Partners in Ministry

Empowering Shared Ministry

Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church
Board of Laity
All Christians as Ministers

Reclaiming the Biblical Understanding

Our Baptismal Covenant

“Through baptism you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into God's new creation and made to share in Christ’s royal priesthood. We are all one in Christ Jesus. With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you as members of the family of Christ.”

Our Baptismal Covenant

“As members together with you in the body of Christ and in this congregation... we renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness.”
“God never intended for church to be a spectator sport... Priesthood is all about DOING something as well as BELIEVING something.”
- Marlene Wilson

Biblical Foundations for Service:

Priesthood of all believers
- 1 Peter 2:9
- Ephesians 4:11-13
- 1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Continued spiritual growth
- John 21:15-17
- Hebrews 10:24-25
- James 1:22-25, 27

Giftedness of each person
- Ephesians 2:10
- 1 Corinthians 12:28-31
- Romans 12:6-8
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What does it mean for the laity – the laos (the people of God) – to be in ministry?
The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ’s outreaching love….Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission; every layperson is called to be missional."

Paragraph 128: Ministry as Gift and Task

“Baptism is followed by the consequent awareness by the baptized of the claim to ministry in Christ placed upon their lives by the church.”

What does the ministry of all Christians look like?
The Ministry of All Christians

- People who are intentional about growing in their discipleship
- Our daily lives outside the doors
- Sharing our faith

Another Way to Say It...

- Every disciple is called to be in ministry.
- Every ministry happens in relationship.
- Every ministry is important.

Functions Integral to All Ministry

1. We are storytellers.
2. We are value bearers.
3. We are community builders.
4. We are spiritual journeyers.
Lay ministry is not easy.

When God first called you to be a member of God’s church?

Cardboard Sign Evangelism

Put your call story into 2-3 sentences at the most. A few words or phrases may be even better than sentences. Tell your story in such a way that people can read it quickly, but want to ask you more. Write your story here:

Now, post it on a piece of paper or even better on a piece of cardboard.
The church is not an institution, but the people of God – a community of disciples.

Too often we become the people gathered around a minister or tradition or building, waiting to receive divine service. We become consumers, not providers.

From a traditional model of ministry...

...to a mutual ministry model.
Fredrica Harris Tompsett wrote an article for the *Ministry Development Journal* in 1985 which described the difference in thinking about church as an “institution” and as the “people of God.”

### Institution vs. People of God

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church as building or organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clergy as “set apart” from laity</td>
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| Church means Christians as people of God |
| Christians are clergy and laity assembled together for one mission |

### Institution vs. People of God

| Laity expect religious care and are consumers of church services |
| Church: clergy-centered ministries to “needy” laity |

| All Christians are the signs and bearers of God’s love |
| Church: Christ-centered people working for a needy world |

### Institution vs. People of God

| Emphasis on educated clergy and professional ministry |

| Emphasis on faithful Christians and baptismal ministry |
Partners in Ministry

*Partners in Ministry* is an attitude, something that permeates how we “do” church.

- Church becomes a place of service and ministry for everyone.
- Church becomes a place where everyone is worthy and valued and has equal voice.
- Church becomes a place where people have the ability to see through “kingdom eyes” no matter what their credentials.

**Partners in Ministry Assumptions:**

1. All baptized Christians are called into ministry.
2. There are no levels of leadership in the church, only different functions depending upon personal gifts and graces, the call of God, and the confirmation of the church.
3. To be effective, laity and clergy need to work as teams in every local situation and abide by an agreed upon set of ground rules for behavior.
4. In order to fulfill assumption number three, clergy and laity need to receive skill training in how to live by the ground rules and they need to receive this training together.

**Ground Rules:**

- All team members are committed to Jesus Christ and to a shared vision for the church.
- All team members seek win/win solutions to problems, conflicts or any other issues that arise.
- All team members keep their agreements and are open and honest in their communications.
- All team members assume 100% responsibility for the results that are produced and do not engage in blaming and justifying.
- All team members agree to live by the **HEART** principles:
  - **H**ear and understand me;
  - **E**ven if you disagree, please don’t make me wrong;
  - **A**cknowledge the greatness in me;
  - **R**emember to look for my loving intentions;
  - **T**ell me the truth with compassion.
Everywhere you look you see the word partner—on billboards advertising banking services, in newspaper ads for insurance companies, on TV programs about nursing care, not to mention the number of Internet sites touting partners in their name.

In the church we have talked about a partnership between lay and clergy for several years. Many written articles have appeared across the denomination, and we heard about partners as a new style of leadership. While some conferences have even had Partner in Ministry themes, lay and clergy need to accept a few basics before actually knowing how to practice partnership in ministry.

First, we need to have a clear understanding of our call: All baptized Christians are called into ministry. For most of us, baptism means an invitational rite into the body of Christ that represents the forgiveness of sin and the newness of life in Christ. But who associates baptism with a call to ministry? In I Corinthians 12:13, the apostle Paul makes a connection between the Holy Spirit and baptism as a sign of entrance into ministry of the whole body. Historically, our emphasis in baptism has been on the benefits received and not on the claim of Christ on the one baptized. We forget that the Holy Spirit empowers us to give our life away in service to Christ—that’s being in ministry.

We must understand, accept, and live the fact that in God’s design all baptized Christians are called into ministry. That means none of us can sit back and coast or let someone else minister on our behalf. Each believer has God-given abilities to strengthen the whole body, and “ministry” is what God does through the entire body—not just clergy and not just laity, but the whole body, together as partners. It may take some transformation for that to happen, but then that should be the fundamental nature of the church—transformation in our own lives as we accept Christ as Lord and Savior…transformation for our churches as those called discover their god-given gifts…transformation when lay people catch the vision that ministry belongs to them, as well as to clergy.

There is a church where the Lord is using the laity in dynamic ways, in what were traditionally clergy-oriented roles of pastoral care. It began with a highly intentional school to equip individuals who already showed signs of spiritual giftedness. Even some indication of resistance from the larger church body which said “that is a job for the pastor” didn’t keep the caregivers from tripling in size to meet the needs of the congregation. It became apparent that the laity, through the work of the Spirit, were the real transforming agents in the church. A congregation is limiting the church and limiting God if they say the pastor must be the only person to do the work of Christ.

Once we realize that we are all ministers called to be about the basics of transformation, we need leadership (see “Spiritual Leadership?” Links, May 1998). This new style of partnership calls for ministry and leadership to be shared by the pastor and local church laity. It calls for teams of lay and clergy to trust each other, to always seek win/win solutions, to keep agreements, and to assume full responsibility. We can’t become what we need to be by remaining what we are. When we risk enough to move from where we may have been for years by opening ourselves to the transforming work of God in Jesus Christ, there’s no telling what will happen in our lives, our churches, and our annual conferences.

*Partners in Ministry*, let’s reach out together to make disciples of Jesus Christ!

Darlene Amon served as Virginia Annual Conference Lay Leader, 1994-2000
ALL GOD’S PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES, AND IN ALL TIMES, ARE CALLED TO LOVE AND TO SERVE.

The UMC Ministry of the Laity
Sharing Ministry as Partners

Ten ministry activities often fill a parish pastor’s day. Check only those options that laity could not do, in your opinion:

☐ Pray for the congregation
☐ Care for the sick
☐ Disciple other believers
☐ Train ministry leaders
☐ Study and teach the Bible
☐ Tell others about Jesus
☐ Represent the church at community events
☐ Visit newcomers to the church
☐ Run errands for the church office
☐ Encourage people through hard times

If pastors truly shared ministry based upon people’s giftedness, would we find anything that lay people could not do in ministry? Church history teaches that whenever clergy become the elite ministry doers, the congregation they serve stagnates and dies. But when lay people join each other in meaningful ministry, the church thrives.

Consider the following comparisons of clergy-centered versus lay-driven perspectives:

Old: Ministry is the task of the pastor, supported by the people.
New: Ministry is the task of the people, supported by the pastor.

Old: The people assist the pastor in doing what they believe God is calling the pastor to do.
New: The pastor assists the people in doing what they believe God is calling the people to do.

Old: The pastor has all the gifts required to nurture and care for a congregation.
New: All the people together have the gifts required to nurture and care for a congregation.

Old: The pastor bears the burden of the ministry. The people hold up the pastor in prayer.
New: Both people and pastor bear the burden of ministry. They hold up one another in prayer.

Taken from an article by Dale E. Galloway in Net Results Magazine – New Ideas in Church Vitality.
MAKING DISCIPLES: Empowering the Laity for Ministry

How would you rate your congregation on a scale of 1 (low), 2 (medium) or 3 (high) on the following:

1. Helping church members to understand the meaning of their baptism as a call to full time Christian service. _____
2. Helping people discover their gifts. _____
3. Helping people discern their call. _____
4. Providing opportunities for people to give an account of their ministry. _____
5. Enabling church members to find appropriate support for their ministry. _____
6. Providing recognition and affirmation of the ministry of church members in the world. _____
7. Helping people relate scripture to the issues of the work place. ___
8. Helping people develop an appropriate spirituality in the context of the work place. _____
9. Affirming the ministry of “homemakers.” _____
10. Affirming the ministry of “retirees.” _____
11. Enabling “workaholics” to be freed from this addiction. ______
12. Enabling church members to overcome the seduction of “consumerism.” _____

Invite other leaders in your congregation to do this assessment independently and then compare your perceptions.

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What is the relationship between what happens on Sunday in your congregation and the ministry of the whole people of God on Monday morning?

What would it look like?

- If all in the church took the ministry of the baptized seriously

What would it look like?

- If all leaders were ready to forget former ways and do a new thing
To help those who are offering their service to grow as disciples of Jesus and to experience the joy of serving – **NOT** to merely fill positions.

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**2008 General Conference: Lay Responsibility for Growth of the Church**
*(Resolution #2105, p. 159, 2008 UMC Book of Resolutions)*

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has steadily lost membership for many years in its country of origin; and,

WHEREAS, in the most recent year’s totals, The United Methodist Church lost 70,000 members, thus exceeding the previous year’s losses of 60,000 members; and,

WHEREAS, the historic strength of The United Methodist Church lay in well-equipped laity who were passionate in their beliefs; and,

WHEREAS, the clergy of The United Methodist Church continue to equip the laity for the task of winning commitments for Christ through witness, service and transforming ministry; and,

WHEREAS, too many of our laity no longer claim that core responsibility of every Christian to find those who are lost and lead them into a church home,

*Therefore be it now resolved* that we, the laity, accept collegial responsibility with the clergy for the growth and vitality of The United Methodist Church.
Partners in Ministry Litany

Leader: We are called to be PARTNERS living in God’s Light!

Right Side: Sometimes we let our light shine as brilliant as the sun. Sometimes our light is hidden under a basket. Sometimes God’s light is hidden from our eyes. Sometimes being partners is unresting and silent as light.

ALL: O Lord, help us to see the splendor of light that hides YOU!

Leader: We are called to be PARTNERS working in God’s work!

Left Side: We work in hard times, tough times. We work late and we work hard. We are partners with each other as companions in God’s work. We come with pure hearts, steady hand, and in gentleness.

ALL: O Lord, remind us that we are yours in whatever work we do!

Leader: We are called to be PARTNERS in God’s love!

Right Side: We come with our hands uplifted and our hearts filled with love. We come into Your Holiness to honor and praise you with our lips. As you have loved us, so may we love one another. May our actions prove what we say with our lips. With hands outstretched we share with those who need God’s love.

ALL: O Lord, search us and know us; having nothing or having it all. Fill us with you JOY as we give YOU praise for the LOVE you give us to share.

Leader: We are called to be PARTNERS in witnessing to God’s majesty.

Left Side: God, show us YOUR power as we become empowered to act like your sons and daughters. God, show us YOUR Holy Spirit when we are ignored by the world. God, show us YOUR Son, Jesus Christ, who recognizes us as lay and clergy partners in the ministry, so that our doing and our being are pleasing in your sight.

ALL: O Lord, guide us to use our many gifts in YOUR church!

Leader: As PARTNERS with each other, followers of Jesus around the world, we are YOUR church!

HYMN: “We Are the Church”
We Are the Church

Refrain (Union)

I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together!

1. The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,
   the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.
2. We're many kinds of people, with many kinds of faces,
   all colors and all ages, too, from all times and places.
3. Sometimes the church is marching, sometimes it's bravely burning,
   sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding, always it's learning.
4. And when the people gather, there's singing and there's praying,
   there's laughing and there's crying sometimes, all of it saying:
5. At Pentecost some people received the Holy Spirit
   and told the Good News through the world to all who would hear it.