

## Article

[Print](#)

### Lay Member of Annual Conference

#### Result Expected

An effective lay member of annual conference informs the congregation about The United Methodist Church in the conference and around the world. This person attends annual conference sessions as a member from the congregation and interprets the actions to the congregation. An effective lay member builds the connection between the congregation and all United Methodist churches. An effective lay member is especially interested in connecting the church of God with people who are not yet part of it.

#### Spiritual Gifts and Qualifications Helpful for the Job

- A lay member of annual conference benefits from having one or more of these spiritual gifts: servanthood, teaching, compassion, faith, discernment, apostleship, leadership, and wisdom.
- This leader must be a member of the congregation for four years preceding the election.
- This leader needs to enjoy learning about issues, programs, and hopes of people in the community and congregation and have an interest in learning about parliamentary procedure and church structure.
- Other qualifications to consider for this leader are listening and teaching skills; speaking, writing, and interpretative skills; aptitude for networking ideas with the interests of people in the congregation; and a desire to participate in discussion and decisions affecting God's ministry in the world.

#### Responsibilities of the Position

- The lay member of annual conference needs to become knowledgeable about the structure and ministries of the annual conference, The United Methodist Church, and the congregation.
- This leader will attend all sessions of annual conference or arrange for an alternate to be seated. During the conference session, this leader will participate in discussions, debates, voting, and all other activities of annual conference.
- This leader needs to engage in spiritual practices that build attentiveness to God's will and direction. Business sessions of the church can divert attention from spiritual discernment into parliamentary procedure and political positioning. Members of annual conference need to hold one another accountable to the mission and vision of the church.
- Lay members are also members of the annual conference for the year they are elected. The lay member, along with the pastor, serves as an interpreter of the actions of the annual conference session.
- Lay members play a key role in linking the mission and vision of the local congregation with the mission and vision of the annual conference. In having this link, the church is even more clearly focused, and the responsibility of laity in the call to ministry is more clearly set forth.
- Lay members are to serve on the church council, the committee on finance, and the committee on pastor-parish relations in addition to being a member of annual conference.
- An important part of being the link with the annual conference is for lay members to report to the local church council on actions of the annual conference as soon as possible after the close of the conference. Communication truly improves connection.
- This leader is accountable to the charge conference through the church council.

#### Getting Started

1. Participate in the webinar "Local Church Lay Leaders/Lay Members to Annual Conference: What's My Job?" available on the [Discipleship Ministries website](#).
2. Talk with your pastor and others to understand their hopes and dreams for the way your leadership can advance the vision for ministry.

3. Talk to people in your congregation or in other congregations who have attended annual conference sessions. Remember that while parliamentary procedure can seem tedious, the conference session will provide glimpses of exciting ministry.
4. Take advantage of preconference orientation sessions and information on your annual conference website so you are prepared both to learn and to contribute to the life of the church.
5. Become familiar with the ministries and concerns of your congregation.
6. Become familiar with the rules of annual conference and with basic parliamentary procedure.
7. Study the preconference reports and the minutes of the past session so that you are prepared for the ongoing business and the issues that will be on the agenda.
8. Participate in preconference sessions that cover annual conference vision, upcoming issues, budgetary items, and proposed resolutions.
9. Study *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation, 2017-2020: Lay Leader/Lay Member* and participate in training opportunities.

### People and Agencies That Can Help

- Your pastor and people in your congregation, especially those who have attended previous annual conference sessions.
- Discipleship Ministries, visit the website at: [www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources), or call toll free, 1-877-899-2780, email: [laity@umcdiscipleship.org](mailto:laity@umcdiscipleship.org) or Jodi Cataldo, [jcataldo@umcdiscipleship.org](mailto:jcataldo@umcdiscipleship.org)
- InfoServ, the information service for the church, provides current information about United Methodist resources, programs, and staff services. Email: [infoserv@umcom.org](mailto:infoserv@umcom.org); Website: [infoserv.umc.org](http://infoserv.umc.org).

### Web and Print Resources

- *Being a Christian in the Wesleyan Tradition* by John O. Gooch (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2009)
- *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living* by Kevin Watson (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2009)
- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016)
- *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation, 2017-2020: Lay Leader/Lay Member* (Cokesbury, 2016)
- *Living Our United Methodist Beliefs* by George H. Donigian (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2014)
- Ministry of the Laity website, <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/ministry-of-the-laity>
- *Opening Ourselves to Grace: Basic Christian Practices* DVD and CD-ROM (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007)
- *Three Simple Rules* by Rueben Job (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007)
- *The United Methodist Way* by Branson L. Thurston (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003)
- *What Every Leader Needs to Know*, bookstore.upperroom.org (small booklets useful for individual study or as an outline for a one-hour workshop) – *Spiritual Leadership* by Michael Bealla; *Leading Meetings* by Betsey Heavner; *Mission and Vision* by Carol F. Krau; and *Leading in Prayer* by Betsey Heavner