

Because lay ministry has been instrumental in the spread of the gospel from the earliest times and especially in the establishment of The United Methodist Church, and because God, through baptism and confirmation, continues to call each believer into ministry, the Board of Laity lifts up the crucial importance of lay ministry and urges lay people to take this call seriously, committing themselves to grow in faith and ministry. We thank the pastors who commit themselves to leading lay people to discover and develop their ministries and who partner with them in this great adventure of faith and discipleship.

These *Characteristics of Effective Lay Leadership* provide a vision of what the laity of the church are called to be and do as they live out the church's mission of bringing people into fellowship with God. Like the *Characteristics of Effective Clergy* leadership in the Virginia Conference, this list is not exhaustive but expresses the current priorities of the conference. Each lay leader and pastor is responsible for presenting and interpreting this vision to their Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development and to their congregation.

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**All God's People in  
All Places,  
And in  
All Times,  
Are Called to Love  
And to Serve.**



Ministry of the Laity

For More Information, Contact:

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Warren Harper  
Conference Lay Leader  
200 Ladybank  
Williamsburg, VA 23188  
757-258-4498  
wrscharper@gmail.com

Center for Lay Leadership Excellence  
Virginia Conference of The UMC  
PO Box 5606  
Glen Allen, VA 23058  
(800) 768-6040 or (804) 521-1100  
ext. 153 or 154

www.vaumc.org  
Select "Center for Lay Leadership Excellence" or "Ministries,"  
then "Laity"

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Virginia  
Conference  
Board of Laity

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**Characteristics of  
Effective  
Lay Leadership  
in the  
Churches  
of the  
Virginia  
Conference**

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# Characteristics of Effective Lay Leadership in the Churches of the Virginia Conference

This document is intended:

- 1) to assist the local church Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development in selection, training and evaluation of church leaders.
- 2) to help current leaders evaluate their own leadership as they plan for continued growth.
- 3) to help potential leaders as they consider their response to an invitation to leadership.
- 4) to be lifted up before the congregation as a goal for all disciples to work toward.

This document recognizes that all Christians are on a journey of faith and discipleship, and that no one meets all these standards. As such, we accept them as goals and call ourselves to continue to work toward the vision.

## **Leaders model what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ:**

### PRIMARY COMMITMENTS

- Leaders recognize that commitment to Jesus Christ is the foundation for all leadership in the church, and that commitment to God's will is the beginning of all vision.

- They recognize making disciples of Jesus Christ as the primary goal of the Church and of individual Christians.
- They see those who are closest to them - their family and friends - as the frontline arena for their ministry/service, and commit to give them the best of themselves rather than the leftovers.

### CHARACTER

- Leaders seek to respond to conflict as Jesus did — directly, openly, and responsibly, treating others with respect and always seeking justice, healthy accountability, and reconciliation.

They recognize the importance of character and seek to become people whose lives are marked by integrity and compassion, and who treat others with respect regardless of their race, gender, social status, theological viewpoint, or any other human difference.

- They intentionally pursue spiritual growth and renewal of body, mind and spirit, setting aside time to deepen their relationship with God and to grow in faith and discipleship.

### LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leaders are determined to be servant-leaders, seeking the good of the kingdom rather than their own power and status, and making decisions based on the good of the whole Church rather than their own preferences.
- They listen to God, to the community, to their congregation, and to others of differing viewpoints, as well as to their own hearts as they discern visions and set goals for their church's future and ministry.

- They are future-oriented, willing to take risks as they encourage others to celebrate the past while moving toward the future.
- They partner with their pastors — praying for, supporting and encouraging them, and dealing honestly and openly with difficult issues.
- They seek to identify, nurture, encourage and support leadership in others.

### DISCIPLESHIP

- Leaders seek to grow in all areas of discipleship.
- They commit to regular, frequent participation in worship and study, and to grow in giving, service, prayer, and witness.
- They recognize tithing as the traditional standard for giving and commit to grow toward or beyond tithing.
- They support the ministries and programs of the local church, district, conference, and general church, in order to more effectively accomplish the mission of the Church.
- They seek to understand and interpret the Methodist distinctives: history, tradition, beliefs, worship, structure, and vision.
- They are committed to discovering, developing and practicing their spiritual gifts, and to encourage others to do the same.
- They are committed to hands-on service in and beyond the local church, meeting the practical and spiritual needs of others in the church, the community and the world.