. Some of these people may be angry or confused; some might have new ideas for ministry; and some want to tell you how they understand things. You may need to ask some quiet people for their opinions in interviews and surveys. Your active listening skills will be a key to your effectiveness as a leader of the congregation.

Body language is an important part of communicating. People often reveal more about their thoughts by their actions than by their voices. Be alert to what people are saying with their hands, eyes, heads, arms, and legs.

K. Conflict and Mediation Skills - Turn problems into possibilities. Conflict is simply two different ideas in the same place at the same time. Conflict is the result of differences that produce tension. Conflict is normal in communities and families. The important part of conflict management is bringing those conflicts into the open where they can be clarified.
The JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation exists to prepare and assist United Methodists to engage in conflict constructively in ways that strive for justice, reconciliation, resource preservation, and restoration of community in the Church and in the world. The Center challenges leaders to prepare themselves for conflict transformation and then to engage others in transforming conflict. The Center summarizes the skills and attitudes needed for transforming conflict in its ten-point “Engage Conflict Well.” This summary and other helpful material is listed here and is available for free by downloading from http://www.justpeaceumc.org.

L. Living Your Strengths

1 Corinthians 12:14-20

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

15 If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

16 And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’ that would not make it any less a part of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?

20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

A question we all ask ourselves: Who Am I?

You are unique! Only 1 in 33 million will have the top five signature themes in the order that you do. In a world that has 7.125 billion people, that equals out to be 215 people.

Remarkable resource Oklahoma Annual Conference is using: Living Your Strengths By: Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld.

After you read this book, you will have the chance to take an assessment that will give you your top 5 strengths within the 4 domains.
The 4 strength domains:

1. Influencing
2. Executing
3. Relationship Building
4. Strategic Thinking

What do you do with this information after I learn my top 5 strengths?

- Have each leader, committee members and staff member in your church take this assessment including your clergy!
- Once each person has taken his or her assessment, group building will begin.
- Discussions will begin and questions like these will be asked and answered:

Questions like these can be discussed within your teams, staff, etc.?

- Which of your strengths do you see working together most often?
- How do you identify when strengths are working in tandem?
- Do you have strengths that seem to be at odds?
- What examples can you share of more than 2 strengths working together?
- What are common pairs that you see?
- How do you leverage your strength pairs?

What will happen next?

- Communication will be improved!
- Teams will work more effectively!
- The laity AND clergy will be more effective in their roles!
A local lay leader who understands his or her gifts of the spirit will better enable ministry to be achieved for the glory of God. We recall, “There are many gifts – one spirit – many ways to serve”. To know one’s strengths is a gift in itself, but to recognize the gifts of others to enable people to partner in ministry, might be a greater gift that can lead to more effective ministry. It is suggested that as lay leader, you use a spiritual gift assessment to discover your gifts; that you discover the area of ministry you are passionate about; that you seek out ways to use your spiritual gifts and that you thank God as you receive and or recognize your spiritual gifts. You will want to pass that process on as much as possible to your congregation as you encourage them to discover and use their gifts for ministry.

Questions to consider are: What gifts have you observed in others, including your pastor? What are the ways you can help other recognize their gifts? How will you affirm & celebrate these gifts?

1. You can help members of your congregation answer these questions through the recognition and utilization of their spiritual gifts:
2. How can I find more meaning and joy in life?
3. What is God’s plan and purpose for my life?
4. What are my special gifts and abilities?
5. How is God calling me to use my gifts?

M. Discussion Questions and Exercises
Read the four main scripture passages dealing with the gifts. Note the gifts and make a list of the gifts you have used at one time or another.

1. In using those gifts, which of them gives the greatest satisfaction or makes you feel good in serving others?
2. How are you witnessing to God’s grace working in you?
3. How might you use your gifts to bring God’s healing and wholeness to your church community?
4. Explore what your church might look like today if we would match the gifted person to the needs of the church.
5. Which of your gifts have received affirmation from others? Are you discovering your grace gifts? What is your next step?
6. How is Jesus calling you to use your gifts for ministry today?
7. What reservations do you have?
8. What new direction is God calling the church toward today?
9. What is your Christian response to the needs you see in the world? How has God gifted you to minister to some of these needs?

Exercises:
1. Name one person with the gift of helps who has touched your life. How has that person helped you?
2. List the roles and work of ministry that are high priorities in your life. Do any of these coincide with the gifts you have identified in your life?
3. List 10 things that burn within you and give your life meaning. Things that give you passion to live and restore your energy; call forth the best in you. You know that you are living in God’s will and your life has meaning. What clues does this list give you about your gifts? What patterns emerge?

4. On a scale from 1 to 10, with one being equivalent to a security gate across your congregation’s doors and 10 equivalent to a welcoming committee on the street offering valet parking, how would you rank your church’s gift of hospitality?

5. Think of a creative ministry in your community. What gifts of justice, wholeness and righteousness do you witness in that ministry?

6. Invite persons to share how their gifts have enhanced their prayer life.

7. Think about your particular gifts in relations to your congregation or your family. What kind of responses do people have toward your gifts? How do you feel about their responses?

8. What gift or gifts is God confirming within you to help the church grow?

9. How is your church calling you to use your new gifts?

10. Make 3 columns: List the gifts you have discerned and are willing to name and claim as your own. Middle column – list the ways you are presently using each gift. 3rd Column – list concrete, tangible ways you envision yourself living out these gifts in the future.

N. The Lay Leader working with the Leadership Development Committee can help see that their people with particular spiritual gifts have opportunity to utilize their gifts for effective service. The church must find meaningful and creative ways to match the gifts of persons with the time they can give to ministry. Bill Easum, in Leadership on the Other Side, says that all people with a call from God can be leaders when they exercise the spiritual gifts given to them by God. If you’re not a leader, there’s hope for you.” He makes three observations, “1) God can use those whom others choose. 2) No one knows who will or won’t be a leader 3) Almost anyone who wants it badly enough can be a leader.”

Our role is to help people discover and utilize their gifts for mission and ministry. The church must provide settings in which members of the congregation can share with one another the unique aspects of their spiritual journey. We need to recognize other members and the value of their gifts. Effectiveness in sustaining fellowship and outreach ministries comes from all gifts working together in mutual interdependence.

O. Leadership Resources: www.gbod.org

- Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit, Lovett H. Weems, Jr
- Be All You Can Be, A Challenge to Stretch Your God Given Potential, John C. Maxwell
- Everyone Communicates Few Connect, What the Most Effect People Do Differently, John C. Maxwell
• *Developing the Leaders Around You, How to Help Others Reach Their Full Potential*, John C. Maxwell
• *Leveraging Your Leadership Style, Maximize Your Influence by Discovering the Leader Within*, John Jackson and Lorraine Boss’-Smith

• *I Refuse To Lead a Dying Church*, Paul Nixon
• *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels
• *Strengths Based Leadership, Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*, Tom Rath and Barry Conchie
• *Switch, How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, Chip Heath and Dan Heath

**Lay Leaders:**

**What You Need To Know**

**Lay Leader Reference Calendar**

**January:**

• Meet with pastor and set goals for church ministry and personal accountability goals as lay leader of the church.
• Meet with pastor to design a church training event to orientate new and existing church leadership.
• Attend any conference and/or district leadership training events. Also check out the resources on our conference website.
• Many District Lay Servant/Speaking Schools will be offering Leadership training classes offered by the Board of Laity.
• Offer any names of people in your church that would be willing to serve on a conference committee to your district lay leader.
• Be sure your District Lay Leader has your contact information. (Email, Address and Phone)
• Celebrate Lay ministry in your church by applying for the It Worked For Us award. Visit www.okumc.org for the application. Deadline is March 1.
• Check conference web site for up to date information and training events. www.okumc.org

February:
• Attend any conference and/or district leadership training events. Also check out the resources on our conference web site.
• Develop relations with all of the church leadership, so that you will know of any needs that may arise for resources from your district or conference.
• Many District Lay Servant/Speaking Schools will be offering Leadership training classes offered by the Board of Laity.
• District Lay Servant/Speaking School – Many district lay speaking schools will be offered. If you have a person in your church that wants to attend but are unable to attend your district school, check into another district.
• Offer any names of people in your church that would be willing to serve on a conference committee to your district lay leader.
• Celebrate Lay ministry in your church by applying for the It Worked For Us award. Visit www.okumc.org for the application. Deadline is March 1.
• Check conference web site for up to date information and training events. www.okumc.org

March:
• District Lay Servant/Speaking School – Many district lay speaking schools will be offered. If you have a person in your church who wants to attend but are unable to attend your district school, check into another district.
• Offer any names of people in your church that would be willing to serve on a conference committee to your district lay leader.
• Check conference web site for up to date information and training events. www.okumc.org
• Schedule time to meet with pastor and discuss the state of the church.
April:
- District Lay Servant/Speaking Schools. Encourage people to attend.
- Check conference web site for up to date information and training events. www.okumc.org
- Some Districts may have Pre-Conference Meetings. It is very important that the Lay Member attend these meetings. All are welcome to attend.

May:
- Check conference web site for up to date information, training events and Annual Conference information. www.okumc.org
- Some Districts may have Pre-Conference Meetings. It is very important that the Lay Member attend these meetings. All are welcome to attend.
- Annual Conference

June:
- Plan a celebration / reception for your pastor’s re-appointment or for the new pastor.
- Camps begin for youth.
- Summer Slump begins. Find ways to keep people engaged and excited about church.
- Schedule time to meet with pastor and discuss the state of the church.

July:
- Camps are in full swing
- Districts begin planning Re-Ignite Workshops; if you have any ideas contact your District Lay Leader.
- Summer is in full swing; create excitement with a new summer ministry.
- School will be starting soon. Brainstorm some back to school ministries

August:
- Summer Camps winding down.
- School will be starting.
- Great opportunity for an after school program.
September:
- Local Churches begin the process for “Charge Conferences/Church Conferences”
- Lay Servant / Lay Speaker reports and other board and committee reports are due.
- Ask your pastor for your church’s charge conference date.
- Schedule time to meet with pastor and discuss the state of the church.

October:
- Charge Conferences begin.
- Laity Sunday is the third Sunday.

November:
- Fall Lay Servant/ Speaking Schools – Many district lay speaking schools will be offered. If you have a person in your church that wants to attend but are unable to attend your district school, check into another district.
- Charge Conferences wind down.

December:
- Deadline for updating Conference “Data Base” with church leadership contact information. (Email Addresses are very important!)
- Schedule time to meet with pastor and discuss the state of the church.
- Review benchmarks set for the year.
- Brainstorm with pastor ministry opportunities for the coming year.

Keep up to date by visiting: www.okumc.org

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