

Report to the 2014 Arkansas Annual Conference

I am including a part of the 2013 report in order to continue presenting the description of our program

The 2012 General Conference changed the way we have been doing things and gave us a new name and position. Change is sometimes met with suspicion and confusion so I would like to share as much information here as I can.

The term "Lay Speaker" has been used for many years, and usually was thought of as "Pulpit Supply". It has been said that there are a lot of United Methodists that will not take the training because they do not want to be in the Pulpit. General Conference made changes that will assist in getting those people into our training classes that want to be trained to serve in the many other functions of the church.

*We now have the "Local Lay Servant" position instead of Local Lay Speaker (will be able to serve the local church in whatever capacity available for them, including filling in for their Pastor). (Must have taken the "Basic" course, and take at least a 4 hr. refresher class every three years).

*We now have the "Certified Lay Servant" position instead of the Certified Lay Speaker (will be able to serve the local church and also the extended church in whatever capacity that is available for them, including filling in for local Pastors and other Pastors in the connection. (Must have taken "Basic and one "Advanced class") and take another "advanced" class at least every three years).

*We now have the new position of "Lay Speaker" which is a new "track" inside the Lay Servant Ministries Program (we retained the name "Lay Speaker" for this position) that requires 1 basic and 5 specific advanced courses as required by General Conference Legislation. Those course Categories are: Basic, Worship, Prayer, Spiritual Gifts, Preaching, UM Heritage and Polity.

Each of these positions (except the Lay Speaker position, which requires more), require at least 10 hours of classroom time every three years or specific alternate courses of equivalent service / training that can be used to stay in the program. **If a person delays coming to class for three consecutive years, even if using an Alternate Class, (see 2014 list) then they will be dropped from the program and will have to take the "Basic" and then another Advanced class to be Certified, if they return at a later date. The Lay Servant / Lay Speaker will be recommended by the Pastor of the local church where their membership is held and by a vote of the local charge conference. (Annual Lay Servant Report Charge Conference Form). Completing this form is required each year to stay in the LSM Program, but does not give you status as a Lay Servant unless you have completed the training classes.

***Upon requesting to enter the new Lay Speaker Track -, persons applying to become a **"Lay Speaker"** will be examined (records / past service) by the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (DCLSM) or equivalent structure and be recommended to the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (CCLSM) or equivalent structure for "Approval". The "Lay Speaker" must apply for Re-Approval" (we do not use the term "certification here") and appear before the District Committee on Lay Servant Ministries (DCLSM) or equivalent structure (at least) every three years (this can be done at classes). They also must receive the endorsement of the local church charge conference every year by the Annual Lay Servant Report form.

- Anyone may come to our classes without committing to be a part of Lay Servant Ministries, will not have to fill out a Lay Servant Report, and will not be entered in our records unless desired. (we think you will want to be a part of our program once you come to a class though!

List of 2014 "Approved" Alternate Service / Training for Certified Lay Servants

1. All LSM Classes conducted / approved through the District Director
2. UMC recognized courses / events: Walk to Emmaus, Mission U, Disciple Bible Studies, Stephen Ministry, Hendrix College Religious Ed. Programs, Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence
3. Be-A-Disciple and other online courses, to be considered on a case – by – case basis for 2014 (please contact your District or Conference Director before taking these to be able to get credit for the course. (these courses must conform to general LSM Program requirements.

Under the 2012 General Conference Legislation, the Lay Servant Ministries Program is a Laity driven, Laity led program and the District and Conference Directors "shall" be Laity. We have several Clergy helping and directing the program now, and I hope that we can find competent Laity that will become "Directors" of the District Program and then our Clergy will continue to "partner" with them and strengthen the program. We certainly need the "buy-in" of all of our Bishop, D.S.'s and our Clergy if we are to succeed.