

Lay Speakers are Salty People

The following article appears in the Winter 2001 edition of "Links" a publication of the Section of Lay Ministries of the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. It is sent to clergy and lay leaders all across the denomination four times each year.

Lay Speakers are salty people. United Methodist Lay Speakers add a richness of flavor and stability to the witness for Jesus Christ throughout the entire United Methodist Church. From every charge, from every county seat church, from every suburban church, from every 2, 3, and 4 point charge, from every village and hamlet across this great church lay people are engaged in a myriad of ministries beyond imagination and description.

Every time leaders in Lay Speaking Ministries get together each discovers that we are not all organized the same and do not approach our ministry the same in every place. That is precisely the reason that Lay Speaking Ministries are at the forefront of every description of meaningful and lasting ministry with and among our people. It is when lay folks are in ministry with other lay folks that "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ" becomes something other than a line in our *Discipline*.

The 2000 General Conference made significant changes in the way Districts and Annual Conferences organize Lay Speaking Ministries. The overall name of the program was changed from "Lay Speaking Ministry" to "Lay Speaking Ministries". However the every day ministry of Lay Speakers remains the same - - no changes there. The procedure for becoming a Local Church Lay Speaker or Certified Lay Speaker remain the same.

Almost every Conference is reporting an increase in the numbers of credentialed Lay Speakers. It requires quite a commitment on the part of the Lay Speaker to become trained and then to complete the required continuing education. Salty people indeed!

A significant event this year was the organizational meeting of the "Association of Annual Conference Directors of Lay Speaking Ministries". This new organization consisting of each Annual Conference Director of Lay Speaking, will be able to enhance and advance the Lay Speaking programs and be an advocate across the church for this ministry. They along with the "National Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders" are responsible for initiation of any changes in the Discipline in the areas of lay leadership and lay speaking.

Here is where you will find United Methodist Lay Speakers - -

- Taking communion to nursing homes and retirement centers.
- Volunteering in hospitals.
- Taking senior citizens to their medical appointments.
- Volunteering in their community centers.
- Teaching computer courses to seniors.
- Teaching Sunday School Classes.
- Leading community organizations.
- Holding Local Church, District, Annual Conference and General Church positions of responsibility.
- Leading the church childrens choir.
- Helping out in Vacation Bible School.
- Serving as Liturgist.
- Preaching the Word.
- Serving as volunteer Chaplains.
- Leading Bible Studies.
- Operating Shelters for Indigents and Homeless People.
- Volunteering to work with AIDS patients.
- Rocking Babies in the Hospital Nursery.

And the list just goes on and on - - for you see "Lay Speaking Ministries" is all about "speaking" of the love and grace of Jesus Christ in ways that people not only hear - - but in ways that they feel and see.

A Jim Lane Commentary
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