

Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church

Church Lay Leader Manual

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Structure of the United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church is a connectional structure maintained through its chain of conferences.

The General Conference

The General Conference is the supreme legislative body of The United Methodist Church. It is made up of not less than six hundred or more than one thousand delegates, on a formula spelled out in *The Book of Discipline*. Half of the delegates are ministers and half are laypersons elected by their annual conferences throughout the world. The General Conference meets every four years. The General Conference is responsible for all legislation of policy established by the United Methodist Church and published in *The Book of Discipline*. No person, no paper, no organization, has authority to speak for The United Methodist Church. This right having been reserved exclusively to the General Conference under the Constitution of The United Methodist Church.

The Jurisdictional Conference

The Jurisdictional Conferences are regional bodies. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by their annual conferences within the jurisdiction. The Jurisdictional Conference meets every four years. The Jurisdictional Conference may order a special session in such manner as it shall determine.

In the United States, there are five Jurisdictional Conferences as follows:

- Southeastern Jurisdiction
- South Central Jurisdiction
- North Central Jurisdiction
- Northeastern Jurisdiction
- Western Jurisdiction

The Florida Annual Conference is part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

The Central Conference

The role and responsibilities of the Central Conferences are set forth in *The Book of Discipline*. Central Conferences perform about the same function as Jurisdictional Conferences, except that they are located in other countries than the United States. However, because of their location and their need to adapt to the needs there, they are accorded a larger measure of freedom to work out their own structures than is the case of the Jurisdictional Conferences.

The Florida Annual Conference

The Annual Conference is the basic body in the Church and as such shall have reserved to it the right to vote on all constitutional amendments, on the election of clergy and lay delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences, on all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy. The Florida Annual Conference meets every year. The Bishop presides at the meeting. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay

members.

There are nine (9) districts in the Florida Conference:

- Atlantic Central District
- East Central District
- Gulf Central District
- North Central District
- North East District
- North West District
- South Central District
- South East District
- South West District

The Charge Conference

The charge conference is the basic unit in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church. It is the local church level. The charge conference meets every year and, also, may meet in special sessions. The membership of the charge conference shall be the pastor and all members of the church council, together with retired clergy who were elected to hold their membership in said charge conference. If more than one church is on the pastoral charge, all council members of each church shall be members of the charge conference.

The district superintendent shall preside at the meetings of the charge conference or may designate an elder to preside. To encourage broader participation by members of the church, the charge conference may be convened as the **church conference**, extending the vote to all local church members present at such meetings.

Vision and Mission Statements

The United Methodist Church

The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.

Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: *"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"* (28:19-20), and *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind....And you shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (22:37, 39)

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 120, 121

The Florida Annual Conference

Vision Statement:

God's transforming grace in Jesus Christ calls us to become one dynamic church with diverse people in many settings, offering a new life of Christian discipleship to the world.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Florida Annual Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by:

- *equipping congregations for the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ;
- *transforming existing congregations from a life of institutional maintenance to a life of transformational mission in their diverse communities and the world;
- *reproducing vital congregations in new settings;
- *calling, training and supporting lay and clergy leaders for the church; and
- *engaging in shared ministries that fulfill the vision of the Kingdom of God.

The Local Church

Each Local Church should prepare a Vision Statement and a Mission Statement that reflects its specific ministry. The following is offered as guidance in preparing such:

Mission Statement:

Each congregation is a community of Christian people organized to carry out God's mission for the church as defined in Matthew 28: 19-20. This mission, the development of disciples to minister to the world, requires:

- ***reaching out*** into the world surrounding the congregation and joyfully receiving into the family of faith all who would respond;
- ***encouraging*** people in their relationship with God and inviting them into a commitment to God's love in Jesus Christ;
- ***providing*** opportunities for people to be nurtured and to practice the disciplines of faith; and
- ***supporting*** people to live and act as faithful disciples in ministry to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Commentary:

This mission statement defines the Primary Task of the congregation. It is the essential process that must be carried out if the congregation is to be faithful to the directive of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a faithful, effective congregation, all processes, all activities, all tasks support the mission of the church.

When the Primary Task is really working in a congregation, there is a sense of flow. People coming into the congregation from the community are transformed, nurtured, sent back to the world to witness and serve, and return to the Christian community for a deeper relationship with God and growth in discipleship. Individuals being transformed and empowered as disciples will move through the process at their own pace.

The four elements of the Primary Task are most often carried out simultaneously and continually. Each element flows into the others and no element of the task is more important than the other. It is critical that all elements of the Primary Task be working effectively or all will fail at the whole process.

The Florida Annual Conference

Purpose

The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 601

Composition

The clergy membership of an annual conference shall consist of deacons and elders in full connection, probationary members, associate members, affiliate members, and local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment to a pastoral charge.

For purposes of attending the Annual Conference Event, the lay membership of the annual conference shall consist of a professing member elected by each charge, home missionaries, conference president of UMW, conference president of UMM, conference lay leader and district lay leaders.

For purpose of attending the Annual Conference Event, if the lay membership should number less than the clergy members, the annual conference shall, by its own formula, provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize lay and clergy membership.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 602

In the Florida Conference, there are 634 churches. Statistical data for these churches in the year 2010 is as follows:

Total Membership	294,479
Received on Profession of Faith	6,055
Restored by Affirmation of Faith	1,295
Received from Other Denominations	1,857
Transferred to Other Denominations	1,206
Removed by Charge Conference Action	7,557
Died	4,146
Average Weekly Worship Attendance	142,177

The 2011 Journal—Florida Annual Conference Event

The Superintendency

The task of superintending in The United Methodist Church resides in the office of bishop and extends to the district superintendents, with each possessing distinct and collegial responsibilities. The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The purpose of superintending is to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry. Those who superintend carry

primary responsibility for ordering the life of the Church. It is their task to enable the gathered church to worship and to evangelize faithfully.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 401

The Episcopacy

Bishops are elected by the Jurisdictional Conference in the United States and by the Central Conference in other parts of the world. The conference then, on recommendation of its Committee on Episcopacy, assigns the bishop to a residence. The College of Bishops of the Jurisdictional or Central Conference assigns the bishops to residential and presidential supervision over one or more Annual Conferences, which the assignment is known as an “Episcopal area”.

The Bishop, with the assistance of the district superintendents, makes all pastoral appointments in the conference.

The Resident Bishop of the Florida Area is Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker.

The Conference Lay Leader

The conference lay leader is the elected leader of conference laity and will have responsibility for fostering awareness of the role of the laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission of the Church and enabling and supporting lay participation in the planning and decision-making processes of the annual conference, district, and local church in cooperation with the bishop, district superintendents, and pastors.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 607.1

The Conference Lay Leader for the Florida Annual Conference is Sharon Luther.

The Cabinet

The cabinet under the leadership of the bishop is the expression of superintending leadership in and through the annual conference. It is expected to speak to the conference and for the conference to the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region encompassed by the conference.

The cabinet is thus the body in which the individual district superintendents are held accountable for their work, both for conference and district responsibilities.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶429.2 & .3

The District

District Superintendent

The district superintendent, appointed by the bishop, shall oversee the total ministry of the clergy and of the churches in the communities of the district as provided for in *The Book of Discipline* Section V ¶ 417-425. The appointment is for a term of six years.

Atlantic Central District Superintendent – Gary Spencer
East Central District Superintendent – Wayne Wiatt
Gulf Central District Superintendent- John Powers
North Central District Superintendent- Annette Pendergrass
North East District Superintendent- Tim Smiley
North West District Superintendent- Tony Fernandez
South Central District Superintendent- Sharon Austin
South East District Superintendent- Craig Nelson
South West District Superintendent- Rini Hernandez

District Lay Leader

The district lay leader is the elected leader of the district laity and shall be a professing member of a local church. The district lay leader shall provide for the training of local church lay leaders for their ministries in the local churches. The District Lay Leader shall have responsibility for fostering awareness of the role of the laity both within congregations and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world in achieving the mission for the Church, and supporting and enabling lay participation in the planning and decision-making process of the district and the local churches in cooperation with the district superintendent and pastors.

The district lay leader will meet regularly with the district superintendent to discuss the state of the district, the Church, and the needs for ministry both locally and globally.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 659.1 & .3

Atlantic Central District Lay Leader- Dottie Graves	Assoc. District Lay Leader – Jeanie Tennant Assoc. District Lay Leader – Rod Groom
East Central District Lay Leader- Alice Williams	
Gulf Central District Lay Leader- Walter Dry, Sr.	Assoc. District Lay Leader – Helen Morrill
North Central District Lay Leader- Lenny Shultz	Assoc. District Lay Leader- Idella Gaston
North East District Lay Leader- Bob Holzkamp	
North West District Lay Leader- Jim Crosby	

South Central District Lay Leader-John Reeve
South East District Lay Leader-Oswald Sands

South West District Lay Leader-Jodi Anderson

Assoc. District Lay Leader-Mike Mullins
Assoc. District Lay Leader-Oscar Negron
Assoc. District Lay Leader-Clausette Emmanuel
Assoc. District Lay Leader-Jack Warner
Assoc. District Lay Leader-Dave Hamrick

District Leadership Council

The District Leadership Council shall consist of twelve (12) to fifteen (15) members all of whom shall be members in good standing of The United Methodist Church. Of this total number, four (4) shall be:

District Superintendent
District Lay Leader(s)
District Business Administrator
President of the Corporation (Chairman of the District Leadership Council)

Of the total number of members, twelve (12) will be elected in classes of four (4) and each class will serve for three (3) years. Classes will be staggered to assure continuity of leadership.

The officers of the corporation shall be elected by the District Leadership Council.

Corporate Officers

The officers of the corporation shall be as follows:

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer

District Committees

Members of the district committees are elected by the annual conference. The following committees are responsible to the District Leadership Council:

Nominations and Leadership Development Committee
New Church Development
Congregational Transformation Committee
Clergy Housing Committee

There shall also be a district committee on ordained ministry. The district committee on ordained ministry shall be amenable to the annual conference through the conference board of ordained ministry.

The Local Church

Definition of a Local Church

The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 201

The Function of the Local Church

The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. It is primarily at the level of the local church that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 202

Church Membership

The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 214

The membership of a local church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith. The professing membership of a local church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other local churches.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 215

Characteristics of a Healthy Church

There are eight defined characteristics of a healthy church, which are as follows:

1. **Empowering** Leadership
2. **Gift-Oriented** Ministry
3. **Passionate** Spirituality
4. **Functional** Structures
5. **Inspiring** Worship
6. **Holistic** Small Groups
7. **Need-Oriented** Evangelism
8. **Loving** Relationships

NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT, A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches by Christian A. Schwarz

Local Church Organization

The basic organizational plan for the local church shall include provision for the following units:

- Charge conference
- Church council
- Committee on pastor/staff-parish relations
- Board of trustees
- Committee on finance
- Committee on nominations and leadership development.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 244-259

Local Church Leaders

The Pastor

A pastor is an ordained elder, probationary deacon or licensed person appointed by the bishop to a local church (a Charge). The appointment is for a term of one year; however, it is customary for a pastor to be returned to the same church for many years. A pastor may be appointed to a charge that consists of more than church. Responsibilities have a four-fold ministry as follows:

*Word and ecclesial acts:

- a) To preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage the people in study and witness
- b) To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles
- c) To perform the ecclesial acts of marriage and burial
- d) To visit in the homes of the church and the community, especially among the sick, aged, imprisoned, and others in need.

*Sacrament:

- a) To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ's ordinance
- b) To encourage the private and congregational use of the other means of grace.

*Order:

- a) To be the administrative officer of the local and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for
- b) To administer the temporal affairs of their church in their appointment, the annual conference, and the general church.
- c) To participate in denominational and conference programs and training opportunities
- d) To lead the congregation in racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

*Service:

- a) To embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership
- b) To give diligent pastoral leadership in ordering the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world
- c) To build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community, extending the ministry of Christ to the world
- d) To participate in community, ecumenical and inter-religious concerns and to encourage the people to become so involved and to pray and labor for the unity of the Christian community.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 340

The Local Church Lay Leader

Out of the professing membership of each local church, there shall be elected by the charge conference a lay leader who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in the 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 on lay-leadership, and the committee on pastor-parish relations or staff-parish relations where, along with the pastor, the lay leader shall serve as an interpreter of the actions and programs of the annual conference and the general Church,
- 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.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 251

The ministry of the Local Church Lay Leader is as follows:

- a) Member of:
 - Charge Conference
 - Church Council
 - Committee on Finance
 - Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development
 - Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee
- b) Tasks include:
 - Primary lay representative of the laity in the local church
 - Foster awareness of the role of the laity in all aspects of life in caring out the mission of The United Methodist Church to make Disciples of Jesus Christ
 - Support the ministries of the laity: United Methodist Men, Women, Youth and other lay groups

- Meet regularly with the Pastor. You and your pastor are called to be partners in ministry
 - Be continually involved in study and training opportunities in order to come to better understand the Church's reason for existence and the types of ministries that will fulfill the mission of the Church
 - Advise church council of needs and opportunities provided by the annual conference attend those training events
 - Lay Leaders are urged to actively promote Lay Speaking and to become certified lay speakers
 - Plan, promote and implement Laity Sunday (3rd Sunday in October)
- c) The Local Church Lay Leader should prepare spiritually to carry out these tasks by developing Spiritual Formation (striving to be Christ-like) through the practice of Spiritual Disciplines.

Leaders To Be Elected

The charge conference shall elect, upon recommendation by the committee on lay leadership, the following leaders:

1. Chairperson of the church council
2. The committee on nominations and leadership development (Pastor is chairperson)
3. The committee on pastor/staff-parish relations and its chairperson
4. The committee on finance and its chairperson
5. The committee on trustees (committee elects its own chairperson)
6. Lay leader
7. Lay member to the annual conference
8. Recording secretary

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2008) ¶ 249

The Methodist Way

This refers to the five essential practices that are involved in making disciples for Jesus Christ. These practices are a natural and essential outgrowth of disciples being in Christ-centered community and joining Him in mission. These five practices are what being a congregation is really all about.

These five practices are nothing new. They firmly have their roots in scripture. They are what Jesus called us to do. They are what Paul taught his congregations to do. They are:

- Cultivating a congregation of **passionate worshipers**
- Extending **radical hospitality** to our community and the next generation
- Forming persons in Christ through deep and **intentional discipling**
- Sending out into the community disciples as **salty servants**
- Pouring ourselves out in **extravagant generosity**

1. Cultivating a congregation of passionate worshipers

Our identity as a congregation has its well-spring in our life of worship together. Christ calls us out of the world to gather around Him. We gather because of what God has done and is doing. We gather the attitudes of trust and gratitude, of openness and obedience. We gather to be formed as God's people through praise, prayer, Word and Sacrament. Passionate worshipers are expectant worshipers, they anticipate experiencing Christ afresh, and know that their lives will not then be the same.

2. Extending radical hospitality to our community and the next generation

As followers of One who gladly welcomed children, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, Samaritans and indeed, sinners of all sorts into His Fellowship – how can we not do likewise? Radical hospitality is actively inviting, welcoming, receiving and caring for strangers, so that they can find a spiritual home among us and discover for themselves abundant life in Christ. Radical hospitality also involves “go and get them” evangelism. Like John Wesley taking up field preaching-way outside his comfort zone – in order to reach those who would never darken the door of a cathedral, so we must find ways to reach those who would never otherwise wander into our sanctuaries.

3. Forming persons in Christ through deep and intentional discipling

Church membership and discipling are not the same. Discipling is about people who have received Jesus as their Savior, then learning what it means to walk with Him as their daily Lord. This isn't something that happens automatically. In fact, there are many people in our congregations who consider themselves good Christians, who never made a commitment to following Jesus and becoming more like Him. These people need basic knowledge about Scripture, about living a

Christian life-style and about the disciplines that will sustain their spiritual life. Deep discipling takes intentionality, organization and leader commitment from the Church congregational leaders.

4. **Sending out into the community disciples as salty servants**

Inside the church, the bounteous God-given gifts, abilities and passions of many people lay fallow, untapped for the kingdom. People are all spiritually dressed up with no place to go and nothing to do that seems to make a Christ-like difference into the World. Jesus said, *“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve....”* Matthew 20:28. As followers of Jesus, we too are called to pick up our crosses in service to a hurting world. Christ pulls us out of ourselves and into the lives of others where we would never have gone, were it not for our commitment to follow Him. Salty service restores credibility to those who would share a Gospel of love to a doubting world. Salty service is where we make difference in the world for Christ.

5. **Pouring ourselves out for Christ in extravagant generosity**

John Wesley urged Methodists to: 1) make all you can by working hard at an honest and honorable trade; 2) save all you can, never squandering money; and 3) give all you can by supporting your immediate family, the household of faith and then to all who are in need. Wesley insisted that for the wealthy, holiness, spiritual vitality, love of God and even faith are directly linked to generosity for the poor. It was for him not just a matter of the poor going hungry; also at stake was the harmful effect of not fulfilling the acts of mercy on the souls of the rich. Jesus sets for us the example of a steward who knows that all we have comes from God, who trusts God to sustain His needs, and who therefore is freed up to pour Himself out in generosity to others-even to the point of the cross.

“The Methodist Way” with its five core practices is one way to fulfill Christ’s mission to make disciples. It provides us with a much needed common language by which we can encourage and hold one another accountable for fulfilling our Kingdom potential, in hopes that one day Christ can greet each of us, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant”.

Dr. Jeff Stiggins, Office of Congregational Excellence,
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