

# Section XI. Lay Servant Ministries

## ¶266. *Lay Servant*—

1. A lay servant (local church or certified) is a professing member of a local church or charge who is ready and desirous to serve the Church and who is well informed on and committed to the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership, and care-giving ministries. An applicant must be active in the support of the local church or charge.
2. Lay servants are to serve the local church or charge (or beyond the local church or charge) in any way in which their witness or leadership and service inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective discipleship, including the interpretation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and ministries of the church.
3. Through continued study and training a lay servant should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church or charge.
  - a) To take initiative in giving leadership, assistance, and support to the program emphases of the church.
  - b) To lead meetings for prayer, training, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor, district superintendent, or committee on Lay Servant Ministries.
  - c) To conduct, or assist in conducting, services of worship, and present sermons and addresses when requested by the pastor, district superintendent, or committee on Lay Servant Ministries.
  - d) To relate to appropriate committees and ministry areas in providing leadership for congregational and community life and fostering care-giving ministries.
  - e) To assist in the distribution of the elements of Holy Communion whenever celebrated upon request by the pastor of the church of which the lay servant is a member.
4. Lay servant training courses shall be those recommended by the General Board of Discipleship or alternates approved by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries. Such training should enable ministries with all language and cultural groups as appropriate. These courses are open to all, whether or not an enrollee applies to serve as a lay servant.
5. It is recommended that a service of commitment be held for persons recognized as local church or certified lay servants.
6. Provisions for Lay Speakers—A lay speaker is a professing member of a local church or charge who is called and equipped to serve the church in pulpit supply in accordance and compliance with ¶341.1. A lay speaker will complete a course of study provided by Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent conference structure. Lay speakers will be certified by the annual conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure after examination. The concept of lay speaker is based on the historical tradition of ministry of the laity instituted by John Wesley. While lay speakers are engaged in a variety of ministries, their purpose is to complement and support, not replace, pastors. The lay speaker will preach the Word when the pastor is unavailable, or in accordance with ¶341.1.

A certified lay speaker or a person with requisite training defined by the district or conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure may be certified as a lay speaker. The lay speaker will complete a course of study to include the Lay Servant basic course, and leading worship, leading prayer, discovering spiritual gifts, preaching, and United Methodist heritage and polity, and/ or other courses as may be determined by the annual conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure. The lay speaker will be recommended by the pastor of the local church where their membership is held and by a vote of the charge conference.

Upon completion of the required course work, the individual will be examined by the district committee on Lay Servant

Ministries or equivalent structure and recommended to the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure for certification.

The lay speaker must apply for re-certification and appear before the district committee on Lay Servant Ministries or equivalent structure every three years and receive the endorsement of this local church charge conference.

A lay speaker is a volunteer and serves without compensation.

### **¶267. Local Church Lay Servant—**

1. A candidate may be recognized as a local church lay servant by the district or conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries after the candidate has:
  - a) Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the church council or the charge conference of the local church in which membership is held. The district superintendent shall be responsible for reporting the names of applicants to the appropriate committee.
  - b) Completed the basic course for lay servant.
2. The local church lay servant with appropriate training (see ¶266.3) shall serve the local church in which membership is held through ministries of leading, caring, and communicating.
3. To maintain status, a report and reapplication with recommendations must be submitted annually and a refresher course approved by the conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries must be completed once in every three years (see ¶ 247.11).

### **¶268. Certified Lay Servant—**

1. A candidate may be recognized as a certified lay servant by the district or conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries after the candidate has:
  - a) Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the church council or the charge conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
  - b) Completed both basic and one advanced training courses for lay servant ministries.
  - c) Had his or her qualifications reviewed by the district committee on lay servant ministries and the annual charge conference (see ¶ 668.3).
2. The certified lay servant with appropriate training shall continue to serve the local church through ministries of leading, caring, and communicating, and may serve in the role of class leader (see ¶ 266.1 and .3). In addition, the certified lay servant may serve in the district and conference and in local churches other than the local church in which membership is held.

3. Recognition as a certified lay servant shall be renewed annually by the district or conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries after the certified lay servant has:
  - a) Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
  - b) Submitted an annual report to the charge conference and the committee on Lay Servant Ministries, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of lay servant service.
  - c) Been recommended for renewal by the pastor and the church council or charge conference.
  - d) Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay servants.

**¶ 269. *Transfer of Certification by Certified lay Servants—***

A certified lay servant who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's committee on Lay Servant Ministries confirming current certification and the date of completion of the most recent advanced course taken. Further renewal of certification is in accordance with ¶268.

**¶ 270. *Provisions for Lay Missioners—***

Lay missioners are committed laypersons, mostly volunteers, who are willing to be trained and work in a team with a pastor-mentor to develop faith communities, establish community ministries, develop church school extension programs, and engage in congregational development. All lay missioners must follow the guidelines established by the National Committee on Hispanic Ministries of the National Plan for Hispanic Ministries and may be certified by their annual conference. If annual conferences choose to certify lay missioners, they must do so according to the guidelines. They are accountable to their pastor-mentor as members of the ministry team. The ministry team is accountable to the local congregation or sponsoring body that established the goals for the ministry and assigned the ministry team. The lay missioner is accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference where assigned. The concept of lay missioners is theologically based in the ministry of the laity. While lay missioners are engaged in a variety of ministries, their purpose is to complement, not replace, pastors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Judicial Council Decision 693

## ¶ 271.1 271. *Certified Lay Minister*—

In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God's grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized.

1. The certified lay minister shall preach the Word, provide a care ministry to the congregation, assist in program leadership, and be a witness in the community for the growth, missional and connectional thrust of The United Methodist Church as part of a ministry team with the supervision and support of a clergy person.
2. A certified lay servant or a person with equivalent training as defined by his or her district or conference may be certified as a lay minister by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry after he or she has:
  - a) Been recommended by the pastor of the local church where he or she holds membership and by vote of the church council or charge conference.
  - b) Completed courses relevant to his or her assignment including preaching and exegesis, the care of the congregation, and other courses as recommended by the General Board of Discipleship and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in consultation with leaders in the annual conference, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.
  - c) Demonstrated appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship, and liturgy of The United Methodist Church through service in his or her local church.
  - d) Been recommended by the district superintendent after completion of appropriate screening.
  - e) Made application in writing to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.
  - f) Appeared before the District Committee on Ordained Ministry for review and approval.
3. The certified lay minister is to apply in writing for recertification biannually to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry upon:
  - a) Ministry review by church council or charge conference from the congregation of which he or she is a member.
  - b) Satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event, and
  - c) Recommendation of the district superintendent.
4. The certified lay minister under assignment is to appear bi-annually before the District Committee on Ordained Ministry for recertification after:
  - a) Ministry review by church council or charge conference where assigned,
  - b) Satisfactory completion of an approved continuing education event, and
  - c) Recommendation of the district superintendent.
5. *Transfer of Certification by Certified Lay Ministers*—A certified lay minister who moves may transfer certification to the new district upon receipt of a letter from the previous district's Committee on Ordained Ministry confirming current certification.
6. The certified lay minister is a layperson and as such is not eligible for support by equitable compensation funds or pension that are provided for clergy members. The local congregation is encouraged to provide appropriate compensation.