

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL

JANUARY 2007

PROGRAM OF STUDY

THE ROLE OF LAITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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PREFACE

***Regular Bible Study: It's Good For the Soul*, was the original focus for the January 2007 Connectional Lay Council Program of Study. However, there have been recent request by some of the Regional and District Lay Leaders expressing need for a lesson with an emphasis on the laity's relationship to the local church. Thus, the January 2007 topic will be, The Role of Laity In The Local Church. *Regular Bible Study: It's Good For the Soul*, will comprise the February 2007 Program of Study.**

The actual content that will follow is a revised version of a presentation that I was privileged to prepare for and share with the laity of the Southeast Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin Region of the Third Episcopal District. The workshop was presented during a Pre-Annual Conference Workshop in August of 2005. Mr. Cephus Johnson, Regional Lay Leader offered the invitation; Bishop Paul A.G. Stewart is the Presiding Prelate.



INTRODUCTION

In defining The Role of Laity In The Local Church, one must first know and understand the meaning of the term Laity as it relates to the Christian Church. The Laity are those individuals within the body of Christ whose place or service is not defined as the *ministry* of preaching and/or pastoring. While there certainly must be cooperation and coordination between pastors and laity, - *as laity*, we must fully understand our role and our calling in the life of the church. First and foremost the primary role of the laity is to be an advocate and witness for Christ, and to be continually involved in learning about the church and community, to the end that the church grows in fulfilling its mission.

I feel it, therefore, fitting and appropriate that the beliefs and objectives of the Department of Lay Ministry of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church serve as the foundation in communicating the role of laity in our local churches. What is to follow is not lengthy, yet I trust that it will assist in teaching and providing understanding for those who may not fully know.

THE ROLE OF LAITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The **Lay Ministry Beliefs** of *Studying, Seeking, Serving, and Sharing*, should be a part of every layperson's conscious. Characterized and anchored by these beliefs and enabled by the **Lay Objectives**, found on page 25 of **The Lay Manual**, *the fundamental activity or role of all laity, regardless of organizational membership, affiliation, or duty, is to:*

STUDY to show thyself knowledgeable; be one who is continually growing in the understanding and the interpretation of the God's Word, and of the procedures, organizational structure, history, laws, and doctrines of the CME Church.

- ❖ **Study** the Holy Bible and attend Bible Study and Sunday School.
- ❖ **Study** the Discipline of the CME Church.
- ❖ **Study** parliamentary procedure.
- ❖ **Study** the history of the CME Church.
- ❖ **Support** the development of a vigorous teaching ministry.

Scriptural Reference/Foundation > **“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”. 2 Timothy 2:15**

“As their teacher, I often remind the Youth and Young Adult Sunday School classes at Pettie Chapel CME Church, that the reason we **study** and **learn** is to **equip ourselves and to teach others**. For, studying increases understanding; stimulates spiritual growth; builds and strengthens confidence; and helps to light the path on ones way to helping others.”

SEEK God first and in all things; seek out lost or misdirected souls. **Seek** out fellow lay men and lay women who may have become discouraged and now need a helping hand or a word of encouragement.

- ❖ **Seek** to inspire other members to become more informed about the church.
- ❖ **Seek** to make Christian commitment increasingly more meaningful as it relates to ones whole life.
- ❖ **Seek** to develop personal evangelism.

Scriptural Reference/Foundation > **“But Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” *Matthew 6: 33***

**“Let not one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”
I Corinthians 10:24 (NOB)**

“Our role as one of God’s workman must include a reaching-seeking attitude; seeking God in all of his righteousness will not allow us to stay preoccupied with ourselves and our own selfish desires. The local church is where our labor should be constant, - always being on watch for ways to do our part in helping to perfect others.”

SERVE mankind through God’s church by taking on the attitude of one who looks to serve rather than one who expects to be served. The layman’s role is that of a servant who models by precept and example.

- ❖ **Serve** well and promote Christian Stewardship.
- ❖ **Serve** so that others may grow in confidence; **support** the **development** of lay speakers.
- ❖ **Serve** in a way that **promotes** and maintains a good working relationship between pastor and laity.

Scriptural Reference/Foundation > “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” *Matthew 20:28*

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” *Ephesians 4: 11-12*

“Our service should be our badge. To serve with a glad heart pleases God and strengthens the Church.”

SHARE and give back to God and his church a portion of that which only God, himself, can give. As laity we must accept the role of bringing about a greater awareness and commitment, among members, through the grace of giving.

- ❖ **Share** in ways that will inspire others to become more informed and committed to the church.
- ❖ **Share** personal treasures, time, and talent in the development of a tithing program.
- ❖ **Share** positive thoughts and encourage financial support of the Church's programs.

Scriptural Reference/Foundation > "Thus all the tithes of the land, of the seed or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord." *Leviticus 27:30*

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! Yet you say, How have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. (9) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! (10) Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, "says the Lord of hosts," if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." *Malachi 3:8-10*

"If the local church is to be strong and vibrant, laity must wear the **role** of tither, embodied by the Stewardship of Time and Stewardship of Talents."
