

“Celebrating the Ministries of Lakewood”

Date: September 8, 2019

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Matthew 9:35-38; 1 Cor. 12:12-20

Themes: Spiritual gifts; ministry of the laity

Occasion: Spiritual gifts, series

In order for our physical body to function, it needs all of its various parts to do their job properly. Each has a purpose and each has a function and each is needed. So it is in the church, every person a valued member of the body.

Today we want to consider the various ministries of the church, as we practice them here at Lakewood. Hopefully each of you has taken the spiritual gifts inventory (umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment) and discovered what your gifts and graces are. As you listen to the various speakers this morning, consider each one. Does it interest you? Do you feel drawn to it? Does it resonate with your soul?

Not everyone is called to administer the finances of the church, just as not everyone is called to be a teacher, or to sing in the choir, or to serve on mission trips. Each of us has a gift. We need to discover how and where God wants us to use our spiritual gifts.

Perhaps you have been serving on a committee, but as you listen today, you may feel drawn to another ministry. Maybe you are not currently serving on any ministry team. I hope you will hear God’s voice speaking to you, inviting you to share your spiritual gifts by volunteering to serve on one of our ministry teams.

After you have heard them all, if you feel drawn to serve on one of the teams, please speak to me or to the speaker who caught your attention. Let them know you’d like to know more about that ministry area. My prayer is

that God will use our speakers to call people into ministry, here at Lakewood United Methodist Church.

Church Council

This is the main decision-making part of the church. It meets monthly to address the business of the church. It also meets once a year with the district superintendent in what is called Charge Conference. When the superintendent opens the meeting up to the entire church it is called a Church Conference. Confusing huh?

Church Council sets goals for the church and works to accomplish them. They receive reports from all of the committees and provide direction and oversight as needed. The council has the final vote on salaries as well as the church budget.

It is made up of the various chairpersons of each of the committees as well as members at large, who attend the monthly meetings but do not belong to any specific committee. Members at large listen to and bring concerns from the congregation to the attention of the council. They also help to accomplish the goals set by the council, usually done in the late fall for the coming year.

Persons who would be interested are those who would like to get involved, who have at least one evening a month to spare. The meetings are routinely on the third Wednesday of the month. They should have a real passion and concern for the health and growth of Lakewood UMC, advancing the cause of Jesus Christ and be willing to assist in accomplishing the goals of the church.

Finance

The finance committee is made up of various people who have specific functions related to the finances of the church: financial secretary, other church leaders, the finance chair, the audit committee, the money counters and the capital campaign committee.

For the most part, each person knows what their job is and does it on a regular basis – count the money, pay the bills, reconcile the bank statements, monitor the spending of the church. Once a year the church has a review of its books and the audit committee meets to do that. And near the end of the year, in preparation for the coming year, the chairperson prepares the budget and presents it to church council for approval. In some churches, the entire committee is involved in the budget process, but that has not been the case at Lakewood.

Persons who would be a good fit for this committee are those who have some background or experience in accounting, counting money, or who are comfortable with finances. It is always a good example when the people serving on the finance committee are also good givers to the church, but we don't do background check when asking people to serve.

Trustees

The trustees have the responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of all of the church property: the sanctuary, two parsonages and the education building. They have the legal right to buy and purchase property. They are responsible for the repair and maintenance of all the equipment used by the church, like lawnmowers, snow blowers, air conditioners and so forth.

To be a trustee, one does not have to be a mechanic or carpenter, though it does help to have some knowledge or skills. If the trustees don't have the skills to do the work themselves, they will hire a local contractor to do the work for them.

The trustees are involved in the hiring, supervision and setting of salary for the custodian. Church council has final say, and Staff Parish Relations Committee is sometimes involved, but the responsibility falls on the trustees to oversee the custodian.

The board of trustees is made up of nine, but no less than five persons. They are divided into three classes and each person serves a term of three years. You cannot succeed yourself, but may return after a year of rest. One third of the trustees are to be women, and no one under the age of 21 may serve, since trustees are sometimes involved in legal matters. The pastor is an ex-officio member, but without vote.

They generally meet on the third Thursday of the month, but this will vary depending on people's schedules. A representative from trustees also serves on the church council and finance committee.

Staff Parish Relations Committee

The SPRC committee is the personnel committee of the church. It meets monthly, usually on the second Thursday of the month. This is the group of the church that oversees the staff and is involved in hiring new staff as needed, providing ongoing supervision and support of the pastor and staff, and conducts an annual evaluation of each staff member, including the pastor.

The *Book of Discipline* charges this committee with interpreting to the congregation the nature and function of ministry, promoting the Ministerial

Education Fund, and promoting open itineracy, or the ability of any pastor to be appointed to the pulpit at Lakewood.

In the United Methodist Church we have an appointment system, which means the pastor is appointed by the bishop to serve, one year at a time. The SPRC committee has an opportunity every year to recommend keeping or replacing the pastor. The district superintendent receives that request and shares it with the bishop, but there is no guarantee that a church will get its request.

During the time of a pastoral transition, it is the SPRC committee that confers with the DS about the criteria desired in the next pastor. SPRC also works to assist the pastoral families in times of transition, both leaving and coming to Lakewood.

The SPRC committee works to resolve any conflicts with staff and handles all complaints and criticisms regarding any staff member, including the pastor.

Spiritual gifts would include good people skills, the ability to keep confidences, resolving conflict, and certainly good organizational skills. In many respects this committee is the human resource office of the organization.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee is tasked with the responsibility of attracting new persons to Christ. Lakewood has chosen not to do door-to-door evangelism like the Jehovah Witnesses. Instead we have chosen to provide ministries and activities that might be of interest to persons who do not already have a church.

Some of the ministries include the Party in the Park, Fellowship Café, Jazz and Dinner night outs, and our popcorn visitation, where we visit first time visitors with a bag of microwave popcorn and thank them for “popping in” at Lakewood. We hope they’ll come back.

The committee has done mass mailings to the neighborhood, developed a website and Facebook page as part of its ministry. We advertise weekly in the local newspaper and place an ad in the glossy magazine promoting Erie.

Some may view this committee as an entertainment committee; others may see it as the public relations branch of the church. The goal is to attract new persons to our church, hoping that once they see and experience our church, they will want to stick around.

Those who may wish to serve on this committee should have a real love for Jesus Christ, and for Lakewood United Methodist. Skills in planning events are helpful. Public relations and advertisement skills are useful. Those who wish to share the love of Jesus Christ and want to reach beyond the walls of the church should consider this ministry.

Education

Lakewood is blessed to have a staff person to coordinate these ministries. Pam Anthony has responsibility for purchasing curriculum for teachers to use; recruiting and training of teachers; obtaining clearances for all of our volunteers; planning and executing our Vacation Bible School; helping to promote our camping program; and keeping good records.

Of course Pam doesn’t do all of the work by herself. She needs others who love the Lord, who love children, youth and other adults on the Christian journey. Persons who might be attracted to assist Pam would be

those who love children; those who have some teaching background; and those who personally like to learn more.

Many of our teachers have told us that they have learned more by preparing their lessons than they would have had they tried to study on their own. And they're glad for the experience. Many people doubt their ability to work with children or youth, but once they try it discover they have a real gift and talent for it.

Missions

The missions committee helps Lakewood to extend the love of Jesus Christ out into the community and around the world. The committee itself is not the only group in the church engaged in mission activity, but it does have the task of planning and coordinating mission activities for the church to be involved in.

Some of the projects involve soliciting donations: coats for kids in the winter, money for CROP Walk, donations to the local food pantry; shoes for EUMA; clothing, toiletries and paper products for the Refuge. Some of the projects involve hands-on work, helping others: Habitat for Humanity is an example, serving a meal at the City Mission, or sitting down with veterans at Liberty House and sharing a meal and conversation.

Sometimes a team is formed to go on a mission project. Usually there is a team leader who coordinates it. Sometimes that person is a member of the missions committee, other times not. Currently we are looking for someone to lead a team to Redbird Mission in Kentucky in 2021.

People who would be attracted to this committee are persons who have a heart for hurting people, who like to put their faith into action, and who love to serve others.

Worship Committee

The worship committee assists the pastor in providing the best possible worship experience for people, and to give God praise and glory. We have two staff members who assist us, Jeremiah Bull our music director and Carolyn Sanford our organist. They provide the musical leadership necessary to have meaningful worship services.

There are lots of behind the scenes jobs that happen to make worship happen, many of which you may be unaware of – unless that person doesn't do his or her job one Sunday. For example, we need a team of people to run the sound system every week and to work the video projection so that the words show up on the screen every week.

Someone needs to recruit ushers, every week. We have greeters at the doors to make our visitors feel welcome. They don't just show up; someone recruits them and reminds them of their time to serve. And so, we need greeters and ushers.

Someone fills the candles with oil so they burn brightly every week, and cleans the brass when it needs it. Someone orders flowers, weekly. Once a month we have communion. A team of people prepare the communion elements, set them out, and clean up afterwards. Not just one person, but a team of people.

Every week we have a lay reader; someone calls ahead of time to recruit them. And twice a year we have a meeting to plan the upcoming worship services for that half of the year. Then, all of the members come together and have input and help to make decisions.

Spiritual gifts include a willingness to help and to serve, a real love for the Lord and a desire to glorify Jesus.

Health Ministry

The health ministry team strives to help the members of our church achieve wholeness of body, mind and spirit. They do this by raising an awareness of health issues, providing resources, and helping to advocate and assist individuals to improve and maintain their whole – body, mind and spirit.

Examples of their ministry include the Tracy Backpack ministry, packing 70-80 bags of food for needy children to take home on the weekend who attend Tracey Elementary; The Produce Express, where volunteers help with a bi-weekly food distribution of fresh produce at the Erie County Health Department.

Recognizing that grief is a process and not a moment, they send timely booklets to families who have experienced a loss throughout the first year to help them cope with their grief. A weekly exercise and chair yoga class provides whole body workouts for folks of all ages. Encouraging all of us to walk a little more and increase our physical activity, programs such as A Walk to Jerusalem and Journey around the World have combined exercise with prayer.

The team provides or finds rides for members who need a ride to medical appointments. One of their most significant ministries is providing educational materials – through newsletter articles, bulletin blurbs, Backdoor Readers in the restrooms, and guest speakers.

If you would like to share your gifts of teaching, encouragement, and compassion, this ministry team might be a good fit for you. The team meets quarterly to plan their activities, and often relies on emails between meetings.

Well, as you can see, we're doing a lot. And we need a lot of volunteers to share their gifts to continue all of these valuable ministries. If you'd like to know more about a given ministry, or would like to volunteer, please speak to the speaker or to the pastor to express your interest.

Let us all turn to our hymnals and join in praying prayer number 570 once again.