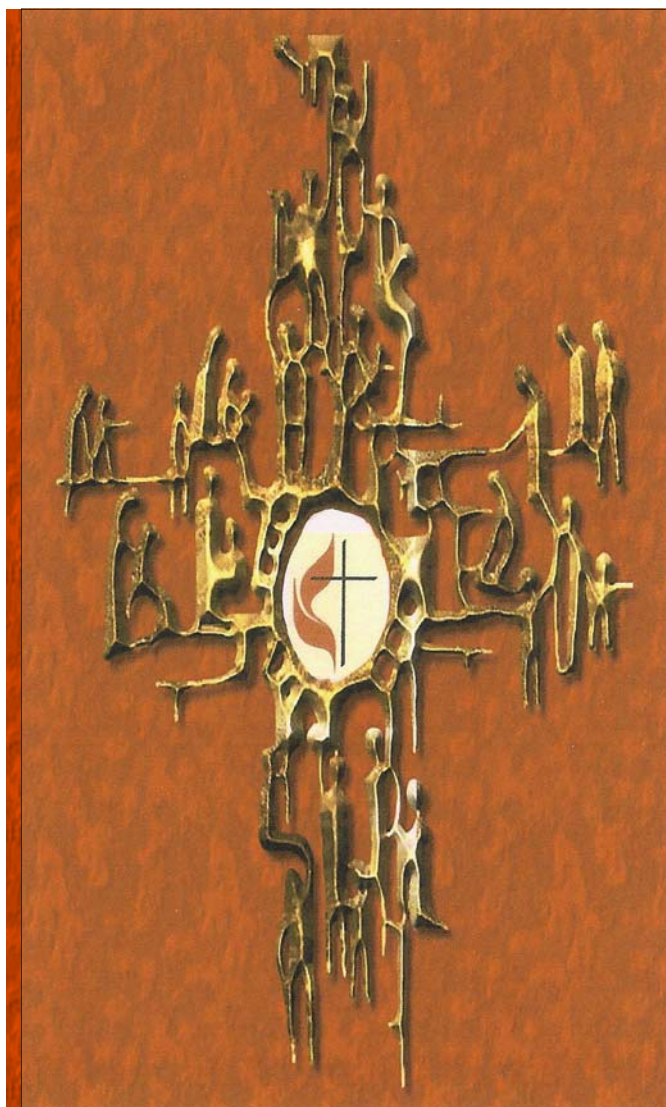


NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE  
of  
The UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**A TRAINING RESOURCE**  
for  
**LAITY LEADERSHIP**  
in the  
**LOCAL CHURCH**



**CONFERENCE BOARD OF LAITY**  
**2008-2012**

*by Jane Finley.*  
*Conference Lay Leader*

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**NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE**  
Of  
**The United Methodist Church**

**2008-2012**  
**Conference Board of Laity**



Greetings!

Thank you for being a “servant leader!” It is exciting that you have chosen this path of leadership in the North Georgia Conference, and the Board of Laity welcomes you to the team! Regardless of your title in ministry ~ or maybe you have the distinguished title of “disciple”~ you are laity answering God’s call on your life and we celebrate with you this awesome adventure. A portion of this resource handbook further defines what we are prayerfully striving to achieve in character, image and spiritual relationship as a servant leader.

John Wesley boldly exclaims that we, as Methodists, are all in the “process of becoming”, so you will find information to guide you on your journey. The handbook is tailored for your use as a church leader and is applicable for effective leadership in any setting. It is our desire to equip you with the tools that provide a sound foundation for your future mission/ministry endeavors. Your efforts will bring you joy and you will be a blessing to others as you focus in areas that utilize your spiritual gifts.

The United Methodist Church has the unique structure of the “connection”, and so it is with you and your local church. From the local church, you are connected to the North Georgia Conference through your district, and the conference is connected to the global church, The United Methodist Church, through the jurisdictional conference. In turn, your Conference Board of Laity and your district lay leader are an extended hand of assistance to you. The back cover of the handbook provides contact information for your use, and we are a phone call or an email away. We want to learn of ways that we can provide assistance and need to hear your thoughts and suggestions. Look for us on the web site ([www.ngumc.org](http://www.ngumc.org)) and click on Board of Laity, to learn more about programs and opportunities of interest to you.

May God richly bless you and your local church,

Jane Finley  
Conference Lay Leader

## ABOUT THIS TRAINING RESOURCE

This training resource is produced by the North Georgia Conference Board of Laity to assist you in discerning your leadership role while making full use of your talents and energies in a significant new relationship within the Body of Christ, the church and your congregation. It is our desire to provide you with encouragement, as well as knowledge, understanding and guidance in your quest to be an effective servant leader.

In addition to suggestions on the Servant Leader role and Standards of Lay Leadership, you will find information to broaden your knowledge of the structure and functions of The United Methodist Church. This will enable you to better relate to issues within the church, your pastor's role as head of your local church, and provide insight to share

with the laity of your congregation. In a leadership role, an established rapport with your pastor based upon mutual respect and loyalty is essential to being an effective functioning church and a vibrant congregation. You will also find information on Board of Laity sponsored programs that provide training to equip and sustain you on your journey as servant leader.

Retired Bishop Emerson Colaw states, "When both pastor and people of the church are deeply dedicated and work together in the building of Christ's kingdom, fantastic things happen. Committed lay people lead more people to Jesus Christ than preachers, evangelists, books or any other method. If our present decline is to be reversed, it will happen as laity discover and fulfill their calling."

# CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR COMMITMENT!

God has called you and blessed you ~ now comes the exhilarating task of being faithful to Him through commitment of your prayers ~ presence ~ gifts and service. You have accepted the call to be a *Servant Leader*, whether as the local church Lay Leader or a member of the Leadership Team. You understand it is a great honor and an awesome responsibility to live out God's call upon your life ~ BUT, what is a servant leader?

Alan E. Nelson says, "The result of being broken in the right places ~ in the soul ~ yields the heart of a servant." The Apostle Paul gave us the true motive, "You serve Christ the Lord! Whatever you do, do it heartily, from the soul, as unto the Lord rather than for men. It is the Lord whom you serve." The *Servant Leader* is a servant, first! It is about the concern that others' highest priority needs are being served, thereby unleashing the potential in others to serve, to encourage and develop the gifts of ministry and mission within others following the example of Jesus Christ. It's about others and Thee, not about "me." It's about "power with," not "power over."

With the basic desire of the servant, one may make a conscious choice to be a leader and make the commitment to be a "servant leader." Effective leadership style has changed from the traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes to a new model ~ one that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of followers through teamwork, personal involvement and with ethical and caring behavior. This emerging approach to leadership and service is called servant-leadership. Let's look at the example of Jesus Christ, the Servant Leader.

## JESUS ~ SERVANT LEADER

Jesus was bold in His commitment and opened a new and living way to God through His death on the cross. He made possible an access to God for all believers and is “the way, the truth, and the life” – John 14:6

Throughout His life, Jesus focused on the path God would have Him follow even to His death. Jesus truly models the importance of being obedient to the will of God, regardless of the consequences.

Jesus exemplified Servant Leader as he washed the feet of the Disciples. He said to them, “If I then, the Lord and (master) Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you the example that you also should do as I did to you. I say to you, “A slave is no greater than his master, neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. — John 13:13-17



### The Servant Leader Learns Valuable Lessons from Christ.

- First, God calls each leader to walk a specific leadership path.
- Second, each leader must commit to the goal of finishing what God called him or her to do.
- Third, leaders become lifelong learners and continue to grow while on the leadership path.

The Son of God became the servant of God in order to do the mission of God. That image provides the pattern for churches and individual believers to fulfill their God-given mission.

The servant leader can lead others only as far along the road as the leader has traveled. Merely pointing the way is not enough. If we are not traveling on the journey, then no one can be following, and we become ineffective. Like Jesus, we must become servant leaders.

‘Because we, children of Adam, want to become great,  
He became small.  
Because we will not stoop,  
He humbled Himself,  
Because we want to rule,  
He came to serve’

A great orator once said, “Leaders possess the heart of a child, the hands of a servant, and the gift of self-motivation to instill passion for commitment in those who follow; always focusing on the missions and ministries of Jesus Christ.”



The *Discipline* is the book of law of The United Methodist Church and is a product of over 200 years of General Conferences of the denomination. As the instrument for setting forth the laws, plan, polity and process, it is the constant by which we as Methodists govern ourselves. All areas of leadership are addressed in the *Discipline* and as leaders of the laity, we utilize this book as your guide. A checklist of leadership responsibilities which summarizes the specific leadership position as stated in *The Book of Discipline* will assist us in fulfilling our duties. To demonstrate that task, the duties of Lay Leader are provided below along with a checklist for ready-reference.

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Paragraph 251. *Duties of Leaders and Members* Out of the professing membership of each local church (Par. 126), there shall be elected by the charge conference a Lay Leader who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in that local church and shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) *fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;*
- b) *Meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;*
- c) *Membership in the charge conference and the church council, the committee on finance, the committee of lay leadership, and the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations, where, along with the pastor, the lay leader shall serve as interpreter of the actions and programs of the annual conference and its general Church (To be better equipped to comply with this responsibility, it is recommended that a lay leader also serve as a lay member of annual conference);*
- d) *Continuing involvement in study and training opportunities to develop a growing understanding of the Church's reason for existence and the types of ministry that will most effectively fulfill the Church's mission;*
- e) *assisting in advising the church council of opportunities available and the needs expressed for a more effective ministry of the church through its laity in the community;*
- f) *informing the laity of training opportunities provided by the annual conference. Where possible, the lay leader shall attend training opportunities in order to strengthen his or her work. The lay leader is urged to become a certified lay speaker.*

### CHECKLIST OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL CHURCH LAY LEADER



- Serve as primary lay representative in local church,
- Foster an awareness of the role of laity in ministries;
- Meet regularly with the pastor for input in the plans and development of missions and ministries of local church,
- Be a participant in the missions/ministries and other activities of church,
- Attend Local Church Conference(s),
- Serve as member of Church Council,
- Serve as member of Committee on Finance,
- Serve as member of Committee on Lay Leadership,
- Serve as member of Committee on Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations,
- Partner with pastor in interpreting and implementing actions of Annual Conference,
- Be a participant in Bible Studies (teacher or student)
- Be knowledgeable of church needs and share suggestions/ideas with pastor and council,
- Keep congregation informed of training events within local church/district/conference to enhance knowledge and encourage development of emerging leaders,
- Attend training events for self-development,
- Encourage others and self to become a Lay Speaker.

# Called

## GOD CALLS

“When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ, many radical changes take place and many new opportunities come our way. One of the most exciting is His call to *purposeful living*.

Often, we take this call for granted, even ignore it and go on with life as usual. ~ But to do so is to miss out on the riches of kingdom living.

In contrast to life as usual, Christ’s urgent call is to a special assignment in kingdom building for each one of us. We are the elect for that unique purpose in life. More than any other group, lay people are needed by God to advance His interests in fashioning the future of the world. For those who are ready to hear and are quick to respond, rewards are great and assured.”

*Copied by permission of Gus Gustafson from his book “Called To Be A Layman”. Gus was recipient of the North Georgia Conference Board of Laity’s 2003 Laity of the Year Award in recognition of his faithful service to God, his exemplary servant leadership and his mentoring and encouragement of many dynamic leaders in The United Methodist Church.*

## SERVANT LEADERS



## SOW THE WORD

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28: 19-20

The world is where people live out their lives – in their homes, at their places of work, in their schools, and spend leisure time. In the world, those that are lonely or hungry or hurt, the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor – all await the transforming and empowering grace of God. The church is surrounded by that world and called to service within its setting ~ in our local communities as well as throughout the world. As the Body of Christ, we are called to be in ministry. As Jesus told his disciples, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit ~ fruit that will last.*” John 15:16

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

*“For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” ~*

Romans 12: 4-6

The Apostle Paul used the theme of the church as the Body of Christ in letters written to early Christians and to us. In addition to Romans 12, the theme is found in Ephesians 5:29-30, 4:25, I Corinthians 10:17 and I Corinthians 12:12-25 further refers to the Body as many parts, yet one in Christ, working together for God. Paul reminded the Ephesians (5:1) that the Body of Christ exists to be “imitators of God”.

While we are many in one Body grounded in Christ, we are to build up the Body, to preserve unity in the Body in order to allow the parts to function smoothly for the health of the whole. We are members one of another, using our spiritual gifts and fitting together. We are chosen and special people. We have been brought by God out of the darkness of sin into His marvelous light of salvation to tell the wonderful things God has done. All members of the Body experience unity through grace, diversity in gifts, and connection by covenant in The United Methodist Church.



### **TOGETHER, THE BODY OF CHRIST**

- As servant leader, you are a member of the Body with the special function of feeling the pulse of the congregation and community, sensing the health and wholeness of the Body, and listening to both pastor(s) and the people.
- You are a source of connectional and ecumenical linkage that provides vast networking capabilities.
- You, too, are sent out into the community – returned to the world for witness and ministry.
- You, too, must find renewal for your body, mind, and spirit through worship, study of the Bible and other resources, prayer, and “worshipful work”.
- You, too, are the storyteller and the storykeeper. **TELL THE STORIES!** As a servant leader of Christ, you are a steward of God’s mysteries. The mystery fully known is that Christ is in you, the Hope of Glory! This mystery is yours to share. **SHARE IT!**
- God calls the Body of Christ to be positive, joyful, winsome, and enthusiastic for the gospel. You can realistically look at what is and, through the eyes of faith, see what can be. God does not leave us alone, nor expect any of us, laity or clergy, to be solely responsible for the mission to which we are all called. We function as The Body.
- You and your pastor are called to be a team in ministry knowing that where you are assigned (or appointed) is holy ground. God is present with you. God was there before you. God will be with you in your planting, tending and harvesting where you are planted.
- Each person has a call and spiritual gifts to be used for ministry. Perhaps your biggest challenge as a servant leader is to be a catalyst in releasing each person’s gifts to be used on behalf of the whole Body of Christ. Then, in the **POWER** of the Holy Spirit, all might live and act as faithful disciples in ministry in the world.

## THE CONGREGATION'S MISSION ~ PRIMARY TASK

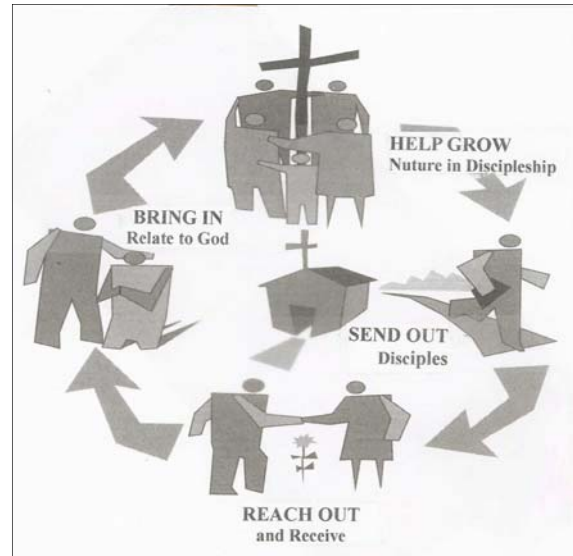
Each congregation has a primary task as a community of Christian people organized to carry out God's mission for the church as defined in Matthew 28:19-20 ~ "... Go, and make disciples . . ." The Book of Discipline suggests that the local church be organized to pursue its Primary Task and Mission in the context of its own community –

**Reach Out** and receive, with joy, all who will respond;

**Bring In** and encouraging people in their relationship with God, inviting them to a commitment and understanding of God's love in Jesus Christ;

**Help Grow** spiritually by providing opportunities for them to seek strengthening and spiritual formation as disciples; and

**Send Out** these new disciples into the world to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit.



When the Primary Task is working effectively in a congregation, there is a sense of flow and unity. All members of the congregation are encouraged to use their own spiritual gifts toward the achievement of the Primary Task. People come into the congregation from the community, are transformed, nurtured, sent back to the world to witness and serve, returning to the Christian community in a deeper relationship with God and having grown in discipleship. Individuals being transformed and empowered as disciples will move through the process at their own pace.

Thus, all four elements of the process interact to support the Primary Task and becomes a part of the congregation's vision. This process establishes a plan of action for the congregation to be faithful to the directive of our Lord Jesus Christ. The four elements are most often carried out simultaneously and continually, as each element flows into the other and no one element of the Primary Task is more important than another.



### A VISION STATEMENT FOR THE CONGREGATION

John F. Kennedy did not live to see the achievement of his vision for NASA, but he set it in motion when he said, "by the end of the decade, we will put a man on the moon." Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have a dream," and what followed was a vision that changed a nation. These statements are dramatic examples of the power that can be generated by communicating a compelling vision for the future of the local church.

A vision statement should be realistic, well articulated, easy to understand and responsive to change. The statement will serve to orient the church's energies and serve as a guide to action. It must be consistent with our values and Wesleyan heritage, and should challenge and inspire the congregation to achieve its mission. If your church does not have a Vision Statement, begin by brainstorming together (the pastor and leadership team) to adopt a statement that stretches the future actions and activities of the congregation to "make disciples" and reach the unchurched. If you have a vision statement, review to insure it is applicable for future.

## SERVANT LEADERSHIP

As a servant leader you are to exemplify servant leadership in your congregation and be a minister of Jesus Christ. You are called to work in support of the church's Primary Task and maintain the flow in your congregation; that is, to live out its mission to make disciples. Guidelines will assist you in planning, promoting, and training for your area of ministry and will offer guidance in how to go about its day-to-day tasks. In carrying out your responsibilities, there are some questions you should keep in mind.

- |                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ➤ What are the realities in the community surrounding your congregation?                                         | ➤ How is God working in and through your congregation?                                                                  |
| ➤ What are the opportunities for ministry that these realities provide?                                          | ➤ Are there activities or programs that ought to be discontinued because they do not support the primary task?          |
| ➤ How well is the flow of the PRIMARY TASK working in your congregation? Are all four elements working together? | ➤ When has the congregation began a new ministry/mission serving the community?                                         |
| ➤ Are you making disciples?                                                                                      | ➤ Does your church have a vision statement applicable to meet the challenges for mission/ministry within the community? |
| ➤ How are the people in your congregation witnessing and serving in the world?                                   |                                                                                                                         |

What is servant leadership? IT IS FOCUSED ON OTHERS. It is servant first – before leader. It is leadership without ego, and is unselfish. It is humble. It does not covet prestige or power. It gives power and control away; yet it demands stewardship – an accountability not only for one's own actions but for those involved in the endeavor we lead. It is not servile or meek. It does not wait to be asked. It is not without convictions. It listens deeply and well for what is in the heart as well as in the head. It is not arrogant. It can change its mind. It heals and mediates. It seeks justice, consensus, and win-win solutions. It leads by example. It has vision, a sense of destiny, and yet seeks shared vision. It is determined and persistent. It is willing to do whatever is needed and right to attain the objectives of ministry. It is all these things and more, according to God's plan for the servant leader's life. Just as one's spiritual gifts are unique, so is God's plan for each life. Seek to find your calling within God's plan!

## EQUIPPING FOR THE TASK

Church business is reformed and transformed by informed and transformed servant leaders. Prepare yourself by taking part in training opportunities sponsored by the Conference Board of Laity for the benefit of laity in the North Georgia Conference. Let's look at the opportunities and the various areas of ministry/mission. For more information on how to be a part of these programs, visit the Conference web site [www.ngumc.org](http://www.ngumc.org), then click on Lay Ministries then Board of Laity Links.



**LEADERSHIP UMC** ~ LUMC identifies and trains emerging laity leadership from throughout the annual conference, and seeks to mentor these trained persons into preparation for a leadership role within the local church, district and conference. Workshop topics include Discover Your Church, Discover Your Ministry, Discover Yourself and Discover Your Charge.

## EQUIPPING FOR THE TASK (continued)



**LAY MISSIONARY TRAINING ~ LMT** provides training and support to equip laity to more effectively accomplish the mission of the church “to make disciples of Jesus Christ.” This program provides guidance for laity with a “calling to service outside clergy responsibilities. LMT will empower you to live out your passion, you call, employing your spiritual gifts in a way that is pleasing to God and makes a real difference in the world.



**LAY REVITALIZATION MINISTRY ~ LRT** is a ministry dedicated to meeting the needs of our local churches by providing avenues to obtain assistance in accomplishing the mission and goal of the church. Using a structured group of dedicated laity who are knowledgeable, experienced and trained in specific areas of ministry and service, the team provides assistance in the following areas: Music, Visitation/Evangelism, Developing Church Image and Finance.



**LAY SPEAKING MINISTRIES ~ LSM** provides training and motivation of laity for services of leading, caring and communicating in the local congregations, the connectional church and community. The Book of Discipline recommends that lay leaders and laity in leadership roles receive this training to more effectively communicate and coordinate their duties and responsibilities .

### THE HABITS OF GROWING ~ “LIGHT THE FLAME”

Churches become ineffective when they lose touch with the communities in which they are located. To reach the unchurched, an important challenge is to seek new ways of understanding what makes our culture tick, what people believe and want most from life, what they fear most and what they value most. Through this understanding, we are able to fulfill our calling of introducing Christian living and following Christ in their everyday lives. Moving evangelism out of the board meeting and into the homes within our communities bridges the gap between church and community. Move from our Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria and the world.

Growing churches do many things to reach out to the community and the people. Growing churches seem to mirror Paul’s description to himself in his first letter to the Corinthians: “Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people; religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose living moralist, the defeated, the demoralized ~ whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearing in Christ ~ but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saving life.” Corinthians 9:19-22

Growing congregations are excited about the future of the church and strive to strengthen member relationships while seeking to incorporate newcomers through a welcoming and inviting atmosphere. Growing congregations enjoy the preservation of denominational heritage and its individual history while embracing change. Congregation leadership focuses on involving everyone in a “reach out to the community” mission as clearly defined in their vision statement. Catch the blessing of the Holy Spirit working within the people by being willing to take a giant step in faith. Strong congregations are bold in their efforts to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” The effectiveness of answering God’s call lies in the heart of the leader for evangelism. “*Mission is to a church as burning is to a fire.*”



## NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE STANDARDS OF LAY LEADERSHIP

Because lay ministry has been instrumental in the spread of the gospel from the earliest times and especially in the establishment of the United Methodist Church; and because God, through baptism and confirmation, continues to call each believer into ministry, the Board of Laity lifts up the crucial importance of lay ministry and urges lay people to take their call seriously, committing themselves to grow in faith and in their ministry. We thank the pastors who have committed themselves in leading lay people to discover and develop their ministries and who partner with them in this great adventure of faith and discipleship.

### THE STANDARDS

The Standards of Lay Leadership provide a vision of what the laity of the church is called to be and to do, as they live out the church's mission of bringing people into fellowship with God. This list is not exhaustive, but expresses the current priorities of the Conference. Each lay leader and pastor is encouraged to present and interpret this vision to their Committee on Lay Leadership and to their congregation.

Leadership Standards are intended to:

- \* assist the local church Committee on Lay Leadership in the selection, training and evaluation of its leaders,
- \* help current leaders evaluate their leadership as they plan for continued growth,
- \* help potential leaders as they consider their response to an invitation to leadership.
- \* be lifted up before the congregation as a goal for all disciples to work toward.

It is reality that all Christians are on a journey of faith and discipleship, and that no one will meet all of these standards; therefore, we accept them as goals and call ourselves to continue to work toward the vision and achievement.

*Leaders model at home, at work, at school, as well as at church, what it means to be a disciple of Christ.*

### PRIMARY COMMITMENTS ~

- \* Leaders recognize that commitment to Jesus Christ is the foundation for all leadership in the church; and that commitment to God's will is the beginning of all vision.
- \* Leaders recognize that making disciples of Jesus Christ is the primary goal of not only the church, but also of individual Christians.
- \* Leaders see those who are closest to them - - their family and friends - - as the first opportunity for their ministry and service; and commit to give them the best of themselves rather than the leftovers.

### CHARACTER FOR LEADERSHIP

- Leaders seek to respond to conflict as Jesus did ~ directly, openly and responsibly. Leaders treat others with respect and seek justice, healthy accountability, and reconciliation.
- Leaders recognize the importance of character and seek to become persons whose lives are marked by integrity and compassion; and who treat others with respect regardless of race, gender, social status, theological viewpoint, or any other human differences.
- Leaders intentionally pursue spiritual growth and renewal of body, mind and spirit; setting aside time to deepen their relationship with God and to grow in faith and discipleship.
- Leaders earnestly seek God's will for the church. They work diligently, with tenacity and respect the views of others, to bring about the changes they feel are needed.
- Leaders welcome and understand the value and desirability of accountability for their leadership.
- Christian leaders strive to reflect sexual holiness as a living testimony to God.

(Continued)



## NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE STANDARDS OF LEADERSHIP (Continued)

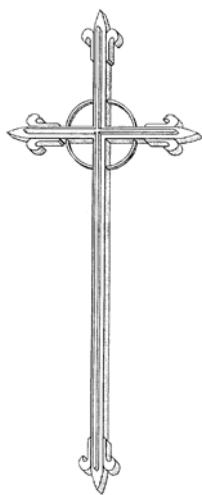
### LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leaders are determined to be servant leaders, seeking the good of the kingdom rather than their own power and status. They make decisions based on the good of the greater Church rather than their own preferences.
- Leaders listen to God, to the community, to their congregation and to others of differing viewpoints, as well as to their own hearts as they discern visions and set goals for their church's future and ministry.
- Leaders are future-oriented. They are willing to take risks as they encourage others to celebrate the past while moving toward the future.
- Leaders partner with their pastor ~ praying for, supporting and encouraging them ~ and dealing honestly and openly with difficult issues.
- Leaders seek to identify, nurture, encourage and support leadership in others.

### AREAS OF DISCIPLESHIP

- Leaders seek to grow in all areas of discipleship.
- Leaders are called to prayer. They read scripture for the enlightenment of God's will for their lives. They commit to regular, frequent participation in worship and study, and grow in giving and in service to others.
- Leaders recognize tithing as the traditional standard for giving and commit to grow toward, or beyond, that standard.
- Leaders seek to support the ministries and programs of the local church, the district, the Conference, and the General Church; in order to more effectively accomplish the mission of the Church.
- Leaders seek to understand and interpret the Methodist distinctives: history, tradition, beliefs, worship, structure and vision.
- Leaders are committed to discovering, developing and practicing their spiritual gifts, and to encourage others to do the same.
- Leaders are committed to hands-on service in and beyond the local church; as well as meeting the practical and spiritual needs of others in the church, the community and throughout the world.

*Adopted by North Georgia Conference Board of Laity on January 13, 2004*



**CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP** is a lifestyle choice that recognizes that everything is a gift from God. Jesus taught that it is our responsibility as disciples to recognize that God is the provider of all that we possess and that our call is to be generous givers. A servant leader contributes time, talents, prayers, and financial resources with a willing and joyful spirit.

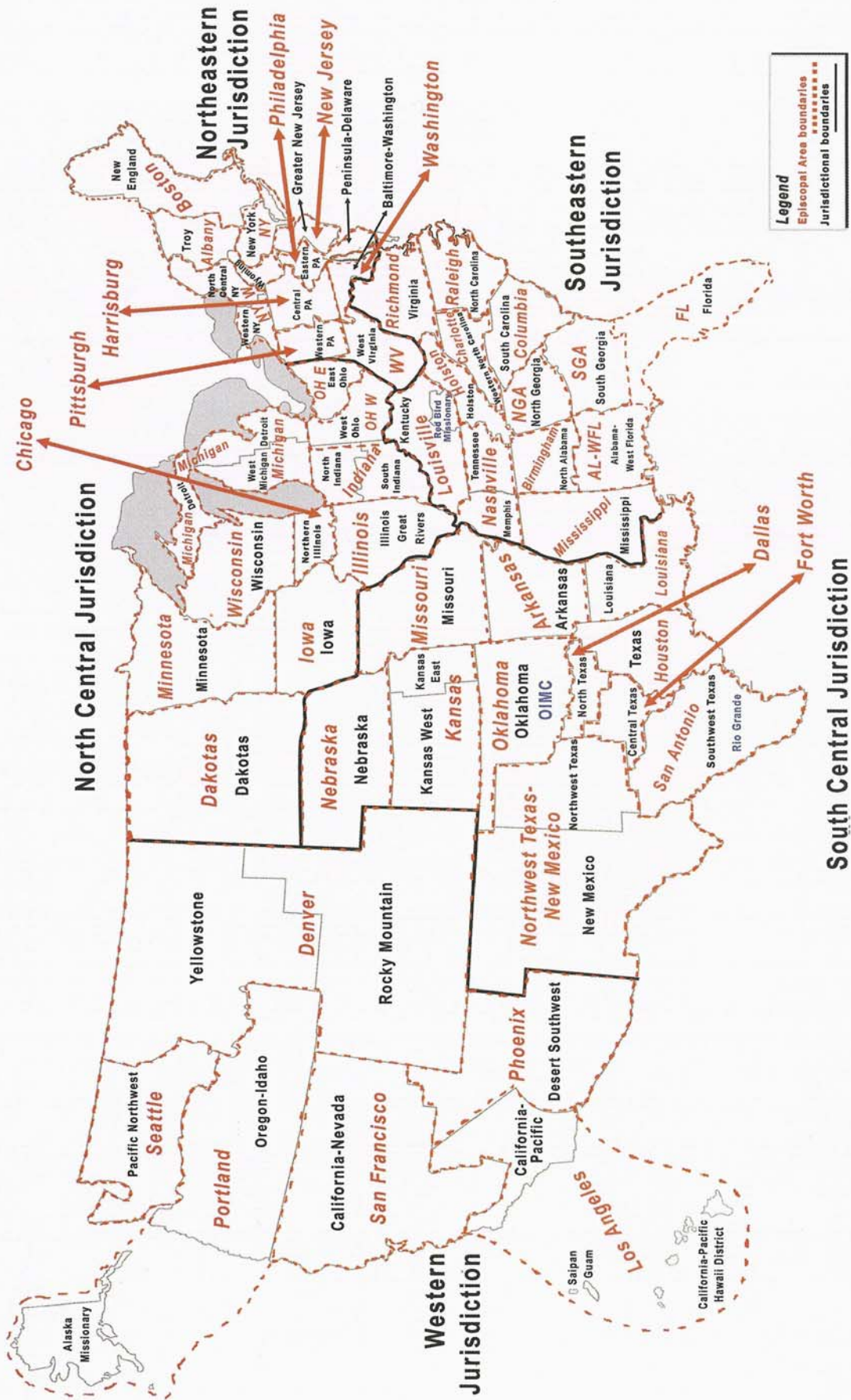
A Christian Steward is: COMPASSIONATE      CONTENT      GENEROUS  
 GRATEFUL      LOVING      LOYAL      OBEDIENT  
 PRAYFUL      RESPONSIBLE      TRUSTWORTHY

A Christian Steward: SACRIFICES      SHARES

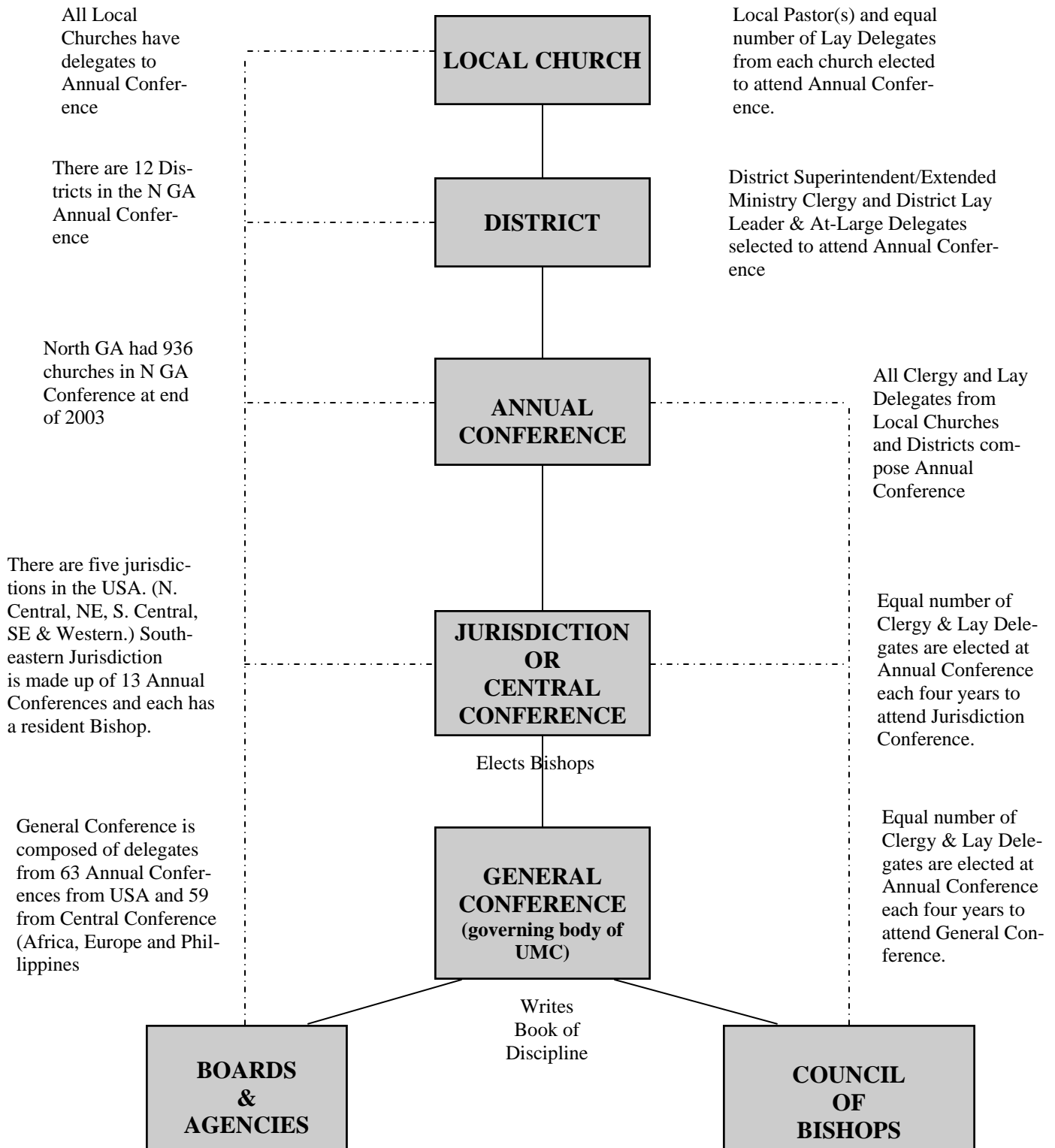
Being a generous giver is a spiritual response to God's goodness. "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries." I Corinthians 4:1

Reprinted from *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation: Stewardship* by Phyllis M. Bowers

# United Methodist Annual Conferences Episcopal Areas and Jurisdictions



# “THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONNECTION”



The local church is connected to the General Conference through the District to the Annual Conference and the Jurisdictional Conference. The delegates from local churches to Annual Conference elect the delegates to Jurisdictional Conference where Bishops are elected. They also elect delegates to General Conference—the governing body of UMC. General Conference is the only body that can speak for The United Methodist Church. Decisions made at General Conference are passed down to the local church for implementation.

# **THE** **METHODIST** **CONNECTION**

In the early days of the Methodist movement in England, John Wesley recognized the need for communication and accountability among his followers. He developed what he called the “connexion”; an interlocking system of classes, societies and annual conferences. Today, we continue this tradition, but our structure has changed. As Methodists, we are proud of our “connection.”

## **LOCAL CHURCH**

A congregation is not autonomous. It is part of The United Methodist Church family and, as such, has certain rights and responsibilities. Through its Charge Conference the local church is linked to the District and the Annual Conference; if other elders are related to the congregation, they too are members of an Annual Conference, as are Deacons. Each year the Charge Conference elects a lay person (or an equal number of lay persons as members of the Annual Conference to equalize the number of lay and clergy persons going to the Annual Conference from the local church. Both laity and clergy take part in forming policies and programs that affect the congregation.

## **DISTRICT**

The district is a division of the Annual Conference that serves as a link between the congregations and the Conference. It is led by a District Superintendent (DS), an elder appointed by the Bishop, usually for a six-year term. The DS oversees the ministry of the district’s clergy and churches, provides spiritual and pastoral leadership, confers with the Bishop and others in the appointment of ordained ministers to serve the district’s churches, presides at meetings of the local churches’ Charge Conference, and oversees programs within the district, and administers District funds.

## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The term “Annual Conference” has three distinct meanings; 1)it is an organizational structure, 2) a geographical area, and 3) a periodic meeting of representatives, i.e., the Annual Conference session. As an organizational body, it is made up of ordained members, both active and retired, a number of district and conference leaders, and lay members elected by the charge conferences of all the churches and district at-large members .

Conference meets at least annually, usually in May or June, to worship and fellowship together; receive reports from boards and agencies of the Conference; adopt goals, programs, and budgets for future work, discuss and take action on key issues that affect our Conference and The United Methodist Church, receive new clergy members as ordained Deacons and Elders; and (every four years) elect delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conferences. The Bishop of the episcopal area, which may have one or more annual conferences, presides over the Annual Conference sessions.

## **JURISDICTION**

In the United States, The United Methodist Church is divided into five areas known as jurisdictions: Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central, and Western. These Jurisdictions provide various programs and leadership training events to support the Annual Conferences. An equal but designated number of laity and clergy delegates are elected by each Annual Conference to attend and represent the Conference at Jurisdictional Conference. Every four years, the Jurisdictional Conferences meet to elect new bishops and select members to represent the Jurisdiction on General Boards and Agencies of General Conference.

## **CENTRAL CONFERENCE**

Outside the United States, our denomination is organized according to Central Conferences. These units – in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines have their own Bishops and delegates to General Conference.

## **GENERAL CONFERENCE**

Made up of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by Annual Conferences, the General Conference meets every four years. General Conference serves as our legislative body, and is the only organization with authority to speak for The United Methodist Church. It sets our governing procedures which are published in The Book of Discipline, establishes program emphases, and sets a four-year budget for the Church's general operating expenses.

We are thankful for the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church. Without our connection with other leaders, churches, and resources, our local church congregation's mission would be like a boat adrift at sea; however, the connection system binds each church to our Wesleyan heritage and accountability within the system.

\*Updated from 2000-2004 Training Resource for Local Church Leaders by information from The United Methodist Church Communications Office 2005



**April 22—May 2, 2008**

## **OUR GENERAL COUNCILS AND AGENCIES**

### **COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

All active and retired members of The United Methodist Church are members of the Council. “The Council meets twice a year and is the collegial expression of the Episcopal leadership in the Church and through the Church into the world. The Church expects the Council to speak to the Church giving leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships.” At General Conference, members of the Council of Bishops preside over the Plenary Sessions and conduct worship services.

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### **JUDICIAL COUNCIL**

The “Supreme Court” of our Church rules on the constitutionality of the actions of various bodies and officers of the church.

### **GENERAL COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

GCFA has a number of financial, legal, and administrative responsibilities. For example, it receives requests for funding from general agencies and develops a four-year budget which is proposed to the General Conference.

### **GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

This board, headquartered in Washington D.C., guides the church in responding to social issues that affect the quality of human life. It serves as the voice of Christian conscience on matters of public policy, but like other agencies, it cannot speak for the whole denomination.

### **GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Headquartered in Nashville Tennessee, this board provides resources and services to assist congregations in making disciples of Jesus Christ – aids that address the deep yearning in the hearts of people to meet and grow in relationship with God. This includes resources of the Upper Room, Discipleship Resources and the church school curriculum resources.

### **GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

From its New York City headquarters, this program agency oversees the national and worldwide mission of the church, supporting mission programs in locations throughout the world. The Women’s Division relates directly to the work of the United Methodist Women at all levels. Its United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) helps the whole church respond quickly to emergencies around the globe.

### **GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY**

From its offices in Nashville, this board supports the work of United Methodist schools, colleges, universities, seminaries and the campus ministry of annual conferences. It guides the preparation of clergy and oversees the work of chaplains, both in the armed services and in institutions such as hospitals and homes.

## OTHER GENERAL AGENCIES



- General Commission on Archives and History
- General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns
- General Commission on Communications (UM Communications)
- General Board of Pension and Health Benefits
- General Commission on Religion and Race
- General Commission on Status and Role of Women
- General Commission on United Methodist Men
- The United Methodist Publishing House

We support the work of many of the above agencies through our congregation's budget which are paid through our local church apportionments, a part of which goes to the World Service Fund. When we take our vows of church membership, we become a part, not only of our congregation, but also of the United Methodist Church as a whole. Together we accomplish for Christ what we could not do alone.

\*Updated from information furnished by The United Methodist Church Communications Office 2005

### *A JOB or A MINISTRY?*

Some people have a Job in the church, while others involve themselves in Ministry.  
What is the difference???

If you are doing it just because no one else will ~ it's a Job.

If you are doing it to serve the Lord ~ it's a Ministry.

If you quit because someone criticized you ~ it's a Job.

If you are serving others, then it is a Ministry!

If you do it only as long as it doesn't interfere with other activities ~

If you quit because no one thanked you or praised your efforts ~

If you do it to impress others ~

If your concern is success ~ it's a Job!

If you are committed to staying with it even if it means letting go of other things ~

If your reward is in heaven ~

If you do it although no one recognized your efforts ~

If you're a servant and your concern is faithfulness ~ it's a Ministry.

If you have a Job in the Body of Christ, give it up for a Ministry~

And if God has called you to a Ministry, don't treat it like a Job!

Churches are filled with people doing Jobs ~

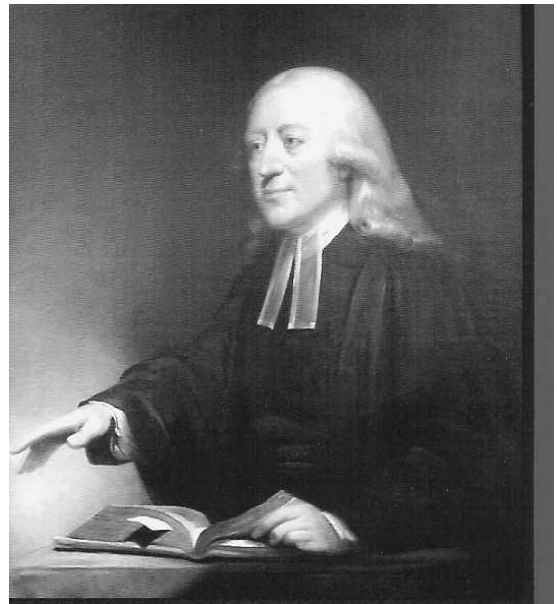
Great and growing churches are filled with people involved in Ministry.

What are you doing in the Body of Christ? A Job or a Ministry?

*Reprinted with permission from St. Peter's of Norfolk*

## JOHN WESLEY

For the vast working class, the early 18<sup>th</sup> century was dismal in England. The Industrial Revolution had brought long hours of drudgery at low pay, while relative few lived in increasing luxury. The Church of England provided little comfort. Too often it served the powerful and rich; it was formal and ritualistic, with little attention given to personal piety, discipline, Bible Study, prayer, or serving the needy. Into this environment came a man God would use to work a major change, the founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley.



Wesley was born in 1703, the 15<sup>th</sup> child of 19 children. His father Samuel Wesley was the rector of the Anglican parish church at Epworth, some 150 miles north of London. Susanna Wesley, his mother, was a strong woman, intelligent and pious, who managed the household with strict discipline and provided the early schooling for each child.

At age 11, John was sent to school in London and at 17 to Oxford University. He studied for the priesthood, was ordained at 25 and later returned to teach at one of London's colleges. There his brother, Charles and other students had started a small group for religious study and discipline. John soon became its leader.

Although intensely serious about religion, John did not sense an abiding faith in Christ. Thinking missionary work might help, he and Charles sailed to the coast of Georgia to work with settlers and Native Americans. But the trip turned out to be a disaster. John's rigid ways and a bad romance caused ill feelings; therefore, following Charles, he returned to England a discouraged man. One benefit of the experience, however, was his introduction to the quiet assurance of faith shown by the Moravians, a sect based in Germany.

On May 24, 1738, John Wesley's life changed. At a Christian gathering on Aldersgate Street in London, while listening to the reading of Luther's Preface to Paul's Letter to the Romans, he felt a remarkable assurance of faith: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation." Though John hardly mentioned this "Aldersgate experience" again, it seems to have released him for an incredibly passionate and productive ministry over the next five decades.

John Wesley began preaching the good news of Jesus Christ wherever he could. Because his message was so personal and the response so enthusiastic, the Anglican authorities became alarmed; and one parish church after another was closed to him. That didn't stop him, for he

proclaimed, “I consider the world as my parish.” Traveling on horseback, he covered some 250,000 miles in his lifetime.

Wesley was a prolific author of sermons, books, pamphlets. He wrote in his journal daily a candid account of his own spiritual struggles, the ups and downs of the new Methodist movement, and his adventures on the road. Though he wrote a number of hymns, some of which are in our Methodist Hymnal, his brother Charles was the master, composing and publisher of perhaps 7500 hymns! It was largely due to Charles that the Methodists became a singing people.

Wesley never left the Church of England; he had hoped to reform it from within. He did not intend to launch a new denomination, and late in life he discouraged his followers from doing so. It has been said that when he died at the age of 87, he left behind “one silver spoon, a worn-out clergyman’s coat, a much-abused reputation, and – the Methodist Church.”

His legacy was a strong organization of classes, societies and annual conferences which did indeed become a church after Wesley’s death. His trademark was a passionate faith and a spiritual energy that the Church of England had never before seen. Perhaps most of all, he left a balanced and sensible way of believing, one that incorporated the best from many traditions but avoided the extremes.

The Wesleyan movement brought to the flow of Christian history certain distinctive qualities that have characterized the Methodist family around the world for over 250 years. The freshness, energy, and intensity of the Wesleys, and of the earliest Methodist preachers and their kindred spirits among Evangelicals and United Brethren, have been a deep source of life for the generations that followed. Today United Methodists strive diligently to maintain the balance of believing and practicing the Christian faith that John Wesley imparted on our denomination.

\*Reprinted from 2000-2004 CBOL Laity Training Handbook

## REFLECTING ON WESLEY AND TODAY’S CHURCH

As congregations, we are to simulate God’s outreaching love, and discover by God’s grace how we can best serve Christ’s ministry in today’s world. Our challenges require self-analysis and intentional planning based firmly on our hope in Christ ~ the Light in a dark world. As we formulate plans to serve the needs of our communities, we focus on John Wesley’s teachings and offer them Christ ~ the One who served others in all things. We prayerfully plan how to best utilize our resources in telling the Good News.



Fed by springs of vitality, we are empowered with the Holy Spirit for mission and ministry. In response to Jesus’ call to discipleship, we receive new vision and determination for becoming congregations of lively witness and active service. From the voices of John and Charles Wesley, we hear both grace and challenge in our purpose to serve.

The United Methodist Connection holds in covenant community an immense variety of congregations that undergird the world outreach and support ministries in every walk of life. The Connection is only as vital as the congregations that comprise it; therefore, our prayer is that God will cause a well to spring forth watering the tree of faith, so we as faithful disciples may bear fruit for the reign of God for His glory. If it is Thy will, so let it be in Jesus’ Holy Name.



The Rose Window, currently located in the Fitzgerald Prayer Chapel at the North Georgia Conference United Methodist Center, Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center, is a part of the Wesley Memorial Windows.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

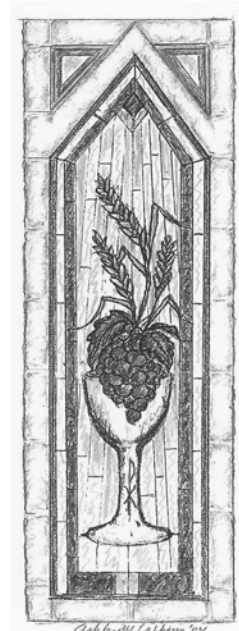
**Marcia McFee, Worship Leader of 2004 Southeastern Jurisdiction Conference and Worship Workshop Consultant, for sharing of the SEJ Conference logo found on the front cover of this Handbook.**

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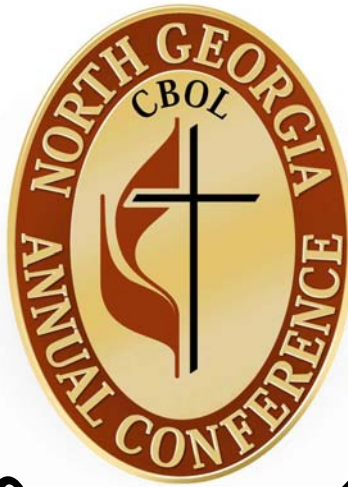


“Do all the good you can ~ by all the means you can ~ in all the ways you can ~ in all the places you can ~ at all the times you can ~ to all the people you can as long as ever you can.”

John Wesley

# NOTES





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## CONFERENCE BOARD OF LAITY

Jane Finley, Conference Lay Leader  
706-886-4039 mjfarms100@aol.com

Ron Davis, Associate Conference Lay Leader  
770-425-5433 r.davis@hp.com

Mathew Pinson, Associate Conference Lay Leader  
404-727-4482 mathewpinson@gmail.com

Dianne Spencer, Associate Conference Lay Leader  
404-288-9285 ds2687@bellsouth.net

Dianne Traynham, Associate Conference Lay Leader  
770-737-3125 dtraynham@etc.mail

Rev. DeDe Leetch, Cabinet Advisor  
404-634-2520 atlantaemory@earthlink.net

Reverend Mike Selleck, Director-Connectional Ministries  
678-533-1441 mselleck@ngumc.org

Bishop B. Michael Watson, North Georgia Conference  
678-533-1360 bishop@ngumc.org