



GUIDELINES
for Leading Your Congregation

LEADER SELECTION & DEVELOPMENT

*Nurturing leaders in your congregation
(Committee on Lay Leadership)*

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General Board of Discipleship*

LEADER SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Marilyn Magee Talbert has served the General Board of Discipleship in a number of capacities with her specialities in Local Church Organization and Ministry Leadership Development, Family Ministries, and Ethnic and Multicultural Congregations. She is currently Director, African American Ministries. In addition to this Guidelines booklet, she has written *Families Matter: A Planning Guide for Congregations*, *Claiming Our Time With God and With Each Other*, *Making a Difference You Can See: How to Plan for Ministry*, and numerous articles. She earned her B.S. in Education at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, and an M.S. in Administration and Supervision from Loyola University of Chicago.

As her personal ministry statement, Marilyn states: "I am a Christian under construction, endeavoring to use the gifts God has loaned me for my earthly sojourn." In addition to her service through the General Board of Discipleship, she has used her gifts and skills as a teacher, counselor, case-worker, and seminary administrator.

Our Identity, Call, and Mission

About now a small voice in the back of your mind may be whispering, “What am I doing here? To what have I said yes? What is my role?” At the same time you may be aware that your congregation has extended to you a *call—a call to serve*. And you have said *yes—yes to leading in a vital mission*.

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. You have agreed to serve as a leader bringing your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to the church. When the leaders focus on the church’s purpose—*its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ*—and link that purpose to the passions of the people, amazing things can happen.

The fundamental way we fulfill our mission is to reach out to people in the name of Jesus Christ, to relate people to God, to nurture and strengthen them in their journey of discipleship, and to send them into the world to be the church—inviting and receiving others in the name of Jesus Christ. We call this the primary task of The United Methodist Church.

Effective leaders keep the whole of the primary task in their sight, working to keep all of its aspects in concert.

Leaders in the church must be first, and foremost, spiritual leaders who model and embrace Christian discipline and teaching. *By practicing the means of grace—prayer, fasting, studying Scripture, corporate worship, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Christian conversation, and acts of mercy—church leaders stay tuned to the mission of the church and live out the primary task.* Members and would-be members should be able to look to a congregation’s leaders for spiritual example and direction because true leaders are known by their fruits. People’s lives are changed through their influence.

Leaders use their gifts and talents to enable others to use their gifts and talents to the fullest potential. The flow of information, inspiration, guidance, and vision from leaders is an encouragement to others on their spiritual journey. Leaders help others to see new possibilities. When leaders are focused on the mission of the church, community is built and ministry occurs. The church focused on God is alive with creative energy aimed at transformation.

Four Essential Leadership Functions

Church leaders support and strengthen the church when they pay attention to these leadership functions: (1) help people discover the current reality in

which they live; (2) bring together the congregation's understandings of current reality and desired reality into a shared vision; (3) develop the plans to help the community move from current reality toward the reality of its shared vision; and finally, (4) monitor the whole work of the church as the congregation moves with God's guidance toward its vision.

1. Discovering Current Reality

Accurately describing current reality—the way things are—may be the most important function of leadership. The booklets in this Guideline series offer suggestions for leaders to pay attention to the various committees of the church's ministry. In addition, it is critical for church leaders—lay and clergy—to spend time together discussing the ministry of the whole congregation. The conversation needs to include attentiveness to God's guidance and everything that describes a congregation's "what we are, here and now." Because God is always doing a new thing, this job is continuous. When we pay attention to change, we provide a base of integrity and strength from which to move into the future. Faith in Jesus Christ and a spiritual centering in God offers the strongest foundation to move people fearlessly through the massive changes of the twenty-first century.

2. Naming Shared Vision

Ask the question, "What do you want more than anything else in the world?" and most persons will give a response that indicates that they want to live in a world filled with love, faith, security, and meaning. Because persons desire a positive future, they are willing to invest themselves in organizations that are committed to it. By its very nature, the church is devoted to the creation of a better future. When the church promises to move people personally and corporately toward their desired reality, people will invest time, energy, and resources into the church. As people see their own desires linked to the congregational vision and a deeper understanding of God's future, they deepen their commitment and involvement. Building this link is a vital role of leadership.

Naming a shared vision is accomplished by asking people about their lives and their faith, and by listening very carefully. By listening, we mean deep listening—the kind that requires setting aside our own agendas and entering into the worldviews of others, and listening for God through the conversation. It is a significant shift in our understanding of leadership in the church to move from telling people what we think they need to know to listening to people in order to find out who they are and what their desired realities are. Effective spiritual leaders listen to the hearts of people and begin to articulate a shared vision.

3. Developing Bridges

To span the gulf between our current reality and the hope expressed in the shared vision, leaders must build a bridge. The third critical function of leadership is to plan actions and develop systems that create the bridge across this gulf. Leaders who are elected to administrative and program committees are responsible for the ongoing work of the church and must pay attention to the present. At the same time, leaders *must* be focused on the future—keeping today and tomorrow in tension—ensuring that the church does not get stuck in the past, present, or future.

Church leaders who are attentive to God’s leading and who can hold the tension between today and tomorrow are *visionary leaders*. Visionary leaders see it all—current reality, desired reality, and the bridges to get from one to the other.

4. Monitoring the Journey

Perhaps the most critical task for leaders is keeping an eye on the whole of the faith journey of the congregation. When leaders are constantly caught up in “doing” the administrative and program work of the church, there is not any time left for “being” with God in prayer to discern the leading of the Spirit for the congregation. Leaders must step back from “doing” constant activities in order to pay attention to the total direction of the church’s mission and ministry. All elected and appointed leaders must spend time together listening to God in prayer, Bible study, conversation, and other means of grace in order to lead the entire community in the work of Christ. Anything less is not Christian spiritual leadership.

Welcome To Your Ministry!

Congratulations! Welcome to your ministry! You have been asked to be involved in the important work of helping persons to be in service in the name of Jesus Christ. This means that you have been elected by the charge conference to serve as a member of the Committee on Lay Leadership (formerly Nominations and Personnel). It is a committee or team that serves throughout the year to guide the church council or alternative structure on matters regarding the leadership (other than employed staff) of the congregation to:

- Focus on mission and ministry as the context for our service;
- Guide the development and training of Christian spiritual leaders;
- Recruit, nurture, and support persons in their elected roles; and
- Assist the church council (or alternative structure) in assessing changing leadership needs.

What's My Job?

The major responsibilities of this committee are to:

1. Assist persons in the congregation to identify their gifts and skills for service;
2. Assist in the nurture and development of Christian spiritual leadership;
3. Identify and recommend persons for service in the various ministry areas;
4. Equip by training and support;
5. Deploy persons for effective witness and service in ministry tasks; and to
6. Identify competencies needed for a variety of ministry tasks.

Identifying Gifts

These responsibilities are especially important as you work to secure the best candidates for the elected leadership in your church.

The Church, as the Body of Christ, is made up of people with a variety of gifts, talents, and abilities. These gifts vary as widely as the people do. One person may be skilled in the work needed for service in the kitchen or as a carpenter. Another may be able to lead a group or direct plays. Still another may be an excellent accountant or may have an uncanny ability to remember the names and interests of people. *Every person in the Church has something to offer—a gift to share with others.*

As members of the Body of Christ, we are called to use our gifts in ways that fulfill God's purposes. The growth and ministry of a local congregation and of the Church as a whole depend on the careful linking of these gifts and needs. When this linkage occurs, lives are enriched, ministry ensues, and God's purposes are fulfilled. When it fails to happen, the whole Body of Christ suffers.

As a member of the Committee on Lay Leadership, you have the privilege of linking persons who have gifts to share with opportunities to meet specific needs within your congregation and community. This is no simple task. It requires hard work and a strong commitment on your part, but it can be a joyous and rewarding experience as you help persons discover and use their gifts in ministry.

Remember that people are the most valuable resource in the life of a church. With them, and with careful leadership and guidance, the church can effectively proclaim Christ's good news to the world. *The ministry of a local church moves forward, falters, or grinds to a halt based in large part on the work done by your committee.*

It is imperative, then, that the committee be attentive to its own spiritual development and growth, as individuals and as a team. Thus, it can model the roles of spiritual leadership.

Building the Team

When Jesus called his disciples, he was not looking for perfect people, but for willing hearts and yielding human spirits. Each person was unique and had something to contribute. The group was diverse by every criteria: socioeconomic, education, skills, and in other ways. Yet each was loved and used by Jesus for the fulfillment of His ministry. Jesus spent a lot of time teaching and modeling behavior. Even when they failed to understand, the disciples were willing to learn and to persevere.

The Committee on Lay Leadership is a team bound by the tie of a common love for Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church, and the common love of the local congregation. From this common bond we engage our work as a team in ministry. The following statements are helpful markers in assessing how well we are doing:

1. *We have a clear purpose.* Our mission, vision, and ministry are clearly defined.
2. *The climate in our meetings is one of warmth, informality, comfort, and hospitality.*
3. *Everyone participates.* The discussion is not dominated by one or two. We avoid the clichés of “we have always done it this way” or “that won’t work.”
4. *Our members use effective listening techniques* in order to clearly understand what a speaker wants us to know.
5. *We may disagree, but we are not disagreeable* nor do we “gang up” on or ignore new or quiet members.
6. *We have open discussions and work for consensus,* not necessarily unanimous decisions. We avoid win-lose voting.
7. *There are no hidden agendas,* and our members feel free to express themselves openly.
8. *Our roles and work assignments are clear.*
9. *We share leadership although we have a chairperson or team leader.* No one person has all of the gifts, skills, and knowledge that may be needed.
10. *We assess ourselves* to see how we are doing, spiritually, functionally, and evangelically.

Note to Volunteer Committees: The majority of this booklet is directed to the specific work of the Lay Leadership (formerly Nominations and Personnel) Committee, a mandated group whose responsibility is to fill leadership positions for each local congregation. The work of a Volunteer Committee is much broader—it seeks to see that every disciple has a place to be in ministry. *A Volunteer Committee for ministry deployment would do for the entire congregation what the Lay Leadership Committee does for a more limited number of persons: matching an individual's gifts and skills with places of service, then providing training and support.* Assessment and analyses of gifts and skills would consider leadership and service needs in the community in addition to the needs of the institutional church. The church must recognize, affirm, and validate an individual's service in the community as an expression of Christian discipleship. In a small membership congregation, one committee can do both tasks. In a larger congregation, the work of the Volunteer Committee will provide valuable information for the work of the Committee on Lay Leadership, as well as other groups. The material in this booklet can be easily adapted for a Volunteer Committee. Additional resources listed at the end will also be helpful.

The makeup and responsibilities of the Committee on Lay Leadership are described briefly below. Along with this description, read *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2000*.

“The Job Description of the Committee on Lay Leadership (Nominations and Personnel)” in *Job Descriptions and Leadership Training for Local Church Leaders* is an excellent resource that can help the committee plan and conduct its work. (See Resources at the end of this booklet.)

Makeup of the Committee

The committee has no more than eleven members. No more than nine are elected by the charge conference on recommendation of the committee and/or by nomination from the floor. In addition, the pastor and lay leader are members. All lay members must be full members of the local church.

Of the nine elected members, one must be a young adult (aged 18-30) and one may be a youth (aged 12-18). The pastor shall be the chairperson. In keeping with the needed gifts of the position, a layperson shall be elected vice-chairperson of the committee and represent the committee on the church council. A member of the committee can be designated as the secretary. The committee is responsible to the charge conference and to the church council.

In a charge of more than one church, a separate Committee on Lay Leadership is to be elected for each church. A chargewide committee may also be elected if desired.

How Elected and Term of Office

Committee members are elected by the charge conference for a term of three years. The membership should be divided into three classes, one class of which is to be elected annually for a three-year term. Retiring committee members may not succeed themselves.

If You Are the Pastor

As pastor of the congregation, you are a key member of the Committee on Lay Leadership.

If you are new in your appointment to this church, rely on the committee members' knowledge of the congregation. Insightful questioning about gifts and skills, suggesting alternative or creative ways of doing the tasks involved, and facilitating the process will help you and the committee in accomplishing your work in a productive manner. You may want to team with the lay leader, who also serves on this committee, to uncover gifts and match persons with ministry opportunities. Your very newness to the congregation, however, may mean that you notice strengths in persons who previously have not been considered for leadership positions.

If you have been the pastor of this congregation for more than a year, you have become increasingly familiar with the gifts and talents of the people, as well as the opportunities for service in the church and community. Now is the time to take a fresh look at these persons and opportunities. Are you overlooking someone who has never been asked to share in the leadership of the church and would welcome the opportunity to serve?

Remember that your own attitude of openness toward new ways of linking persons and opportunities for ministry will help instill an attitude of openness in committee members. Remember also that developing an attitude of partnership in working with committee members will strengthen your work and produce more effective results.

Your Role as Chairperson

- You will guide the work of the committee throughout the year, plan meeting agendas, preside at meetings, and foster an environment for creative, spiritual, and positive work on behalf of the congregation.
- You will maintain close communications with the vice chairperson (or with the pastor if you are the vice chairperson).

- You will establish and maintain a working relationship with the church council or alternative structure leadership.
- You will study and gain knowledge of and about the disciplinary passages related to your work and other available resources.

Basic Responsibilities of Members

The Committee on Lay Leadership will:

1. *Engage in biblical and theological reflections* on the mission of the church, the primary task, and the ministries of the local church.
2. *Be active and attentive to developing your own spiritual life* (individually and as a team) in light of the mission of the church.
3. *Intentionally become familiar with as many persons in your congregation as possible.* Build a database or people bank, if there is not one available. List their gifts, skills, interests, knowledge, and commitment. Since The United Methodist Church is an inclusive church, consider persons of various ages (including youth, young adults, and older adults); various life situations (married, single, retired, persons with disabilities); and persons who will ensure racial and ethnic inclusiveness. Develop a system for keeping this list up-to-date.
4. *List the leadership positions established in your congregation* (other than paid staff).
5. *Study the responsibilities for each leadership position and identify the gifts and competencies needed to effectively function in this position.*
6. *Work cooperatively with leadership of work areas, ministry teams, and other groups or individuals to prepare job descriptions that are appropriate to the needs and organizational style of your church.*
7. *Prayerfully match potential leaders with particular leadership positions.*
8. *Invite persons to serve in leadership positions.* Receive their responses and present those nominated to the charge conference.
9. *Guide the church council on matters regarding the leadership* of the congregation (other than employed staff) to maintain the focus on mission and ministry as the context for service.
10. *Guide the development and training of spiritual leaders,* also providing nurture and support.
11. *Keep the information gathered, the deliberations, and the opinions expressed in strictest confidence within the confines of the committee.*
12. *Be accountable to the charge conference through the church council.*

Working Together

How well your committee accomplishes its task depends in part on how well the members work together. You are coworkers with one another and with God, seeking to identify, guide, and nurture the leadership of your church. As committee members, you have assumed a commitment and a responsibility to one another. Your task of overseeing the leadership of your church is crucial to strengthening the Body of Christ. Working together, you can develop a sense of Christian community that is also important. *Sharing together, reflecting on your faith, and understanding the mission of the people of God will become a primary part of your experience as a committee.* Such communication provides an opportunity for your own spiritual development, even as you seek ways to make that possible for others.

As a representative of your congregation on this committee, you have been entrusted with identifying the most effective and appropriate lay leadership for your congregation. Consider the variety of people who make up your congregation as you invite persons to lead them. Your congregation has men and women, children and youth, of different ages, of different ethnic or racial groups, of various socio-economic backgrounds, and of different theological orientations. You may have members with disabilities. Each one of these is a significant member of the Body of Christ. Each has something to offer your congregation.

Be in contact with all of these various groups and individuals so that you may become aware of their gifts.

All members of the Body of Christ must do their part in building up the whole Body. In this same way, members of your committee must do their part to accomplish the task. Working together means listening perceptively to one another and to others in your congregation. Become aware of the concerns, needs, and dreams of your church members. Challenge one another to put aside attitudes such as “We’ve always done it this way,” or “This person has always been chairperson.” Avoid stereotypes, such as “Only a middle-aged or older person should chair the church council.” And, especially, support one another in the decisions you make.

You were elected to serve on this committee because the charge conference considered you to be the kind of person who is sensitive to the leadership needs of the congregation and who knows the capabilities of the persons in the congregation. By accepting this role, you declare your intent to share your gifts with your congregation—to support and lead it in this way.

This committee's work will affect your life in the church, as well as the lives of others. The influence of the persons you nominate for the various tasks in your church, if elected, will go beyond the bounds of your congregation. These leaders will be representatives of the Body of Christ in the surrounding community. Some will represent your congregation in the district and conference structures of The United Methodist Church as well.

Your task is crucial to the ongoing ministry of your congregation and to the Church as a whole. Work together cooperatively, trust one another, and remain open to discerning God's guidance at every step of your work.

*Be intentional about building a good working climate within your committee. Group prayer, Bible study, and group-building activities can create a strong base from which to work. The book *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (see Resources) would be a valuable tool in establishing a spiritual way of working within your committee.*

An activity such as the following can be helpful:

Read Romans 12:1-8. Celebrate the fact that God gives to each of us gifts that can be used in the service of the church and world.

- Identify gifts in your individual "treasure chests." On index cards or separate sheets of paper, ask all persons to make a list of any skills, abilities, talents, and so forth that they bring to the work of this committee. These may include years of experience in your local church, serving on a similar committee in another congregation, enthusiasm, ability to communicate, a sense of humor, and others.
- After a few moments to complete the task, invite persons to share what they wrote.
- On the opposite of the card or paper, ask persons to list things the committee might want to know about them that could be a concern for the committee's work. These might include a tendency to talk too much rather than listen closely, a home or job situation that is consuming much of their time, and so forth.
- Share these with the group.
- Pray together that God will use the gifts and temper the concerns in order that your committee's mission might be accomplished.

How to Get Started

Here is a checklist of responsibilities for the year:

- _____ 1. Read through this entire Guidelines booklet carefully.
- _____ 2. Meet as a committee and review your responsibilities, using this Guideline and the job description already mentioned. Begin to build a vision for the work of your committee. Review the mission and aims of your congregation. (Ask your pastor or the church council chairperson for a copy of these. If your congregation does not have a stated mission and aims, ask your pastor about starting the process to set them. Without them, your work will be extremely difficult and lack direction.)
- _____ 3. Individually and as a committee, reflect on your spiritual life in light of the mission of the Church. Consider how you can help one another grow in that spiritual life as you provide leadership for the congregation.
- _____ 4. Take stock of what is happening now. How are persons using their gifts and skills? How effective/ineffective is the present system of leadership recruitment and development? Where will you need to concentrate your efforts?
- _____ 5. Determine the gifts, skills, and interests of your membership. Use an information file, if one is available. If such information is not available, consider using one of the gift discovery inventories or workshops listed in the Resources section.
- _____ 6. Review the leadership positions that *The Discipline* requires to be nominated and elected by your charge conference. Review other leadership positions your church has identified. Also review other positions of service in your church and community that may not require charge conference action, but need to be filled, such as Sunday school teachers, ushers, greeters, or soup kitchen workers. Determine the number and kinds of leadership and service positions needed by your church or charge.
- _____ 7. Consider the qualifications, skills, and abilities needed for particular leadership and service positions.
- _____ 8. Review any written job descriptions for leadership and service positions, noting the responsibilities, activities, and skills required. Work with the appropriate persons, council, or committee to prepare other job descriptions that might be needed.
- _____ 9. Review the information gathered and the decision to be made. Identify the persons who best match the service and leadership opportunities.

- ___ 10. Decide who will do the inviting and what information they will need for recruiting. Develop and follow a timetable for inviting and reporting back to the committee.
- ___ 11. Report to the charge conference the names of those persons to be nominated for elected positions who have indicated their willingness to serve. When leadership positions become vacant during the year, nominate persons to fill those positions.
- ___ 12. Work earnestly and cooperatively with the church council, church school leadership, and other concerned groups to develop training plans for new and experienced leaders and workers, paying special attention to nurture and to developing leaders as *spiritual* leaders.
- ___ 13. Work cooperatively with appropriate groups to support, recognize, and show appreciation for workers and leaders.

A Year-Round Job

The work of the Committee on Lay Leadership is a year-round job.

Depending on the size and organization of your church, some of the tasks just described may take several months. Begin early in the year to gather the information you need to identify the gifts, abilities, and experience of members of your congregation. Become familiar with the job descriptions of the positions for which you will make nominations. Study the descriptions provided in *Job Descriptions and Leadership Training for Local Church Leaders*, available from Discipleship Resources. The committee may revise those descriptions to meet the specific needs of your church or may create new descriptions.

Designate committee members to be in touch throughout the year with all persons selected for positions of responsibility. See how their work is going and make sure their gifts are being used. Some Committees on Lay Leadership assign a member to stay in touch with each leader, offering to assist in appropriate ways. Such periodic checkups offer needed support to the leaders. An added bonus: The checkups also enrich your committee's feeling of effectiveness.

Check with your church council to make sure it is offering opportunities for training that will enhance the leaders' spiritual growth and development, and provide support and recognition for each person serving in a position.

Look over the chart of the year's calendar carefully. Adjust the timetable to fit your specific situation. (For instance, in some areas of the country the summer months are not good times to begin inviting leaders.)

Your Committee at Work

Build a Vision

It is important not to rush “fill the slots” in your leadership needs. This approach leads to “business as usual” and fails to take seriously the mission and primary task of the congregation. *Your committee members need to first spend time discussing what they hope the ultimate results of their work will be.*

After everyone has read the introductory material in this Guideline, begin to discuss questions such as:

- What is the mission and aim of our congregation?
- If persons were really involved in servant leadership in our congregation, what would it look like? What would they be doing? How would they be growing?
- If persons were truly being formed as disciples, what would be happening?
- If members were effectively using their gifts and skills in the community, what might happen?
- How could we help all members of our congregation to identify their gifts, understand what God is calling them to do, and equip them for ministry?

As you talk, begin to vision together a picture of what you hope will happen. It is this picture that will call you into the future and give energy to your work. Keep that vision before you as you move ahead.

Take Stock

Again, resist the temptation to begin the specifics of your work before you have a clear picture of the present situation. Determine what is happening right now—what is working well and what needs to be improved. Ask yourselves, as well as those currently serving in leadership positions, questions such as:

- What is God calling our congregation to do and be at this time?
- What are the major needs of our congregation? Of our community?
- How are the leaders of our congregation addressing these needs?
- Are there things that are keeping us from meeting these needs? What are they?
- Where are we being effective? Where do we need to improve?
- How might the answers to these questions affect the work of this committee?

The answers to these questions, coupled with clarity in your vision, will be of great assistance to you as you begin the specifics of your work.

Know Your Members

Before you can match people effectively with leadership and service opportunities, your committee will need up-to-date information about the gifts, interests, and skills of your members. You might begin with your membership roll and list the qualities, abilities, and interests for each member. In a larger church, an information file can serve as a source to identify persons for elected leadership and service positions, for long- and short-term projects, for behind-the-scenes tasks, and for leadership needs of the community, the district, and the conference.

If you decide to establish such a file, be sure your committee and other organizations in the church are committed to updating and using the data. The file can be costly in terms of the time required to set it up and to keep it going. If you do not use it, persons who offer their services will be forgotten and their gifts will be untapped. New persons will not be incorporated into the service and leadership opportunities of the church and their gifts may be lost to the ministry of Christ.

Gather enough information to be helpful but not so much that its retrieval becomes too complicated or invades privacy. Information that might be helpful includes:

- Name
- Address and phone number
- Family relationships (marital status, children, spouse)
- Age and birth date
- Occupation and employer
- Gifts and abilities
- Training and education
- Time available for service in the church
- Hobbies and special skills
- Experience in this congregation and elsewhere
- Present participation in worship, Sunday school, and other activities
- Any special interests

You can select one or a combination of the following ways to gather this information from your congregation:

1. Survey your congregation through your church newsletter, by direct mail, by phone, or before or after a worship service or a church program. You might also place copies of the survey in pew racks or use the survey as a bulletin insert. At Grace United Methodist Church (Naperville, Illinois) a

- survey form was distributed while persons waited to be photographed for the church directory and turned in before leaving. Be creative!
2. Interview each church member. (This takes the most time but will give you the best information base.) In some churches a Volunteer Committee has been established to care for this duty. The Volunteer Committee then alerts different groups such as Lay Leadership and the Education Committee, in order to identify persons who have particular gifts in which they might be interested.
 3. Gather information during a churchwide emphasis on stewardship of time and abilities. Such an emphasis might be a cooperative responsibility of the committee, the ministry team on stewardship, and the church council. See the resources listed at the end of this booklet for helpful suggestions for discovering the gifts and abilities of people in your congregation.
 4. Gather information on all new members as a routine part of their membership classes or at the time they are received into membership.

Keep the Information Useful and Usable

Churches have selected many different methods of storing this type of demographic data:

A card file. This is one of the most common methods of keeping the information. One church has a part-time church secretary who is responsible for seeing that the card on each person is kept up-to-date and that new persons are interviewed and added to the file. In another church, a regular volunteer has assumed this responsibility. *Caution: A card system is time-consuming and must be kept up almost on a daily basis or it will soon be out-of-date and useless.*

A file drawer. The drawer contains a manila folder on each household with an information sheet on each member of the household, no matter how young or how old. The membership secretary in one church has a small committee that keeps this information up-to-date. *This method is also time-consuming, and the files must be updated constantly, moved to inactive status, and new files added.*

A notebook. One church keeps a three-ring notebook at the church office with an information sheet on each person. The secretary of the Committee on Lay Leadership works with a member of the stewardship committee to see that the information is continually updated.

Computer records. Many churches now use a computer to store in a database their financial records, as well as information on the interests, gifts, and skills of each member. One church employs a membership secretary who works full-time to keep the information up-to-date on new and old members. With

the increasing use of computers in our church offices, this method has become the one of choice because of the ease of updating and retrieving information. Even with computers, however, information must be kept current.

Choose the system that works best for your church. Be sure that someone has the responsibility of keeping the information updated. Your committee needs to have access to this information, especially at times when you are matching persons with available service opportunities.

Identify Leadership Qualities

As a committee, discuss the qualities that make good leaders. As you do this, include some of the personal qualities required for persons to bear witness to their faith in any task. List these qualities and keep them before you as you watch for persons who might serve in leadership and service opportunities. Evelyn Burry (“Developing Leadership for the 21st Century,” LINKS [September, 1991]) suggested that “Good leaders take responsibility to use gifts and abilities . . . in response to God’s call in ways that:

- Aim toward a vision of a loving, just, inclusive, and whole world.
- Invite collaboration with others who aim toward the same vision.
- Build on a clear understanding of current reality.
- Steer persistently and strategically along a feasible path toward the vision.”

In addition, good leaders should:

- Listen to others.
- Be concerned about persons as individuals.
- Facilitate efficient meetings.
- Know when and how to delegate responsibility (they don’t have to do it all) and be willing to share in the work effort.
- Express the love of God through words and actions.
- Be willing to work.

Not all opportunities for service in or through the church require leadership abilities. Some persons may not be able to speak before a group or chair a council but are able to make personal visits; share ideas in a small group; or do behind-the-scenes work, such as bread baking, plumbing repair, or stuffing envelopes. As you think of persons who might fill various positions, keep an open mind and look for qualities that may not appear at first glance.

Identify Opportunities

Look at the leadership and service opportunities in your church. Begin by preparing a complete list of positions for which your committee will make nominations.

Another resource that can help you compile the list is the official *Committee on Lay Leadership Work Sheets*. These list the positions named in *The Book of Discipline* in a work-sheet format. (See Resources.)

If desired, you can prepare your own work sheet. Include all of the positions shown below:

_____ The required positions elected by the charge conference (see *The Discipline*, ¶248). Include members as well as chairpersons for the committees on finance, committee on lay leadership, pastor-parish relations, and the board of trustees.

_____ Other leadership needs within the congregation. The Committee on Lay Leadership should work hand-in-hand with the church council on all leadership needs of the church (see *The Discipline*, ¶251 and ¶254). Possible entries on the list might be Sunday school teachers, persons in ministry with those who have disabilities, the coordinator of scouting ministries, the coordinator of older-adult ministries, the coordinator of single-adult ministries, the coordinator of small group ministries, a representative to a local ecumenical group, communion stewards, a committee on church child care, or a buildings-and-grounds chairperson.

_____ The leadership positions requested by your conference or district—for example, a local church representative to a district organization or a representative for a conference-sponsored United Methodist college.

_____ Certain officers of the church council. In some churches, the committee nominates the vice chairperson and recording secretary; in others, those positions are nominated and elected by the organization. The charge conference should make this decision.

A church council model allows for flexibility. Large membership churches may have several work areas or ministry teams, the small membership churches may have four: nurture, outreach, witness, administration/leadership.

Prepare Job Descriptions

The committee should provide written descriptions of the responsibilities for each position, board, council, or committee to which persons may be elected, appointed, or assigned. These descriptions make the tasks of inviting and matching persons with positions much easier. More importantly, *if individuals have clear expectations about the tasks they will be asked to do, it is easier for them to respond with a sense of confidence. If they understand the impact of the particular ministry they are being asked to perform, they will respond with increased commitment.*

If you already have descriptions for the leadership positions in your church, revise them to make sure that they continue to define the leadership respon-

sibilities adequately. As an aid in writing these descriptions, study *Job Descriptions and Leadership Training for Local Church Leaders*. This resource provides a brief summary of the task, information about job responsibilities, suggestions about ways to get started, the skills and interests helpful for the job, and training that might be available. It also lists references from *The Book of Discipline* and people and agencies that might help for most leadership positions in large- or small-membership congregations. Another resource you might want to consult is *Guidelines for Leading Your Church, 2001–2004*. The entire set of booklets (similar to this one) is available from Cokesbury and Discipleship Resources. It provides guidelines for each committee or position.

Another alternative is to develop your own job descriptions using *The Discipline* as your guide. You can do this in several ways:

1. Identify the positions and service opportunities needing descriptions. Ask the persons or groups presently serving in these areas to write descriptions of their responsibilities and how their area of service helps the ministry of the church.
2. Interview the persons or groups presently serving in those areas and have someone on your committee write the descriptions.
3. If the job descriptions are to be fully descriptive of the positions, the current holders of the position need to answer the following questions:
 - What do you do (what are your functions and responsibilities)?
 - To whom do you report about the work?
 - What is the primary objective of your ministry team or service?
 - How does it facilitate the primary task of the congregation?
 - What gifts, abilities, and special skills does this job require?

You may want to practice this process on many emerging kinds of ministries in your congregation or community for which there are no descriptions provided. Don't be intimidated! Revise and update as needed.

Check with the church council for other information, such as:

- What training can this leader count on receiving? (The Committee on Lay Leadership needs to be particularly sure about this. If the training will not be adequate, begin planning for the types of growth experiences that the new leaders will need.)
- Where and how does this leader get the needed resources to fulfill the task? For instance, what budget is available; how many other people can be counted on to be a part of the work effort?
- Another possible way to develop job descriptions is to ask district or conference groups or other United Methodist churches for descriptions of

leadership and service positions similar to those in your church. Then, modify the descriptions to fit your local needs.

Keep copies of the job descriptions on file and update them each year. You will need them each time you ask persons to consider giving their time and gifts.

Make Recommendations

Now you are ready to begin the crucial task of selecting—matching persons with the available opportunities.

Leadership positions required by *The Book of Discipline* must be filled. So must the other service opportunities in and through your church. You are entrusted with helping persons find their places in the congregation and in the community. As you offer them opportunities to serve, you are helping them fulfill their calling as disciples of Christ.

While you consider persons who might fill the various positions, be sure that these persons are representative of the age-level, gender, cultural, and racial/ethnic makeup of your congregation. Also ask yourself:

- Do they represent a balance of the economic, social, and theological orientation of our congregation?
- Have we remembered persons with disabilities?
- We are rightly called to take seriously our commitment to maintaining our diversity in the midst of our oneness in Jesus Christ. What are the categories to which you must give attention in your selection process?

Confidentiality is an absolute requirement. The committee must make a covenant agreement to keep much of the information, opinions, and records discussed in this process in strictest confidence. This requires openness and honesty on the part of committee members coupled with respect for the persons being considered. Have a discussion on the importance of confidentiality and how to practice it before you begin any discussion of persons and positions.

Throughout the process, be especially aware of those situations where the incumbent has served several terms of office. Ask whether a change should be made, either for the sake of the person or the task. In some cases where change seems wise, the committee will need to plan carefully how this move can be interpreted diplomatically to persons not being renominated.

A Suggested Meeting Procedure

Here is a procedure for the committee meetings that will help you proceed with the process of matching persons and positions.

1. Begin with prayer and reflection seeking to discern God's guidance as you try to match persons with possible leadership and service positions.
2. Study the list of leadership and service positions. Go over the description of responsibilities for each position as you consider it. Make sure the committee understands what each position involves.
3. Review the information gathered about the persons in your congregation. As each position is considered, try to identify several persons whose gifts and skills fit most closely the description of responsibilities. Select a first and second choice for each position, if possible. Keep in mind each person's:
 - spiritual maturity and commitment to the Christian faith;
 - experience in the congregation and community;
 - interest in growing through leadership or service opportunities;
 - training and/or education;
 - gifts, abilities, and special skills;
 - time available for service.
4. Determine who best fits each leadership or service position.
5. Write the names of your first and second choices beside that position on your work sheet. (See Committee Lay Leadership Work Sheets, described in Resources.) The secretary of the committee should keep the official list of persons and the positions with which they have been matched.

Invite Persons to Serve

Now it is time to contact persons and offer them the opportunity to serve. Before you contact them, decide what approach to use and how best to present the opportunity. Whatever method of inviting your committee selects, good preparation is necessary. Please note: In each of the following methods, the telephone is used only to set up the appointment. *A face-to-face meeting is much more satisfactory and conveys the importance of the decision to be made.*

A brief training period for committee members who will be contacting the potential nominees would be helpful. They may want to carry a copy of the "Invitation Checklist" (see below) with them as they contact the persons selected. Make sure they understand each step in the process. Role-playing is a particularly helpful way of practicing the recruitment process. Give each person the opportunity to role-play a visit with a prospective leader. Here are some suggestions for the committee members to role-play. Think of other situations as well. The more your committee members practice, the more confident they will be as they contact prospective leaders.

1. A committee member telephones John Jones to set up an appointment to talk with him about a leadership position. Have two persons role-play the telephone conversation.

2. A committee member arrives at the home of Andrea Ward to talk with her about being church council chairperson.
 - Have two persons role-play the appointment when Andrea is not interested in serving in that position.
 - Ask two persons to role-play the same appointment in which Andrea agrees to serve.

Keep the following in mind as you plan for and carry out the recruitment process:

1. *As a committee, decide who will invite prospective leaders.* Make sure that everyone is contacted. To avoid confusion, the secretary of the committee should keep a master list of who has agreed to contact whom.
2. *Arrange a time to talk with the person selected. Both the person and the position are important.* Offer the opportunity for ministry to a person individually and face-to-face in a personal visit to convey the importance given to serving in the position.
3. *Share the ministry opportunity that is available and how the committee feels that person's gifts are particularly suited for this position.* Present the opportunity to serve as a way of fulfilling one's Christian ministry. As one person put it, "Mission motivates; maintenance of the church does not." Provide a time to reflect with the nominee on how this service helps the congregation fulfill its primary task of ministry.

For example: "We need a seventh grade Sunday school teacher" merely tells an individual what the church needs. "We have ten young persons in the seventh grade class who are looking for someone to help them explore the Christian faith. The committee feels that you have the ability to be open to the questions these youth are asking and the commitment to help them grow in their faith" is much more focused on making an important contribution to the Christian faith.

4. *Be honest about the responsibilities of the position and what is expected if the person accepts the position.* It is most important to give him or her a copy of the job description. Go over the description and make sure the prospective leader knows the answers to the following questions:
 - What are my responsibilities?
 - With whom will I work?
 - To whom will I report?
 - From whom will I get information and resources?
 - What time commitment will be required?
 - How long is the term?
 - Of what other committees does this make me a member?

People need a clear and realistic picture of what a position requires. Such statements as “It won’t take much time” or “It’s easy” or “You won’t have to do very much” are misleading and may be dishonest. These statements also minimize the position as well as the person.

5. *Be positive and enthusiastic when presenting a job opportunity.* “You would make a marvelous chairperson for this ministry team. We would like you to consider it prayerfully” is a much better way of getting a positive answer than “You wouldn’t want to serve as the chairperson in this ministry team, would you?” Encourage them to accept the position. But forcing a yes from someone can lead to problems at a later time.
6. *Outline the training opportunities and the support the church offers to the person in this position.* Share any leadership materials and other resources. Ask, “If you were to accept this position in the church, what kind of support would you want to get started?”
7. *Describe the election process.* The charge or church conference actually elects persons to positions. If the person being recruited accepts the nomination, his or her name will be given to the charge or church conference as the committee’s recommendation. Explain that another person might be nominated from the floor and could be elected to the position.
8. *Give the person time to think and pray about the decision.* Arrange a time to be back in touch for an answer.
9. *When persons being invited say no, try to clarify what they mean.* Are they unwilling or unable to serve at the present time? Are they not interested in this particular position? Would they be interested in other areas of service? Would they be willing to prayerfully consider and get back to you in a reasonable period of time? Thank them for their consideration and any suggestions they may have offered. Allow them to feel comfortable in saying no to this particular invitation.
10. *Let the committee know what those being invited decided.*
11. *Be sure that each person considered for a position has been asked and has accepted before announcing nominations.*
12. *If possible, give a copy of the “Invitation Checklist” (see below) to each person who will be contacting a prospective leader.*

Invitation Checklist

- ___ Make an appointment to talk with the person being asked to serve.
- ___ Prepare for the visit with prayer.
- ___ Take two copies of the job description to use as you talk together.
- ___ Have on hand any needed information to answer questions about the position.
- ___ Arrive at the appointment on time.
- ___ State the reason for your visit.
- ___ Explain the position in detail. Be honest. Be clear. Be positive.
- ___ Be sure the person being asked to serve understands that election to the position occurs in the charge or church conference.
- ___ Answer any questions the prospective leader may have.
- ___ Seek a commitment. Give the person time to think and pray. Arrange to be back in touch, and be sure to contact the prospect again as arranged.
- ___ Leave a copy of the job description.
- ___ Express your appreciation to the individual for giving this request serious consideration.

Report to the Charge Conference

After potential leaders have been invited, present a list of the recommendations for all positions to the charge conference. Forms are provided in the Official Forms and Records System in Local Churches (available from Cokesbury) for the committee's annual report. In addition to the official listing, you might also report how the committee made its selections. *Highlight the gifts and skills of each person being recommended.* This not only provides recognition for the individual but also shows how seriously the committee undertook its task.

Empower Persons for Service and Leadership

The congregation is responsible through its church council for providing leadership development and training for church leaders. Your committee plays a key role in providing this support and assistance. Advise the church council about the needs you uncovered during your identification of candidates. Your committee can organize parts of a comprehensive training program. You can encourage the new leaders' participation in training opportunities sponsored by the local church, the district, and the annual conference. If adequate opportunities are not available within a reasonable traveling distance, consider having an outside resource person conduct the needed training sessions, or find someone in your congregation or community who could lead one of the workshops described in the Resources section.

All persons in new roles of leadership and ministry need help in getting ready to begin their tasks. One way to assist them is to organize an orientation program. Preparing and giving them an orientation packet can also be helpful. Orientation to a new position may be set up in a variety of ways:

- Pair a new leader with an outgoing leader or a person experienced in that role for a time of sharing; questions and answers; and discussion of ongoing concerns, resources, and ways to get started in the new position.
- Encourage new leaders and workers to attend local church retreat and/or training sessions, district, annual conference, and national workshops related to their ministry. If possible, provide the funds for such training in your church budget.
- Invite someone who knows how the church's service and leadership positions operate to talk to the newly elected persons.
- Provide orientation packets.

Prepare an Orientation Packet

The orientation packet should include:

- The objective of the church and the statement of its mission.
- The policies and procedures of the church and of the particular position.
- A description of the job responsibilities.
- A calendar of church events for the year.
- The times and dates of meetings and events.
- Resource materials and appropriate Guidelines.
- Budget information for the church and for that particular area of ministry.

Additional Support

Throughout the year your committee, along with the church council and other appropriate groups, can provide a variety of opportunities for leadership and development. These might include:

- A study of the ministry of leadership.
- A workshop for spiritual development.
- A study of basic leadership skills.
- A workshop on the work and responsibilities of the committees, boards, and councils of the local church.
- A skills workshop on a topic such as group dynamics, building consensus, conflict management, communications, or the care of volunteers.

Support and Recognize Persons Who Serve

Congregational support, appreciation, and recognition undergirds the ministries of those in leadership positions. Ongoing support gives encouragement to those who serve. This is a very important task for the committee. Work closely with the church council to make sure scheduled events acknowledge and recognize leaders and persons in service. Here are some ideas:

1. Keep in touch throughout the year with persons who serve, through informal and planned conversation, support meetings, and times of evaluation.
2. Begin the church year with a consecration service for persons who lead and serve.
3. Hold an annual service or day of recognition and appreciation.
4. Provide orientation and ongoing training programs.
5. Provide the necessary resources.
6. Acknowledge the progress of each person's work and express appreciation.
7. At the end of the term, thank the outgoing leaders and workers personally and publicly for their ministry in and through your church.

One Final Comment

Fulfilling your ministry functions and that of the committee will enrich and strengthen the lives and ministry of persons in your church's life and mission. May you experience the joy and reward of helping persons discover and use their gifts for the ministry of Christ in the world. And may God bless you in this adventure!

Resources

For further assistance, contact

Discipleship Ministries Unit
General Board of Discipleship
P.O. Box 340003
Nashville, TN 37203-0003
Phone (615) 340-7166

Discipleship Resources
P.O. Box 340003
Nashville, TN 37203-0003
Phone (615) 340-7068

To order:
Discipleship Resources Distribution Center
P.O. Box 1616
Alpharetta, GA 30009-1616
Phone: 1-800-685-4370

InfoServe, 1-800-251-8140

Cokesbury Customer Service Center, 1-800-672-1789

For information regarding curriculum resources.
Cokesbury Curric-U-Phone, 1-800-251-8591

EcuFilm, 1-800-251-4091

Publications

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2000 (United Methodist Publishing House, available from Cokesbury).

Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2001–2004 (Abingdon Press, available from Cokesbury or Discipleship Resources).

Job Descriptions and Leadership Training for Local Church Leaders (Discipleship Resources). A set of descriptions for all local church officers. The envelope contains a manual for leadership development and training designs. For use by the Committee on Lay Leadership and in the orientation of each officer.

The Interpreter (United Methodist Communications). The official program journal for United Methodist leaders. Issued eight times a year. Seven copies provided free to church officials selected by the pastor.

The Structure and Organization of The United Methodist Church (United Methodist Communications).

Program Calendar (United Methodist Communications).

Additional Resources

Empowering Lay Volunteers, Douglas W. Johnson (Abingdon Press). This resource helps you learn how to strengthen your church by successfully training volunteers to carry out key tasks.

Committee on Lay Leadership Work Sheets (Cokesbury). These help your committee identify the positions for which you must nominate and provide a systematic plan for your nominating process.

How to Mobilize Church Volunteers, Marlene Wilson (Augsburg). This book establishes principles and offers a plan for recruiting, training, and supporting persons in ministry in and through the church.

Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves, Robert Wuthnow (Princeton University Press). A very readable book that delves into the reasons why we care for others.

Every Member in Ministry, John Ed Mathison (Discipleship Resources). Gives practical suggestions on how to offer each member the chance to become involved in ministry. Also offers strategies for dealing with inactives.

Building God's People: A Workbook for Empowering Servant Leaders, Thomas R. Hawkins (Discipleship Resources). A workbook for a four-week study course probing the biblical understanding of issues such as power and authority. Also identifies specific principles of servant leadership and applies them to concrete and difficult decisions every congregation faces.

Claiming God's Promises: A Guide to Discovering your Spiritual Gifts, Thomas R. Hawkins (Abingdon Press). Using biblical passages related to the gift of ministry, persons are helped to recognize and claim their strong points. Also shows how to become more actively involved in the church and community by using these newfound gifts. Can be used in individual study or in small groups.

Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders, Charles M. Olsen (Alban Institute). Suggests inspiring, practical ways that a board or committee can make its meetings become opportunities for deepening faith, developing leadership, and ultimately renewing a congregation.

Discovering Your Gifts, Vision, and Call, Jacqueline McMakin and Rhoda Nary (HarperSanFrancisco). Designed to help persons reflect on their gifts, vision, and call in order to find focus and direction for their lives. It can be used individually, on a retreat, or in a six-week study for small groups.

Volunteer Ministries: Strategies for Today's Churches, Margie Morris (Standard). A comprehensive presentation of the importance of an intentional plan for mobilizing volunteers. Offers practical guidance for building a strong program of lay involvement in the church and community.

Spirit Gifts: One Spirit, Many Gifts, Patricia D. Brown (Abingdon Press). Designed to be used in a variety of formats, this resource provides an opportunity for persons to better understand spiritual gifts, identify their unique, individual gifts, and discover God's purpose for their own lives. Participant's workbook and Leader's Guide.

Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts: Building up the body of Christ through the gifts of the Spirit. Charles V. Bryant; A workbook by John I. Penn is also available, Upper Room Books.

Skillabilities for Youth Ministry (Cokesbury). Twelve small books designed to offer adult youth workers a quick reference of ideas, skills, and inspiration on a single topic.