

To help you better understand your position as the Charge Lay Member for Annual Conference, you may find the following information helpful. It is published by the General Board of Discipleship. You may also enjoy looking at the information found on the website for GBOD (see website address at the end of the 2nd page.)

The Role of the Lay Member of Annual Conference

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The *Discipline* requires that the lay member of annual conference shall have been a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least one year. The lay member to annual conference:

- participates in the annual conference sessions and votes on all matters except those pertaining to ministerial relations.
- reports to the congregation in the weeks following the annual conference session and to the church council at its next meeting after the close of the conference session. The *Discipline* states that the report to the church council must be within three months of the close of the session.
- interprets, with the pastor, the actions of the annual conference session to the congregation.
- serves as a member of the staff/pastor-parish relations committee, church council, and finance committee (if there are multiple lay members from a charge, only one has these responsibilities).

You and the other lay members to annual conference will be serving with an equal number of clergy members. This is an opportunity to listen and learn from each other. Annual conference gives you an opportunity to experience a greater variety of God's human creation than you may experience in your local congregation. You have the opportunity to meet and work with people from different size churches; various cultures; urban, rural, and suburban congregations; and a wide variety of professions, life experience, and economic levels. Take advantage of this opportunity by getting acquainted with people sitting near you. Celebrate the diversity of The United Methodist Church.

Responsibilities of the Lay Member

The lay member to annual conference has many responsibilities, some before, others during, and others following the session.

PREPARE FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Study the pre-conference workbook and materials that are submitted for action by the annual conference.

To prepare, you should:

- attend any pre-conference district meetings and training sessions.
- understand your annual conference process for conducting business. For example, some conferences operate with Robert's Rules of Order (parliamentary procedure); other conferences operate with discernment processes and consensus. Your pastor or annual conference office can help you prepare before your first session (*Our Rules of Organization are printed in your workbook.*)
- meet with the pastor, lay leader, and congregation members to discuss issues that will be a part of the annual conference business.

PARTICIPATE DURING ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- Attend the annual conference laity session.
- Participate in all sessions dealing with annual conference business.
- During business sessions, you will be asked to vote on legislation, resolutions, reports, and budget.
- Listen to proceedings in order to make informed decisions when voting. You do not have to vote the same as other members from your congregation, and you may abstain if you do not feel qualified to vote on a particular issue. You must hold in mind the tension between the ministry of the Church in the world and the interests of your own congregation. Sometimes you might choose to vote for the "greater good" on issues that may (or may not) have a direct impact on your congregation and issues that may even increase your local church budget. Examples might be an increase in budget for mission work, work to curb violence that is not part of your local community, a position on a social issue on which all members of your congregation do not agree. In these instances, you have a role to explain and educate your congregation about the issues.
- Participate in all worship experiences (opening worship, early morning or evening chapel, ordination, memorial service, and others). You will have opportunities to experience several worship styles, hear a variety of music groups and preachers, and join in new ways to worship God.
- Attend plenary and Bible study sessions. Annual conference sessions can be an excellent way to grow spiritually.
- Explore the resource display to gather information and ideas for ministry in your congregation. During fellowship events, at display tables, and in casual conversation you will learn about The United Methodist Church in new ways. Participate fully with anticipation of new ways God might come to you.

A spiritual discipline for conference is journaling! Write your reflections about proceedings, discussions, worship experiences, special ceremonies, music, and so on as preparation for later sharing with your congregation. Keep an accurate record of the votes taken that will have impact on the congregation's finances, operations, and ministry.

SERVE AFTER ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- Share information with your congregation about your experience. Remember that the report is to be given within three months after the annual conference meeting.
- Search websites and general church news sources and your annual conference newspaper for information to share with your congregation throughout the year.

You can find additional information on the following website:

<http://www.gbod.org/laity>

Go to "Communication Tools for Lay Members to Annual Conference" and also "The Things I Learned at Annual Conference"