

GUIDE FOR LAY LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The intent of this study is to provide guidance to Lay Leadership ministry teams (also referred to as Nominations) in a local congregation to enable them to live as fully as possible into God's invitation for ministry in the local setting in which they find themselves. It addresses the key elements outlined in *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*; identifying, developing, deploying, evaluating, and supporting the leaders in a local congregation. This guide provides structure and guidance for the pastor or lay leadership as they companion the Ministry Team through this study.

The study is laid out in a series of seven sessions; a session a week is recommended but this schedule can be adjusted as needed. The first week is the welcome and overview focusing attention on the intent, objectives, and desired outcomes of the Lay Leadership Ministry Team. The remaining sessions focus on exploring and understanding spiritual gifts, *identifying* gifts and ministry in the congregation, *developing* individuals serving in ministry, *deploying/sending out* those in ministry, *evaluating and monitoring* the fruits of the various ministries, and providing on-going *support* for those in ministry.

Note to study leader: Using the information provided below, welcome the members of the team, discuss the purpose/intent of the ministry team, using the Discipline as a guide, what is the objective of the team, and what is the desired outcome for your congregation. Engage the team in discussion and dialogue particularly if the team currently functions differently with different goals. As we move through the study the focus will be on the giftedness and uniqueness of this specific local congregation; helping the group discern the unique ministries and missions of this congregation. Exploring spiritual gifts and the role they play in guiding ministry and mission will be a key element as we move through the study. At the end of this session, distribute copies of the spiritual gifts inventory and invite participants to complete the inventory before the next session; exploring and processing spiritual gifts and the role they play will be the focus of session two.

SESSION 1—Welcome and Overview

Welcome: As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you have been called to this important work to help individuals discover their spiritual gifts and develop their leadership skills to further God's Kingdom. Your commitment to grow in your spiritual formation as a follower of Jesus Christ invites you to practice various means of grace such as: corporate worship, prayer, small group Bible study with scriptural reflection, engagement in gift-based service, witnessing and sharing God's love. A disciple's faith journey will have twists and turns which will move us from exploring Christ to centering our lives on Christ. Your unique gifts, graces, and abilities of leadership will extend God's love to others. Use of these guidelines will help you as a spiritual leader to understand and discern the leadership practices of various ministry teams and help provide support for church leaders as needed.

Purpose/Intent of Ministry Team: Serve throughout the year to guide and support the individuals in leadership in your congregation and discern ways to continually engage newer members in the ministries of the congregation.

Goal: Support your church ministry teams as they focus the mission of the church on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Objective: Affirm a renewed passion for supporting lay leadership roles as you share and discuss a Biblical and theological understanding of God's inspired word. Your support will help the congregation

remember ‘Why’ we gather together as Christians and enable each ministry team to discern their unique ministry while affirming that ministry through intentional prayer.

Task: As the Lay Leadership Ministry Team your task is to carry out the following leadership practices: identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, monitor, and support the members of your congregation’s ministry teams. As you walk through these guidelines, please adapt them to the culture of your congregation. The intent is to lead each of you into a deeper relationship with each other and with Jesus; Jesus offers guidance throughout the Gospels for ‘How’ we are to lead.

Outcome: Whether you are hearing about these leadership practices for the first time or you have already been using them in your congregation, we believe that such Christ-like behaviors bless us in our spiritual formation as we become transformed disciples of Christ. As disciples of Christ, as we encourage others we strengthen the body of Christ. As you seek to discern God’s invitation for others, you will be better able to say, “I see this gift in you,” and to lead them through prayer to discern how God is calling them to a specific ministry. This takes the focus off of self and puts the focus on the other by giving them permission to try something that might be new or different for them. “When we make this vital shift, we put the best efforts and energy into equipping other Christ followers and emerging leaders- empowering them to be the heroes, wherever they end up serving.” (Hero Maker, 2018)

*According to *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (§258.1) the committee on nominations and leadership development is to:

- **identify** the gifts and strengths of persons in the congregation
- **develop** their gifts and skills and nurture them in their mission or ministry roles
- **deploy** persons according to their gifts and passion in areas of service within the church, community, and world (see also §126.)
- **evaluate** the effectiveness of their service and provide necessary training and support
- **monitor** the progress of their development and celebrate their accomplishments and service

**Book of Discipline, 2016*

SESSION 2—Spiritual Gifts

Note to study leader: The intent of this session is to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of spiritual gifts. Participants will be invited to read key scripture addressing spiritual gifts and how they support the ministry and discuss ‘why’ spiritual gifts are important in the life of the congregation. They will then be invited to explore ‘how’ you focus on spiritual gifts to develop and empower ministry in the congregation. To help facilitate an understanding of spiritual gifts, each participant will be invited to share the results of the gifts inventory including a clear understanding of the definition of each gift.

Open your session with prayer.

Why spiritual gifts? Focusing on giftedness helps move the congregation toward building up the body of Christ as it is uniquely expressed in this local congregation; giftedness leads to and guides the ministry.

Exploring and owning spiritual giftedness is always a work of prayer and discernment; even those individuals who share a common gift will have their own unique expression of those gifts.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to listen for...who gives the gifts...who receives the gifts...what are we invited to do with the gifts...

I Corinthians 12:4-11

Ephesians 4:4-13

Romans 12:4-8

I Peter 4:10-11

Responses might include (but not be limited to) Christ/Spirit gives gifts, all have been given gifts, all kinds of different gifts, gifts are to be used for the common good, we are all parts of the body of Christ.

Spend time discussing what each person heard.

How do we use spiritual gifts in a congregation?

- The level of participation is important; you need to have as many of the active members as possible; continue to engage new people
- Look for the predominant gifts in this group of people. **(I find creating a grid of all the gifts with checkmarks for each repetition of a gift is helpful.)**
- Look for the synergy in the predominant gifts. For example, if you observe that a significant number of participants were represented in three or four gifts (this may vary depending on the size of the congregation), look for what those gifts have in common; how might they be interrelated?
- Gather together individuals who share a common gift and encourage them to brainstorm about ways they could imagine using this gift in ministry; nothing is off the table at this point.

- The gifts can also be grouped by a common focus:
 - o Nurture
 - o Outreach
 - o Witness
 - o Administer/organize
- Do not ignore the outliers (those gifts with only a few people); these individuals may often bring a much-needed gift to a group; look for ways to incorporate them into the body

How does this inform your unique incarnation of the body of Christ?

- Focus first on the gifts, then on how to be in ministry
- Don't ask individuals to do something they are not gifted for; this will lead to frustration
- Allow individuals to be engaged in a particular ministry for as long as they continue to be energized; individuals who have been involved in a particular ministry for a time become wonderful mentors for individuals who are new to the ministry
- When people feel honored and respected for who they are, they are empowered and the ministry thrives

At this point, invite the participants to share their top 3 or 4 gifts; read the definitions as they explore each gift to be sure they fully understand the gift (different inventories may use different names for the same gifts). Invite them to reflect on the gifts; do they seem to resonate for them; do others see that giftedness in them. Invite participants to live with the gift over the weeks ahead; focus on the importance of taking this into their prayer time.

If time is available, start to explore how you might invite the rest of the congregation to explore their spiritual gifts; how can this knowledge inform the life and ministry of the congregation.

Next week's session will focus on how Jesus and the early church identified individuals for ministry. Hand out the readings for next week's session; encourage the participants to read and understand the context for each specific reading.

Close your time with prayer.

SESSION 3—Identify

Note to study leader: The intent of this class is to explore the ways in which the early disciples were identified; first by Jesus and later in the earliest days of the church. Participants will be invited to share key scripture and explore 'how' we see the task of identifying disciples/leaders exhibited in these narratives. Invite participants to discuss how these narratives could inform the ways in which they invite individuals into ministry in their local setting. Focus on how they allow the gifts of the congregation to lead the ministry first (rather than allowing institutional guidelines to guide the ministry).

Open your session with prayer.

Invite participants to share any comments or thoughts from the previous week; invite someone in the group to record comments that might invite further discussion.

We will look first at how Jesus identified/called the original disciples looking more deeply for what gifts Jesus may have discerned in these individuals.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to explore...who these individuals were, what might they have represented, can we discern underlying giftedness...

Mark 1:16-20

Mark 2:13-17

Mark 3:13-19

John 1:35-51

What do we notice about the individuals Jesus called? What gifts might Jesus have discerned in these specific individuals? What do we notice about how Jesus prepared himself for calling these individuals?

Gifts that may be identified...faith, evangelism, proclamation, servant leadership...others?

Read...

Acts 1:21-26

Acts 6:2-6

Acts 9:3-8

Acts 13:2-3

What do we notice about how the early church invited individuals into ministry? What were the gifts of these individuals? How were these gifts important to the ministry?

Gifts that may be identified...witness, evangelism, intercession, preaching, apostle, wisdom, discernment, faith, administration...others?

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As we look at this congregation, what is our 'why'; 'why' do we call/invite others into ministry? 'How' do we invite others into ministry keeping a focus on the gifts that are represented? How do we look first to the gifts and then how to use those gifts in ministry? How does this challenge/invite change to the ways in which we currently invite individuals into ministry?

Encourage conversation around the current culture of this congregation, the extent to which this will represent a change/a shift in the way they currently operate. Begin to explore ways in which this might begin to unfold in this congregation. Again, encourage someone in the group to record key ideas as they emerge.

Next week's session will focus on how Jesus developed the disciples for ministry. Hand out the readings for the next session.

Close your time with prayer.

SESSION 4—Develop

Note to study leader: The intent of this class is to explore the ways in which Jesus developed the disciples. Participants will be invited to share key scripture and explore ‘how’ we see the task of developing disciples/leaders exhibited in these narratives. Invite participants to discuss how these narratives could inform the ways in which they develop individuals/leaders in their local setting. Focus on what opportunities currently exist within the congregation for such development that seem to be serving well and what specific opportunities might be helpful.

Open your session with prayer.

Invite participants to share any comments or thoughts from the previous week; invite someone in the group to record comments that might invite further discussion.

We will look at the various ways in which Jesus developed the disciples; their ministry and their leadership.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to explore...what was Jesus’ initial invitation to the disciples, what form did Jesus’ ‘teaching’ often take, what did Jesus emphasize as important for ministry and leadership...

John 1:38-39a

Matthew 4:23

Luke 11:1-4, 9-10

Mark 11:22-24

Matthew 8:23-28

John 13:34-35

What do you notice about how Jesus begins to develop his earliest disciples? How does that process develop over time? What does Jesus stress as important?

As we consider this congregation, what forms of developing do we already have in place? What additional aspects of development would be helpful? Focus on the importance of developing individuals spiritually as they grow in their ministry and leadership.

Encourage a member of the team to record thoughts and ideas that emerge from the discussion. Begin to explore how ‘developing’ might unfold in this congregation.

Moving forward, let us, as a team, commit to being in prayer for one another and for all those in leadership positions.

Next week's session will focus on how Jesus deployed the disciples in ministry. Hand out the readings for the next session.

Close your time with prayer.

SESSION 5—Deploy

Note to study leader: The intent of this class is to explore the ways in which Jesus deployed the disciples. (The word ‘deploy’ holds a military image for some, so perhaps we consider ‘how Jesus sent the disciples out in mission’.) Participants will be invited to share key scripture and explore ‘how’ we see the task of sending out for the work of the Gospel exhibited in these narratives. Invite participants to discuss how these narratives could inform the ways in which they send out individuals/leaders in their local setting. Focus on specific ways in which this currently occurs within the congregation and what other opportunities/possibilities might be helpful.

Open your session with prayer.

Invite participants to share any comments or thoughts from the previous week; invite someone in the group to record comments that might invite further discussion.

We will look at some of the ways in which Jesus sent the disciples out to engage in ministry and mission in the world.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to explore...how did Jesus send out the disciples, what were the disciples asked to do, how did Jesus make this ministry possible, what was the invitation that Jesus made to the disciples, what was his deep desire for them...

Matthew 10:5-8

Mark 6:7-13

Luke 9:1-5

Luke 10:1-5

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:7-13

John 15:14-17

Acts 1:8

Acts 2:1-4

What do you notice about how Jesus deployed his earliest followers? What guidance did he offer the first disciples? How did Jesus equip them for the ministry he invited them into?

As we consider this congregation, how do we (do we?) currently deploy individuals in ministry? What guidance/support do we offer them? How do we encourage collaboration and teamwork?

Encourage a member of the team to record thoughts and ideas that emerge from the discussion. Begin to explore how ‘deploying/sending out’ might unfold in this congregation.

Let's remember to pray for one another, to pray for all those currently in leadership positions, and for those who are not yet here.

Next week's session will focus on how Jesus evaluated and monitored the disciples in their ministry. Hand out the readings for the next session.

Close your time with prayer.

SESSION 6—Evaluate and Monitor

Note to study leader: The intent of this class is to explore the ways in which Jesus evaluated and monitored the disciples. Participants will be invited to share key scripture and explore ‘how’ we see the task of evaluating and monitoring disciples/leaders exhibited in these narratives. Invite participants to discuss how these narratives could inform the ways in which they evaluate and monitor individuals/leaders in their local setting. Focus on what techniques/processes are currently in place within the congregation and what might be helpful to the process moving forward.

Open your session with prayer.

Invite participants to share any comments or thoughts from the previous week; invite someone in the group to record comments that might invite further discussion.

We will look at the various ways Jesus evaluated and monitored the disciples as they continued the ministries they had been invited into.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to explore...how did Jesus evaluate their readiness for ministry, what characteristics did the disciples display that suggested to Jesus they were ready/not ready for the ministry that would lie ahead for them, what expectations did Jesus have of their commitment to the ministry...

Matthew 16:13-17

Matthew 13:51

Matthew 16:22-23

Mark 4:38-40

Mark 10:36-40

Mark 14:37-38

Luke 9:40-41

Luke 10:17-20

John 6:67-69

John 11:25-27

What were the concerns that stood out for Jesus as he evaluated their ministry? What issues regarding their abilities and his expectations did Jesus become aware of? How did he facilitate their acceptance of what would be required/expected of them?

As we consider this congregation, what processes/tools would be helpful as you seek to evaluate and monitor individuals/leaders and the ministries that emerge? How do you evaluate the giftedness of individuals in leadership? How do you incorporate the giftedness and the needs of the congregation/community in a clear mission and vision?

Encourage a member of the team to record thoughts and ideas that emerge from the discussion. Begin to explore how 'evaluating and monitoring' might unfold in this congregation.

As we move forward, let us continue to be in prayer for one another and for this congregation and community.

Next week's session will focus on how Jesus supported the disciples in ministry. Hand out the readings for the next session.

Close your time with prayer.

WEEK 7—Support

Note to study leader: The intent of this class is to explore the ways in which Jesus supported the disciples in ministry. Participants will be invited to share key scripture and explore 'how' we see the task of supporting disciples/leaders exhibited in these narratives. Invite participants to discuss how these narratives could inform the ways in which they support individuals/leaders in their local setting. Focus on what avenues currently exist within the congregation to provide support for leadership and what additional support might be helpful.

Open your session with prayer.

Invite participants to share any comments or thoughts from the previous week; invite someone in the group to record comments that might invite further discussion.

We will look at the ways in which Jesus supported and nurtured the disciples as they began their ministry.

Read the following scripture inviting participants to explore...what guidance did Jesus provide for their ministry, how did Jesus provide for the disciples following his death, what commitment did Jesus make to the disciples...

Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew 12:49-50

Mark 6:49-50

Mark 14:22-24

Luke 24:30-31

Luke 24:48-49

John 17:6-10, 17-20

John 20:22

What do you notice about the type of support that Jesus offers the disciples? How does Jesus reassure the disciples with regard to his continued presence? What commitments does Jesus make to the disciples with regard to their continuing ministry? What is key to a strong, on-going relationship with Jesus?

As we consider this congregation, how do we currently support individuals/leaders in their ministry? What forms of additional support would be helpful to nurturing and enhancing the ministries in this congregation?

Encourage a member of the team to record thoughts and ideas that emerge from the discussion. Begin to explore how support for leaders and ministry might unfold in this congregation.

Emphasize the importance of prayer; for one another, for the leadership, for the congregation. Invite the congregation to pray for the on-going ministries of this congregation.

Closing thoughts: As you continue to work through discovering spiritual gifts within your congregation and ministry teams, allow a safe space to share your thoughts and ideas with one another. Your commitment to grow in your individual spiritual formation as followers of Jesus will help you to discern the work of this ministry team. Allow yourself to experiment and explore as you do the work of developing leadership within yourself and others to further God's Kingdom. Remember to encourage and inspire individuals because they are the most valuable resource of this congregation. Remain focused on the intent of this ministry. As a team provide support for the congregation to understand 'why' the mission of the church can only be accomplished with diverse spiritual gifts united for 'how' the work will be carried out and 'what' the results or outcomes will look like for this local congregation.

Note to study leader: It is recommended that you encourage the members of this ministry team to spend some time in prayer and discernment and then to re-visit the key ideas from each session. Decide as a group how best to move forward in this congregation focusing on the key things that emerged as part of this time you have spent studying and discerning together.

This study guide was written by Rev. Nancy Dibelius and Ellen Mall-John.