

BANNER

With laity being a critical part of the body of Christ, what should the role of laity be, or better yet, what has been your role in your church, your community, and beyond such as in the Central Bay District and Michigan Conference?

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It was laity that started the early church in the first century, beginning with Jesus and his disciples. They did not start out as what we might consider clergy. They were not priests or part of the Jewish religious hierarchy, yet they started the early Christian church which grew to what it is today.

However, somewhere in our early church history and tradition, clergy were appointed, and they were given certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities. Clergy became the enlightened leadership, and laity became the spectators or an audience, or perhaps you could say the consumers of religion. But that was not the way it was meant to be. Laity lost sight of their role in ministry, but I think you would agree that laity need to take a more active role to accept, celebrate, and use the gifts of ministry?

To be more active and effective as laity we need to put into action the one or more Spiritual Gifts God has given each of us. Some examples include:

Preaching	Healing	Helping
Teaching	Giving	Wisdom
Leadership	Hospitality	Knowledge
Administration	Service	Faith

With all of us as laity putting our Spiritual Gifts into action, we can in turn commit ourselves to actively serving as members of the Body of Christ. This requires two groups – both leaders and members (or followers). Obviously, we need both. There are some who make good leaders, and there are others who are more effective as members. Also, we should keep in mind that our pastor is just one person, but we are many.

Two words that came to my mind when I started thinking about laity in the church include “initiative” and “innovation.” Are we taking the initiative to support our church by volunteering to lead or become members of groups or one-member activities if we’re not already there? These would include:

- Committees and Teams
- The Women’s Group & The Men’s Group
- Bible Study and Sunday School Classes
- Getting people to sign up to be liturgists
- Getting people to sign up to be ushers
- Getting people to sign up for coffee hours

We also need to consider the word “innovation.” We need to look at new and effective ways of helping our church not only to survive, but to thrive. One innovation that comes to my mind is the formation of a Prayer Team, if your church does not already have one, to meet weekly to lift up joys and prayer concerns. At the very top of the prayer list should be your Pastor and his or her leadership and ministry. I suggest that we as laity should look for ways to come up with new outreach programs and not wait for our pastor to come up with ideas. We should also look for ways to support and assist our pastor. An innovation we should consider which our District Superintendent, Reverend John Kasper, suggested is to form a “Visitation

Team” to make visits to those in nursing homes, in hospitals, and those who are considered shut-ins. This is part of nurturing. Perhaps you already have other ideas or can come up with suggestions for new innovations for your church.

It is so very important that we remember that we are all to be a part of the body of Christ, putting into action our talents and our Spiritual Gifts in serving God, our churches, our communities, and beyond. This could include serving our Central Bay District, and the Michigan Conference.

One final thought: Recognizing that each of us is different – each of us being in a different stage in our Spiritual Journey, the question is: “Are there some of us who might be sitting in the grand stands that might need to get out on the playing field”? Could we take on more active laity roles?

My prayer for you is as follows: “Lord, please open our ears, our minds, our hearts, and our lips to being active and effective parts of the body of Christ and servants to You and to others as we continue to walk with you in our Spiritual Journey. AMEN.”