

Select Page



Q&A w/ Kathy Conley

New Lay Leader for the Arkansas Conference

Jun 17, 2020 | Arkansas United Methodist



What is your current church and hometown, and how long have you been there?

My hometown is Murfreesboro, Arkansas but in 1980, I got transferred with my work to Blytheville. I went thinking I was only going to be there a year but there was a man there that I fell in love with and married, had two children, and here I am all these years later still there. We have a wonderful life out in "Promised Land" a few miles out of the city limits. We have lots of friends, belong to several organizations, and enjoy a wonderful church and church family. We are very busy in our life.

What is the role of a Lay Leader, and how did you come to be in this role?

Four years ago, the nominating committee decided to select an associate Lay Leader to shadow and learn from the Lay Leader. Several of the other Annual Conferences have this and it seems to make the transition easier. I have jokingly referred to myself as the "Laity in Waiting" during this time. I have watched and learned from Karon Mann and helped her when she asked. She has been such an asset to the laity in the Conference. She sees so many possibilities for ways to use our gifts. That is how I view my job, too; As a helper to the laity, a teacher, an advocate, a cheerleader and encourager, and someone who always looks to the Holy Spirit for guidance in all things.

What is your goal as the new conference Lay Leader?

This past February, in Nashville at the AACLL meeting, Junius Dotson, the general secretary of Discipleship Ministries spoke to us about our role in our conferences. At the close of his presentation, he challenged us to "exercise courageous leadership and see with spiritual eyes." That is my intent as the new Arkansas Conference Lay Leader: to live before the Conference a life worthy of the calling of God, to follow Jesus, and to allow the Holy Spirit to guide me in all I do and say.

I recognize that I am blessed to experience this new area of ministry as I seek to help God empower our laity to be energized and passionate for the gospel. I want us to continually ask ourselves, "what new things are we willing to create to increase discipleship movements in our congregations as we display visibly the love of Jesus?" I hope to encourage a continued heart for mission and a gracious sharing of mercy and justice.

Communication is important to me; sharing information, talking about viewpoints, learning to listen to one another, always helps in confronting misunderstanding, and alleviates many problems before they begin.

It's such a blessing to see laity doing good work in the name of Jesus. To talk to the folks of our conference and see reflected in their eyes the Holy Spirit moving in the churches through them as they meet the challenges God gives them every day shows their trust in God. They aren't afraid to speak and to witness their faith to others because the presence of God permeates every part of their lives. I am honored to work in the midst of these great people.

What have you learned from past leaders in this role that you can adapt to your position?

In watching past Lay Leaders, I've observed that it is a big job! I'm amazed at how easy they make it look, though. I've watched Jim Lane, Asa Whitaker, and Karon Mann breeze through all their responsibilities and just pray that I'll be able to step into the footprints they have left along the way. One thing I noticed about all three is they looked to others for direction and to God for wisdom during their tenure and I hope to do the same.

Who is someone that inspires you and why?

I have had so many people to inspire me and model the faith throughout my life – too many to name. All those people who have believed in me, offered encouragement with kind, uplifting words I appreciate more than they know. I thank all those who have shown me Jesus by teaching me, listening to me, and making time for my many questions. Those who have prayed for me, noticed what gifts God has given me and allowed me to use them have certainly helped me walk daily with God. And all those sweet-spirited, spirit-filled people who just loved me . . . I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Do you have a favorite passage from the Bible that you would like to share?

My favorite Bible verse is also a song that I love to sing called "You Are Mine" based on Isaiah 43.

"Do not be afraid, I Am with you. I have called you each by name. Come and follow me, I will bring you home. I love you and you are Mine".

This to me says it all. It encompasses everything we are as Christians – Don't fear, follow Me and all will be well. You belong to Me and I love You. May we remember this as we work alongside each other in the days ahead. These words are our focus. This is what we proclaim to the world about Jesus, our Savior.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid."

Share this:

 Facebook
 Twitter
 LinkedIn
 Print
 Email

	Search
--	--------