



# **A Pastors General Guide to Lay Servant Ministry**

**Revised by the  
Mountain Sky Conference on  
Lay Servant Ministries**

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## **Introduction**

The Lay Servant Ministry (LSM) program goes back to the beginning of the Methodist movement. Current day Lay Servants were historically the members of the societies, classes and bands and leaders of the same in the early movement. Lay Servants held together and led the early churches as Asbury was about ordaining clergy to become the Pastors of the Charge and the Circuit Riders of the multi-point charges. In one form or another be it exhorter or Lay Preacher, or Lay Speaker or a Lay Leader in various areas of the church, the Lay Servant has served the Local Congregation, the Circuits, Districts and Annual Conferences throughout the entire history of the church. Lay servants were and are leaders within the United Methodist Church and have a role and responsibility in furthering the mission of the United Methodist Church.

In turn where the laity of a charge has responsibilities, clergy also have a responsibility for the development, training, and encouragement of the laity under their care.

This guide is intended to provide a better understanding of who the Lay Servant is, what should be expected of Lay Servants, and how the Lay Servant Ministry program is administered.

## **What/Who is a Lay Servant?**

According to the Book of Discipline (2012) of the United Methodist Church Lay Servant Ministries can be found in paragraphs 266 through 271 in section XI. Lay Servants are to be active, supporting, and professing members of a local church. They should desire to serve the church and be well informed on scripture, doctrine, heritage, and organization of the United Methodist Church.

Besides training Lay Servants receive in the local church, Lay servants receive training through their District or Conference to develop their skills in witnessing to the Christian faith. They are to serve the local church/charge and beyond using their spiritual gifts to inspire others to a deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship.

The individual lay person in each congregation answers their call to serve in various ways. One answer to their call is to pursue the path of recognized Lay Ministry as indicated below. Along with that desire is the requirement to enter into and complete specific requirements within the Lay Servant Ministry program.

As a Pastor you should expect a Lay Servant to carry out his or her responsibilities of being a Lay Servant.

### **Lay Ministry in the United Methodist Church:**

All Certified Lay Servants and Certified Lay Speakers are first Professing Members of a local congregation.

### **Titles and Requirements:**

- **Certified Lay Servant**

Certified Lay Servants are those who have taken the basic and an advanced course through Lay Servant Ministries and serve in the local congregation and beyond.

#### Requirements

1. Approved by Pastor and Charge Conference
2. Completes the Basic course and an Advanced course
3. Files an annual report with their charge conference
4. Completes one advanced course every three years

**Note:** Advanced courses are identified by Discipleship Ministries and are listed in the Lay Ministry Equipping Resources Catalog on the Upper Room web site.

- **Certified Lay Speaker**

Certified Lay Servants who provide pulpit supply in and beyond their local church/charge

Requirements

1. Approved by Pastor and Charge Conference
2. Is an Certified Lay Servant
3. Completes the required track of courses for Lay Speaker
4. Interviews with District Committee on LSM
5. Approved by Annual Conference Committee on LSM
6. Files an annual report through their charge conference
7. Every three years completes one advanced course and interviews with District Committee on LSM

**Note:** Previously Lay Servant Ministries had Lay Speakers. This name was changed to Lay Servants. At the 2012 General Conference this *new position of Certified Lay Speaker* was established. Individuals who previously were advanced Lay Speakers and conducted pulpit supply are not being grandfathered in the new position.

- **Certified Lay Minister (CLM)**

Certified Lay Servant/Speaker or other applicant who is assigned by the District Superintendent to a particular ministry within the district or conference

Requirements

1. Be a Certified Lay Servant or Lay Missioner
2. Approved by Pastor and Charge Conference/Church Council.
3. Completes required course work, interviews and background checks
4. Receive a letter of recommendation from their District Superintendent
5. Interview with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry who then will recommend you to the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries for final certification.
6. Recertifies every two years

**Note:** CLM will recertify every two years by submitting an annual report, obtain a ministry review, complete a Lay Servant Ministries advanced course, obtain recommendation for re-certification from the district superintendent and have all requirements for recertification reviewed by the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries. The Conference LSM will refer the CLM to the DCOM

for an interview. The DCOM will then recommend the CLM to the conference LSM for final recertification.

## **Administration of the Lay Servant Ministry Program**

The Lay Servant Ministry program is administered at all Levels with the United Methodist Church. Discipleship Ministries through the Ministry of the Laity, Connectional Lay Development along with the Association of Conference Directors of Lay Servant Ministry (ACDLSM) provides the implementation and direction for the formal Lay Servant Ministry Program in accordance with the *Discipline*. Within the Mountain Sky Conference the Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries administers, coordinates, and directs the MSC program. This translates through the Districts and to the Local Church or Charge. Within the MSC each level, Conference, District, and Local Church/Charge has functions of responsibility.

The remainder of this section addresses the function and responsibility of the Local Charge.

### **Applicant, Pastor, Charge, District Superintendent, Conference Requirements:**

1. To begin or continue the Lay Servant ministry track, individuals are required to submit an Annual Report to the Pastor and Charge Conference. That report indicates what they are applying for and their status. That would be beginning or continuing as a Certified Lay Servant or a Certified Lay Speaker. **There is a section for Pastoral approval/Charge approval of the request of the applicant.**
2. The report also contains various parts that show the activities of the Lay Servant to support their application. These are Ministries by the Lay Person and personal and spiritual growth by the Lay Person.
3. Finally, there is a section for feedback by the Lay Person.
4. During your Charge Conference, the District Superintendent or their representative should ask the charge if it approves the application.
5. If a Lay Servant is applying to begin or continue as a **Lay Speaker** first they must be a Certified Lay Servant. If initially applying for Lay Speaker they must also submit a separate Conference Developed form "Application to Begin as a Lay Speaker" The Lay Speaker process requires that the applicant eventually completes a number of courses and undergo evaluation and interview with the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministry before they are finally approved as a Lay Speaker. There are forms that are submitted with the Annual report to show the progress of the Lay Servant through this process. Final approval of a Lay Servant as a Lay Speaker is granted through the Conference Committee on Lay Speaking Ministry.
6. All Forms, **once signed**, and related to the Lay Servant and/or Lay Speaking process/approval need to be reproduced and distributed as indicated below.

a. Three copies of the submitted Lay Servant Annual Report and any other Application and supporting materials should be made. The original copy is filed by the local charge, one reproduced copy is given to the applicant, one copy is given to the District Superintendent/District Office, and one copy goes to the District Director of Lay Servant Ministries.

### **In Closing**

The Laity in your church do not automatically know what to do as Lay Servants. Just by virtue of being a member of their local church does not automatically give them the information or the skills to be an active and effective Lay Servant. They must be nurtured and be taught the meaning of Lay Servant Ministry. They need to understand the United Methodist Church, its history, beliefs, and mission. Then need to be provided the education to build the skills and have the knowledge to work in areas where they are being called. Teaching about God's love starts the process but developing the skills of the Laity through education and enhancing their Spiritual Gifts takes that love out of the church and into the community.

Where many things should be expected of the Lay Servants in your charge, in turn Lay Servants expect their Pastors to meet the responsibilities of pastors as laid out in the Book of Discipline. In particular those related to the development and education of the laity contained in paragraph 340 "Responsibility and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors."

Other Responsibilities that you have as a Pastor include:

- Encouragement of Lay Servants to participate in the various Lay Servant courses and programs. When asked by a lay person what can I do, give them the answer but include their self-development in the answer.
- Celebrating within the local church the accomplishments of the laity. Celebrate completion of classes, celebrate positions they hold within the local church and beyond, celebrate what gets done, celebrate, celebrate, and celebrate.
- Saying "No" to a lay person. It is "tough love." Other than personal satisfaction for the individual and a title they can use, it does no good to approve an application request if the applicant is not involved (to some degree) in ministry and self-improvement.

Finally, Lay Servants are to be about the business of Love. They are to be an active, contributing member of your church and according to their abilities both physically and mentally are to be about the mission of "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World."

For more information about Lay Servant Ministries and the courses offered in your area, contact:



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**Notes:**