

# THE PEOPLE

## OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*Called to Grow, Serve, and Lead*

*The people of The United Methodist Church...*

Christ-Centered  
Outward Turning  
Disciple Making  
Justice Seeking  
Life Transforming

*The people of The United Methodist Church...*

Diverse  
Inclusive  
Multiplying  
Wrestling  
Becoming

*The people of The United Methodist Church...*

Whose mission and ministry  
inspires and captivates the hearts  
and minds of new generations of disciples

*The people of The United Methodist Church -*

Continually being shaped by  
God for the challenges and  
opportunities of these times

### **Who are disciples of Jesus Christ?**

Disciples are life-long learners and followers of Jesus Christ who passionately serve God in the church and in the world.

### **Who is a transformational leader?**

A transformational leader is one who, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, casts a compelling vision and challenging goals, and whose leadership inspires change and produces growth.

### **What is a fruitful Wesleyan congregation?**

A fruitful Wesleyan congregation is a community of passionate disciples led by the Holy Spirit who are connectional and Wesleyan in their beliefs and practices and who work together to 1) extend radical hospitality, 2) make new disciples, 3) create inspiring worship, 4) intentionally cultivate faith through small groups and children and youth ministries, 5) engage in risk-taking community witness, mercy and justice mission, and 6) increase generosity and giving to mission. (Acts 2:42-47)

### **What is world transformation?**

A community of love where lives are changed, hope abounds, diversity is embraced, the Gospel comes alive, justice prevails for all and everyone has the opportunity, knowledge and skills to live to their full God-given potential. (Micah 6:8, Luke 10:27)

### **Called to Be Disciples**

Disciples are life-long learners and followers of Jesus Christ who passionately serve God in the church and in the world.

The first calling of all laity and clergy is to be disciples of Jesus Christ who make disciples and who are in the community witnessing, engaging in ministries of mercy, and working for justice. The first century disciples of Jesus Christ, as described in Acts 2:41-47 and practiced in the early Methodist movement, regularly engaged in spiritual disciplines that included: worship, witnessing, participation in small groups, mercy and justice ministries, and giving generously to the ministries and mission of the church.

### **Called to Practice The Wesleyan Path**

United Methodists have a distinctive Wesleyan way of being the church and individual members of it. All United Methodists are called to follow *The Wesleyan Path* as it is found in paragraph 600.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

There are two types of membership within The United Methodist Church, lay and clergy. Lay membership is in a congregation. Clergy membership is in a council of clergy, or for bishops in the council of bishops. While each have distinctive roles, responsibilities and authority, laity and clergy are disciples of Jesus Christ and are called to work together to serve and lead the church into the community by making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

### **LAY MEMBERSHIP**

The laity of the church are called by God to servant leadership in and through the church. They are called to build up the body of Christ and to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world through ministries of witness, mercy and justice for the transformation of the world.

The United Methodist Church recognizes that in some regions of the world, people are faithful attendees and participants in the ministry and mission of the congregation but do not always join a congregation. While the following paragraphs describe church membership, congregations are to value and include the gifts and involvement of those who contribute to the life and ministry of the church without joining.

Any layperson who has demonstrated commitment to Christ by attending, praying, giving, serving and witnessing in and through a congregation for at least a year may serve in any of its ministries, committees and teams, and may serve in leadership roles except for the following: as a member of the board of stewards, as a lay delegate to the connectional church conference, or as a voting member at charge/church conferences.

Laity join the church through a congregation. They may serve in and through the congregation and/or ministries that extend the church into the community and the world. When a person joins a congregation, they become a part of the global United Methodist Church and the world-wide body of Christian believers.

The leadership of the church at all levels, both lay and clergy, is called to teach, model and affirm the role of the laity in the mission and leadership of the church. The Wesleyan movement and The United Methodist Church have been strongest and most fruitful when laity are called, developed, sent and supported to serve the church and lead it into the community. The primary role of pastors is to nurture the laity to:

- Encounter God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to continually grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Discover and experience their purpose, calling and gifts for their life.
- Live their baptismal and membership vows and to serve others in the community and world.

There are three different lay memberships in The United Methodist Church, baptized, professing and affiliate members.

### **Baptized Members**

Baptized members are children and adults who have received the sacrament of baptism and are associated with the congregation but have not joined the church by professing the membership vows. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation and incorporation into the Body of Christ. The ritual for baptism is found in The United Methodist Book of Worship. Congregations are to continue to engage with baptized members through ministries that nurture their relationship with Jesus Christ and connect them to ministry in the church, the community, and the world. When appropriate, the congregation should encourage them to profess the membership vows of the United Methodist Church.

All children are encouraged to be baptized. The United Methodist Church affirms infant baptism as a sign of God's grace and recognizes that children are members of the family of God. Pastors are to encourage infant baptism through teaching and preaching. Pastors are not to withhold baptism of an infant whose parent(s) request baptism and are followers of Jesus Christ and active in the church.

### **Professing Members**

Baptized members may join the congregation as professing members as early as twelve years old or whenever the pastor determines a person has the spiritual maturity to understand and practice the membership vows. Prior to joining as a professing member, a congregation shall provide learning and faith development experiences so that new professing members understand what it means to be a Christian in the Wesleyan tradition. These include but are not limited to: a) what it means to make a commitment to Jesus Christ, b) the essentials of the Christian faith and how United Methodists use scripture, tradition, reason and experience to make life decisions, c) The Wesleyan Path, d) the history of the church and in particular The United Methodist Church, e) the gift and responsibilities of membership, and f) service in the world through the church. In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, a legal guardian who is also a baptized member may recite the appropriate vows on that person's behalf.

Professing members make a commitment to put God first in their lives as they profess the following vows of baptism and membership:

1. Renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;
2. Accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
3. Confess Jesus Christ as their Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;
4. Remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;
5. Be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;

6. Faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness;
7. Receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

### **Affiliate Members**

Affiliate lay members are those who have membership in another United Methodist congregation or in another Christian denomination who, for a period of time, will not live near the church where their membership resides and who seek to affiliate with a United Methodist congregation near them. A college student, an individual transferred for a temporary work assignment, or a person caring for an aging parent are some examples of people who may seek affiliate membership. An affiliate member may fully participate in the ministries and organizational life of the congregation.

### **Membership Involvement**

An individual, after appropriate preparation and commitment to the Wesleyan Path and the baptismal/membership vows, may not be denied membership, baptism or holy communion.

An individual may only hold membership in one congregation or denomination, except for affiliate members.

Baptized, professing and affiliate members may serve as leaders of a congregation. Professing members may serve as leaders in the connectional, regional and global churches within The United Methodist Church. Only professing members may vote at charge and church conferences.

Members may have their membership transferred to another United Methodist congregation or a congregation of another denomination upon consent of the member and written request from the receiving congregation.

Members may transfer from other United Methodist congregations or Christian churches when the prospective member requests to join by transfer. The pastor or designated individual from the congregation will write and request the transfer of membership from the sending church. Congregations are encouraged to provide an orientation to membership in The United Methodist Church for individuals joining by transfer, particularly those joining from other denominations.

Members may be removed from church membership if: the individual requests to be removed, the member dies, or the charge/church conference votes to remove the individual for inactivity and lack of participation in the life and ministry of the church.

In any concern of calling, character, values and active participation of a member, the congregation is to first counsel with the member about returning to the path of discipleship and The Wesleyan Path. If, after repeated attempts and counsel with the individual, they do not change and reengage faithfully in The Wesleyan Path and recommit to live their baptismal/membership vows, then the individual may be removed from membership upon the vote of the charge or church conference. An individual who has been removed for character or moral issues, not lack of participation, may appeal their removal from membership to the discernment council of the connectional church (paragraph 1000). Discontinuing membership should not be taken lightly and must be done in consultation with the district superintendent.

### **Lay Leadership Development**

Laity are called to be transformational leaders in the church and the world, and in partnership with clergy, to make and grow disciples, and to develop fruitful Wesleyan congregations for the transformation of the world.

Laity lead ministries to build up the congregation, ministries that serve the community and ministries that oversee the administrative life of the congregation. In partnership with clergy, laity have the following core responsibilities as they lead in the congregation.

1. Deepen the spirituality and faith of disciples so that the laity are working together to continually renew and nurture their faith and the mission of the church in the world.
2. Cast a vision for making disciples and growing fruitful Wesleyan congregations or extension ministries that transform the world so that goals are established and achieved, and the mission is advanced.
3. Increase disciples' knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, theology, church, mission and ministry through the teaching ministry of the church so that disciples live faithfully and teach others the faith.
4. Lead disciples into the world to witness, act justly and show mercy so that transformation is occurring in the people of the community and world.
5. Develop leaders within the congregation or extension ministries so that leaders continue to grow in their ability to lead the mission and ministry of the church.
6. Unify the church through The United Methodist Church's doctrine, Wesleyan Path, the teachings and heritage of the church and common mission so that people work together for the witness, mission and ministry of the church in the world.
7. Lead the organizational life of a congregation so that the congregation is organized to fulfill the mission, grow the congregation, meet the budget, and complete administrative tasks on time and accurately.

The connectional church is to establish a program for the ongoing development of laity in the areas of servant ministry and leadership for service in the congregation, the community and throughout the whole church. The program is to include, but is not limited to:

1. Lay Servant Ministry – Laity are called to serve in and through the congregation, the community and in the world. Lay Servant Ministries include but are not limited to visitation, community outreach, worship leadership and support, teaching Sunday school and Bible study, working with children and youth, lay speaking and other outreach and nurture ministries. As an integral part of the Lay Servant Ministry program, in addition to skills for fruitful ministry, the training is to provide biblical and theological foundation for ministry, intercultural competence, how to be in ministry “with” and not “for” people, how to include children, youth and young adults in ministry, how to work in partnership with the pastor(s) and how to be in collaboration with other ministries, groups and leaders of the church. At least 50% of the workshop leaders for the Lay Servant Ministries program are to be laity. A certification program may be developed, or the current certification program may be used. In any case, the mission of the church and the needs, context, focus and goals of the connectional church are to be incorporated into the program.
2. Lay Leadership Ministry – Laity are called to lead the administrative ministry in the congregation, community and throughout the church. As a part of this program, leadership qualities and skills are to be taught in addition to skills for a particular leadership ministry. The program is to include biblical and theological foundation for the ministry, intercultural competence, how to be in ministry “with” and not “to” people, how to include children, youth and young adults in the ministry, how to work in collaboration with other ministries, groups and leaders of the church. At least 50% of the workshop leaders are to be laity. A certification program may be developed, or existing United Methodist certification programs may be used.

Either way, the mission of the church and the needs, context, focus and goals of the connectional church are to be incorporated into the program.

3. **Certified Lay Minister** – The certified lay minister is an individual who may assist the clergy in serving a congregation or may be assigned by a district superintendent to serve a congregation when a clergy person is not available. A lay minister or pastoral associate may perform pastoral duties under the supervision of a clergy person or district superintendent, except for celebrating and consecrating communion, baptizing individuals and presiding at weddings. A lay minister is certified when the individual has been: a) endorsed by the pastor of the congregation; b) endorsed by the congregation's board of stewards or the board's designated committee; c) endorsed by the board of lay advisors or its designated committee, d) endorsed by the district superintendent; and has e) completed the certified lay minister training or local pastor school. A connectional church may add requirements to meet the needs of its ministry context. The training material may be United Methodist material already in existence or it may be adapted and modified by a connectional church so that it aligns with their context, priorities and United Methodist doctrine, teachings, Wesleyan Path and polity. A certified lay minister may serve in a pastoral associate or pastoral role for as long as the district superintendent determines. Each year a certified lay minister must participate in a continuing education program as approved by the pastor or the district superintendent.

Within the congregation there shall be the following lay leadership positions.

1. **The chairperson of the board of stewards** shall be a professing member of the congregation. In consultation and collaboration with the lead pastor, the chairperson organizes the work of the board of stewards and leads its meetings, and keeps the congregation informed of the local church's mission and ministry, particularly regarding vision, goals, progress, challenges and opportunities for the congregation to engage in the ministries of the church at its different levels. The chairperson, in consultation with the board of stewards or the personnel committee, supports, evaluates and provides the lead pastor with feedback about the pastor's leadership and performance. The lead pastor in consultation with the board of stewards evaluates or oversees the evaluation of other staff. The chairperson of the board shall also serve as the lay leader of the congregation.
2. **The delegate to the connectional church conference session** shall be a professing member of the congregation. A delegate attends annual conference sessions and reports to the congregation the outcome of each connectional conference session. A delegate to the connectional church conference session shall serve as an ex-officio member of the board of stewards and is counted as part of the 6-24 members of the board of stewards. There shall be one lay delegate to connectional conference for each clergy person appointed to the congregation. If there is more than one lay delegate from the congregation to the annual conference session, the congregation's nomination committee will determine which lay member will be the ex-officio member to the board of stewards. Other lay delegates may be elected to the board of stewards, but it is not required.
3. **The treasurer** shall be a member of the board of stewards. The treasurer serves as the treasurer of all congregational funds except those which pertain to groups not elected by the charge/church conference. The treasurer shall be bonded where applicable and prepare monthly financial statements and pay bills. There may also be one or more assistant treasurers. The board of stewards or the personnel committee is to assign someone unrelated to the treasurer to make deposits and receive and review bank statements.
4. **The financial secretary** shall be a member of and report to the congregation's finance committee and shall oversee the recording of individual donations and review bank statements of the congregation and perform all other responsibilities as assigned by the finance committee.
5. **The secretary of the board of stewards** shall be elected by the board to take and record the minutes of board of stewards, as well as charge conference and church conference meetings.

**Lay Orders**

Laity may be called to a lifetime of service and mission to the church and community. For this purpose, groups of laypersons may create orders in which the laity may participate. Lay orders may be organized within a connectional church, regional church, nationally or globally for spiritual development, service, learning, fellowship and connection through a common ministry commitment. An example of such an order is the Office of the Deaconess and Home Missioner of the United Methodist Women in the United States and its comparable laity offices in other regions. The lay orders self-organize, have no authority or special privileges from the church and are not given status through *The Connection*.