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Module Two: The Practice of Ministry

Section 1: Worship

Facilitator's Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to prepare the certified lay minister to understand the theological and practical issues involved in planning worship in the church.

Learning Goals

At the end of this course the participant will be able to:

1. Recognize that Christian worship is the congregation's encounter with our Triune God in the power of the Holy Spirit;
2. Plan and organize a Sunday service of Christian worship in our tradition that reflects teamwork in designing and leading worship;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the unique gifts of your congregation for offering outstanding worship;
4. Discuss the role of Scripture in worship and how the lectionary may be a valuable plan for selecting Scripture for each Sunday service;
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the forms of prayer and develop skills to help your congregation offer its ministry of prayer well;
6. Discuss the importance of praise in worship;
7. Develop a plan for choosing music and other acts of praise in a worship service;
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the theology and practice of the two sacraments of our church: Baptism and Holy Communion;
9. Describe your role in leading or assisting in other acts

of worship, including weddings, funerals, and other local worship traditions; and

10. Design worship in ways that will intentionally include persons of all ages in your congregation, especially children and older adults.

Module Plan

Begin with prayer, both individually and as a group, as each person is comfortable praying aloud. Work through the material by reading it together or noting each section if the material has been previously read. Do the exercises indicated in each section, sharing insights and questions as you discuss the material.

Materials Needed

1. One copy of the workbook for each person;
2. Bibles, hymnals, and other reference books recommended in the text; and
3. Markers and whiteboard or large white paper on which to note special insights, questions, etc.

Participant's Guide

Introduction

There are seven primary considerations for anyone who is planning worship in The United Methodist Church. First, the English word, "worship" comes from an older English word, *weorthscipe* ("worth-ship"). Worship, then, signifies the worth of God in our lives. In worship we encounter the fullness of our Triune God who challenges, comforts, forgives, and empowers us for ministry in the world.

Second, in both biblical cultures and in most cultures in the history of the world, worship has been primarily related to community acts of sacrifice. The Latin word *sacrificare* means "to make holy." In the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and ritual practices, sacrifice does not mean "giving something up," but rather refers to holy people receiving and offering themselves and holy things in holy ceremonies to the Holy One.

Third, for United Methodists, corporate worship is understood, in the words of our founder John Wesley, to be a "means of grace." By his definition, the means of grace convey God's grace (God's mercy and transforming power) to all people, both believers and unbelievers. The means of grace that are directly related to worship include attending worship, participating in the Lord's Supper, baptism, public prayer, reading the Scriptures, and preaching. Among those not directly related to worship are fasting, private prayer, works of mercy, and Christian conferencing. In planning worship, you should consider how the means of grace experienced in worship may support the other ordinary means of grace.

Fourth, corporate worship is not only a means of grace in our tradition; it is also a basic expectation of every Christian. John Wesley included "attending upon all the ordinances of God" as one of the three General Rules that all Methodists were (and still are) expected to live faithfully. We do not worship because we feel like it or because it seems convenient. We worship because we are the body of Christ offering our praise to God and seeking the direction, correction, and sustaining power of God for our participation in God's mission in the world. Since regular Lord's Day worship is an act of the body, it is important to schedule times for worship on Sunday, and, if necessary or helpful, at

other times of the week so that all who are part or who may become part of the local body are able to be in worship together with others.

Fifth, the role of the worshipper and the worshipping community is essential. John Wesley made it clear that we must want to worship, be willing to receive the blessings of worship, and realize that what we receive from God in worship we cannot receive from anyone or anything else. You may encounter worship resources that speak of God being the primary audience in worship, rather than the congregation. There is truth in that statement. However, God is also the primary actor in worship, and we must be open to receive the grace God intends to give us through our worship.

Sixth, worship is world-making. In worship, Christians come together to enact with each other and before God the way our world is being transformed by God's mercy, love, righteousness, and truth. By speaking, singing, and embodying in our worship the signs of the kingdom of God in our midst, we live into and from the prayer Jesus taught us: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." By offering worship that boldly embodies the priorities of God's kingdom, we are deeply formed to live out our baptismal vow to "serve as Christ's representatives in the world." (Baptismal Covenant I, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 34).

Finally, worship in The United Methodist Church is guided by and flows from the official ritual of our church as expressed in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989); *Mil Voces para Celebrar* (Spanish hymnal, 1996); *Come, Let Us Worship* (Korean hymnal, 2001); and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (1992). Sunday worship in particular is to be guided by "The Basic Pattern of Worship" (see *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 2, for an outline). The Basic Pattern describes a flow of gathering, proclaiming and responding to the Scriptures, thanksgiving, and Communion and sending forth to serve. The Basic Pattern is biblically based and ecumenically recognized and used, and it reflects continuity with Christian worship practices from the earliest days. You should plan to meet with your team to review and discuss *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, pp. 13-32, as you consider how you will design worship most faithfully and effectively in your congregation.

Your Worship Planning Team

Christian worship is primarily the work of the people themselves, not the performance of a preacher or other worship leaders before a passive audience. It takes a community of many differently gifted people to offer worship well.

In the scriptural descriptions of worship, these gifted people included artists; artisans in metal, fabric, and clay; instrumentalists; cooks; construction experts; butchers; keepers and cleaners of sacred implements; singers; winemakers; herders; financial managers; experts in teaching and proclaiming the Scriptures; and experts in leading the entire ritual of the gathered assembly. Today, in an increasing number of places, we might add to this list experts in sound, video, lighting, and computer graphics technologies. But in any time or place, and above all else, for the congregation to worship well, the people of the congregation themselves must know how to sing and respond with their voices and bodies at each point along the way. Thus, for the congregation to be most fully engaged in the worship they offer, their voices and gifts must be heard, understood and involved in the planning of worship.

Here are a few guidelines to help your team planning be as effective as possible. Additional resources are suggested at the end of this section.

1. Meet regularly for worship planning sessions. You should probably expect to spend one hour planning for each service you will design together. If you are planning monthly, expect to set aside three to four hours at least.
2. Spend time together in prayerful study of the Scriptures that will be part of each service you plan. As you read the Scriptures together, think not only about what they say, but also how the congregation can connect with or embody them during the time of worship through visuals, sounds, smells, music, and movement. Remember that different people have different ways of learning and expressing themselves best. Biblical worship is always a whole body experience!
3. Know and keep learning the many gifts the people of your congregation may be able to bring to worship. Keep think-

ing “outside the box.” Don’t just limit yourselves to musicians, singers, or speakers. Include at least as broad a range of gifts and ways to connect with God as the Scriptures themselves describe! Make it a point to share discoveries of new gifts for worship at every planning session and to find a way to incorporate and honor these gifts in worship at the soonest appropriate time.

4. Find and use the many resources available to you for worship planning. Your General Board of Discipleship provides a wealth of free resources and links at <http://www.gbod.org/worship>.
5. Remember that repetition is a good thing! While God’s mercies are new every morning, the order and practices of worship should not be completely new every Sunday. Keeping worship true to the Basic Pattern, and even repeating words, texts, gestures, songs, and prayers helps the congregation learn how to offer its worship with confidence and joy. For worship to be theirs as it should be, they have to know what they’re doing!
6. Keep learning “best practices” for worship in your context. Build time for worship learning into your team time. If you have not already done so, plan to study our official United Methodist teaching documents on Holy Communion (“This Holy Mystery”) and baptism (“By Water and the Spirit”), as well as the two volumes of *Worship Matters*. All of these resources are available from Discipleship Resources.
7. As you continue to plan worship together, discuss how you will seek to help your congregation live fully into our church’s encouragement that all United Methodist congregations celebrate Holy Communion weekly. If your congregation does not currently have weekly access to a licensed local pastor or an ordained elder to preside, you will need to work with your district superintendent or bishop to obtain access to the sacramental leadership your congregation needs and deserves.

Suggested Resources—Designing and Planning Worship

Worship Matters – Vol. 1 and 2, E. Byron Anderson, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1999.

The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Worship Together, Marcia McFee, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2002.

Worshipping with United Methodists, 2nd Edition, Hoyt Hickman, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2006.

In Spirit and Truth: United Methodist Worship for the Emerging Church, Ed and Sara Phillips, Order of Saint Luke Publications, Akron, OH, 2006.

Hymns for the Revised Common Lectionary, Dean McIntyre, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN. Available annually.

The Africana Worship Book, Valerie Bridgeman Davis, Ph.D., General Editor; Safiyah Fosua, Associate Editor; Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN.

Abingdon Worship Annual, Brian J. Beu, et al, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Available annually.

“This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion.” Document available for download at <http://www.gbod.org/worship/thisholymystery>. Study guide for adults and older youth available from Discipleship Resources (<http://www.upperroombooks.org>). Study guide for children and younger youth available from Order of Saint Luke Publications, (<http://www.saintluke.org/pubs.html>).

“By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism.” Document available for download at http://www.gbod.org/worship/articles/water_spirit. Study guide available from Discipleship Resources (<http://www.upperroombooks.org>).

Styles of Worship

While United Methodist congregations are expected to use the “Basic Pattern of Worship” as the template for the design of Sunday worship and the services of Holy Communion and the Baptismal Covenant as they are provided in *The United Methodist Hymnal* and *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, both the Basic Pattern and the services themselves provide a high degree

of flexibility for worship planners and congregations to make our church's ritual their own.

How shall we worship? The simple answer is this: the best way you and your congregation possibly can! Remember, worship isn't first *for* you, but *from* you to the one who makes your lives, your salvation, and even your worship possible. And our Triune God has abundantly blessed every congregation with gifts to offer its worship with vitality and integrity.

So as you consider worship style, the first question to ask your worship planning team and your congregation isn't, "What do people like?" or "what will attract new people?" but rather, "What can we do to help the people who gather here, and newcomers who may join us, offer their very best worship to God in our United Methodist heritage? How can we help folks in this congregation worship the One who loves us first, and love the ways we do it?"

You can get some sense of this by watching the body language and listening to the level of confidence in the voices of the people as they offer worship. Are their hearts in what they're doing? As you consider that question, be careful not to assume that loudness and outward enthusiasm are the only measurements of that which is deeply meaningful. Quiet assurance and ease in offering a song, or prayer, or bodily gesture (standing, kneeling, raising hands) are just as important.

Where are the people most engaged? What kind of music seems to flow from them most freely? Where does their body language communicate full commitment, and where does it communicate disengagement, confusion, or apathy?

One of the places where worship planning has led congregations and their worship leaders astray is the assertion that one "style" of worship, in terms of music (classical, pop, folk, country, gospel, alternative, etc.), or in terms of ritual action (meditative, exuberant, call and response, clapping, silence, etc) is superior to others. Proponents of classical music and traditional Anglo-Catholic ritual claim their style is better because it preserves the great traditions of the Western church. Some advocates for "contemporary worship" argue that worship offered in the idiom of contemporary electronic youth culture is the only relevant way for the church to worship today. Both are correct in

naming the gifts of their styles, but each is wrong to assert that one is better than the other.

The question of style in worship comes down to what you and your congregation can offer best. If you have bluegrass musicians, offer a bluegrass service of Word and Table, singing the responses to bluegrass tunes. If your congregation has outstanding multimedia artists, let them use their skills to the glory of God! If your congregation brings distinctive ethnic or cultural practices, draw on and celebrate them! Worship in any style can attract newcomers and retain long-time participants when it is offered with authenticity, excellence, and passion.

All three of these are important. Authenticity means being true to who you are (offering your best gifts) while staying in continuity with the best of the Christian tradition of worship. Excellence is essential in whatever you offer. Rehearsal is always necessary—whether for a choir, a musician, or the exact timing and coordination of lighting, sound, drama, and screen images. A good rule of thumb is that the more complicated the media or ritual actions involved—whether they are low tech (choir, crosses, incense, processions, chalices, and candles) or high tech (computers, projectors, dance routines, and band equipment)—the more time should be planned for rehearsal. Passion flows when people know they're offering their very best. If your worship seems characterized more by apathy than by passion, this is a call for you and your team to listen to your congregation more intently, probably one on one, for clues about what they long to offer in their worship.

Following the Basic Pattern does not lock you or your congregation into or out of any given style. The Basic Pattern is not simply traditional, contemporary, “blended,” “emerging,” or whatever the next worship-style adjective may be. In a very real way, all Christian worship is always blended. It always starts from the teaching, truth, and practices of the Christian tradition that we have inherited, and it adds to or reinterprets them in light of the realities God is showing us in our present day. Starting with the Basic Pattern opens the door for you to have a common foundation and superstructure for worship that draws on the depth and comprehensiveness of the best of the Christian tradition, while celebrating the unique giftedness and insight of the people of your particular congregation.

Exercises

Review the Basic Pattern of worship (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 2). Compare your current order of worship to the Basic Pattern. Discuss how you can help the worship of your congregation live more fully into the Basic Pattern and what plans you may have to help your worship grow in expressing the Basic Pattern over time.

Videotape a worship service in your church from at least two angles (one facing the congregation, and the other facing the chancel area). Review the videotapes with your worship planning team, and discuss what you observe and learn about what your congregation offers well in worship. Watching body language, and listen for voices of those who are worshipping. Note, too, any signs of apathy among individuals or groups in your congregation.

Plan one-on-one interviews, both with people who are clearly engaged in worship and those who appear most disengaged, to ask them what they love and would love to offer in worship. Listen especially for the gifts of the people and their motivations to act or change. Incorporate your learnings and those who have indicated a willingness to offer their gifts into planning for upcoming worship services.

The Role of Scripture in Worship

The Scriptures have always been foundational for the worship of the people of God in a variety of ways. The book of Psalms—and other psalms and prayers throughout the Hebrew Bible—preserves examples of sung or chanted prayers used in the homes, temple, and, later, synagogues of God's people of Israel. A variety of texts in both the Hebrew and Christian Bibles provides guidelines for how specific acts of worship are to be performed. The legal codes give direction for both general and specific situations to enable God's people to live as signs of God's justice, mercy, and truth in the world. The many stories and historical texts in the Bible recall God's interaction with people throughout history. Prophecy in the context of worship especially calls on leaders, both religious and political, to remember

their highest calling—to worship God alone and work consistently for justice for the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, and the oppressed. The teachings of Jesus center his followers to see and live from the kingdom of God at work in the world. And the selection of letters to the churches connect worshippers today with the struggles and the insights of early Christian congregations and their leaders seeking to live as the body of Christ.

So how may we best use the Bible in worship today? The Basic Pattern of Worship calls for us to read at least two Scripture lessons every Sunday. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* encourages the use of the reading plan offered by the *Revised Common Lectionary* (pp. 227-237). This version of the *Revised Common Lectionary* is supported by the online worship planning resources at <http://www.gbod.org/worship>. The *Revised Common Lectionary* enables congregations to experience three readings (usually the Hebrew Bible, an Epistle, and a Gospel) for each Sunday, plus a Psalm that acts as a congregational response to the first reading. The selection of texts in the *Revised Common Lectionary* reflects both the seasons of the Christian Year (see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, p. 224, for a description of the Christian Year) and the need for congregations to experience the Scriptures in worship. Congregations using all of the recommended readings weekly will have heard nearly 70 percent of the entire Bible in the course of the three-year cycle. The majority of United Methodist congregations report using the *Revised Common Lectionary* regularly.

The primary way we encounter Scripture in worship is by reading it. The reading of Scripture needs to be offered and supported in ways that enable everyone in the congregation to hear, understand, and connect with what is being read.

Excellent readers are a must. Even with an outstanding sound system, reading in the public setting of worship generally requires that persons read half as quickly and twice as loud and expressively as they would if they were reading aloud to themselves or to a small group. (Chapter 2 of *Worship Matters, Volume 2*, provides more guidance to help you and your team train persons for this ministry of reading Scripture in worship.)

But for Scripture to be not only heard but experienced deeply by the people of God, reading it aloud well may be only the first

step. Some texts include or suggest imagery that could be reinforced in artwork added to your worship space or projected on a wall or a screen. Other texts include suggestions of soundscapes that could be played through your sound system as the reading is being offered. Still others describe ritual actions by individuals or groups that could provide guidance for either a dramatic presentation by a small group or an enactment by the entire congregation.

The Psalms are a rich source of experiential worship in the Bible. As ancient Hebrew prayer songs, the Psalms invite more than just reading; they also provide a multitude of ways to experience and express our lives before God in prayer and song.

Free Worship Planning Resources

Go to <http://www.gbod.org/worship>, and click on the Worship Planning Helps link under “This Week’s Lectionary” on the right side of the page. Make enough copies of the page to share with the leaders of your worship planning team. Read the Scriptures for the upcoming Sunday together, then use the “Atmospherics” and “Compass Point” sections, along with the other suggested helps, to design a worship service that enables your congregation not only to hear, but to experience one or more of the texts.

Work with your worship planning team to develop a plan for your congregation to experience offering (not just reading or hearing sermons about) the Psalms more deeply in a variety of ways over the next twelve months. Be sure to build a plan for evaluating how your congregation seems best able to offer them over time. Keep in mind that any new worship practice takes time and repetition to become familiar, so allow enough time in each mode for the congregation to learn it well.

The United Methodist Hymnal provides four ways for congregations to sing and pray the texts. One is simply to sing the response together, while offering the words of the psalm as a responsive or antiphonal reading. In a responsive reading, one reader reads the regular print, and the entire congregation joins on the bold print. In antiphonal reading, one part of the congregation reads the regular print, while the other part of the congregation reads the bold print. Another way is for the congregation to sing the

response and chant the psalm in unison, using the psalm tones and instructions for singing found on pages 736-737. Finally, the congregation may sing the response, while a cantor sings the psalm to a related tune. In addition to the psalm settings in our hymnal, there are many other settings that enable congregations to sing the entire psalm more as a hymn than a chant.

Your Congregation's Ministry of Prayer in Worship

Christian prayer is communication and communion with our Triune God. While Scripture provides the bedrock for our worship, prayer is its primary means. Indeed, in a very real sense, all that we offer in worship is prayer.

Still, there are discrete forms and patterns of congregational prayer—ways the congregation offers its priestly ministry of praise and intercession to God. These forms of prayer include collects, psalms (see above for more description), litanies, intercessions, sacramental prayers, and the prayers of the daily office.

Collects are typically unison prayers offered by one voice or by the whole congregation that either “collect” the themes of the Scriptures for the day or “collect” the people to focus on some aspect of God’s work or some kind of need or situation in the world. Both *The United Methodist Hymnal* and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* provide numerous examples of prayers of this type, arranged by topic. *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* provides collects for every Sunday of the Christian year.

Litanies (from a Greek word meaning “praises of the people”) are prayers offered in two or more voices. These are responsive prayers and may often be used as calls to praise or as extended calls to confession. Calls to worship, found in many supplemental worship planning resources, are often in the form of a litany.

Intercession is at the heart of the priestly ministry of Christian congregations. Early Christians found this ministry so central that they restricted it to those who had been baptized and who had no conflicts with each other. While a pastor may offer a “pastoral prayer” in many congregations today, the more authentic Christian practice is for the pastor to lead the entire congrega-

tion help it offer its prayers on behalf of the church and the world in as comprehensive a way as possible. “A Prayer for the Church and the World” (*United Methodist Book of Worship*, p. 495) is one example of a comprehensive form of congregational intercession. The “bidding prayers” at the services of morning and evening praise and prayer (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 877, and *The Faith We Sing* 2201) are others. *Intercessions of the Christian People* offers a form of comprehensive intercessions for every Sunday of the church year, based on the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

The sacramental prayers at Baptism and Holy Communion are often incorrectly thought to be only the prayers of the person who presides at these services. They are not. Even if only the presider is speaking, they are the prayers of the entire congregation. While there are few places in the prayer of thanksgiving over the water at baptism that would make sense to add additional voices, the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion does offer several such opportunities. The passage, “When we turned away, and our love failed” through “and spoke to us through the prophets” is one example. Another would be, “We offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving” through “Christ will come again.” Finally, the congregation may join the presider in praying, “By your Spirit make us one with Christ” through “we feast at his heavenly banquet.” In all of these instances, the certified lay minister, standing to the side of the table, may lead the congregation in offering these parts of its prayers.

The United Methodist Hymnal and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* also offer guidance to help our congregations experience up to four daily services of prayer and praise: at morning, midday, evening, and night. These services, known ecumenically as “the daily office,” provide an opportunity for the congregation to offer praise and worship, either together or in small groups, or wherever they may be scattered throughout the day. The daily office parallels the hours of prayer and sacrifice described in the Hebrew Bible. Though it has been less widely practiced among the Lutheran and Calvinist branches of the Reformation churches, it has been a regular part of Christian spiritual practice in one form or another since the second century at least. While each of the services in our official resources includes suggested readings, you may wish to use or suggest readings from the *Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings*, which provides two texts and a psalm for each day and relate to the Re-

vised Common Lectionary readings for the previous or upcoming Sunday. This and other resources for helping your congregation explore and experience the daily office are provided below.

Praise in Worship Resources

Review your videotapes and several recent worship bulletins with your worship planning team. Assess your congregation's current ministry of prayer and worship, and develop a plan to strengthen its ministry by using additional resources or adding new practices.

Revised Common Lectionary Prayers, Consultation on Common Texts, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 2002.

Intercessions for the Christian People, Gail Ramshaw, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1990.

Two Ways of Praying, Paul F. Bradshaw, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, 1995. Now out of print but often available used or in libraries. This book is invaluable as a primer on the origins and practices of congregational prayer.

Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings, Consultation on Common Texts, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 2005.

A Disciple's Journal, Steven Manskar, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN 2006. An annual publication that includes guidance for small groups or individuals to practice an abbreviated form of the daily office using a daily lectionary based on the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

The Daily Office, (five volumes), Order of Saint Luke Publications, Akron, OH, various years. A complete guide for praying the daily office, with suggested readings and prayers for each day of the liturgical year, plus a suggested calendar for remembering significant "saints" in Christian, and especially Methodist, history.

Praise

If prayer is the primary means of Christian worship, the praise of our Triune God is one of the primary forms our praying takes. Our praise of God is not flattery. We do not praise God to gain something for ourselves. Neither is our praise simply a cathartic outpouring of positive emotion. Rather, praise is our fully mindful and fully embodied response to our own and the world's experience of the presence and goodness of God.

Most often, we express praise through hymns or other music, through prayer (including our responses in sacramental prayer), or through our words or actions of assent to prayer (such as saying or even shouting "Amen"). In each of these ways, our praise is more or less "scripted" in words carefully chosen to continue or reflect the best of the larger Christian tradition of praise. Well-scripted praise allows room for, but does not coerce or require, unscripted responses of praise inspired by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the more frequent experience, however, is that scripted praise makes it easy to "go through the motions" of praise without either emotion or motion.

While, as a worship leader, you should not manipulate the emotions of the congregation, you should help direct the emotional energy of the congregation to express praise well. Here are a few pointers that may help:

- a) **Remember that praise takes time and preparation.** Most of us in the rest of our lives are not "tuned" or "wired" for praise. We cannot flip an internal switch to produce praise immediately, nor turn it off easily once we're into it. Think of your role as worship planner and leader as being, in part, to bring the congregation to the throne of God; to give them time, words, and music, art, or other means to express their praise; and then to lead them to the next act of worship, whether prayer, reading of scripture, or something else.
- b) **Help your congregation understand the words it offers in praise.** This does not mean that you or others should give a lecture on the meaning of every hymn or psalm just before or as you offer it. Such lectures harm the flow of worship more than they help worshippers offer their praise. But it does mean that, from time to time and in a variety of

ways, you will want to provide a brief orientation to texts and/or tunes you offer, especially if they are new or unfamiliar to the congregation. A one-minute introduction to and brief rehearsal of such texts and tunes just prior to the formal beginning of worship, perhaps accompanied by occasional notes in the bulletin or newsletter about more familiar texts, may be all that is necessary.

- c) **Posture matters!** It can either help or hinder praise. In biblical accounts of worship, the posture for praise is standing, eyes upward, arms raised, and, sometimes, hands clapping, feet moving, and bodies dancing. While such a full embodiment of praise is uncommon and would be uncomfortable or unwelcome in many (though by no means all) of our churches, you can encourage the members of your congregation to move toward more bodily connected praise by standing as they are able, raising their gazes (rather than looking down at printed bulletins or hymnals), and lifting their hands to whatever level is comfortable for them.

If all else will not work in your setting, at least help them to raise their gazes. If the words and music are unfamiliar, the old Methodist practice of “lining them out” (a leader says or sings a line that is repeated by the congregation) or newer technology of projecting them on a screen or a wall can help.

Planning Music for Worship

As in general worship planning, planning music for worship involves knowing what musical resources are available and how these may best line up with the Scriptures or theme for the day, as well as the congregation’s capacity to perform the music well. Most United Methodist congregations use *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989) as the basic resource for congregational music, and many are using *The Faith We Sing* (2001) for music and other worship resources not included in the hymnal. The other official hymnals of the denomination, *Mil Voces para Celebrar* and *Come, Let Us Worship*, are also in wide use among Spanish- and Korean-speaking congregations, respectively. *Songs of Zion*, though not an official resource of the church, is also in fairly wide use among African American congregations of several denominations. Each of these resources includes at least a basic

Exercise

Review your videotapes with your worship planning team, and assess your congregation's current level of embodying its praise in worship. Discuss where you find room for growth in embodied praise, and develop a plan to help your congregation experience this growth over time.

Resources for helping congregations understand praise in our ritual:

Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal, Carlton R. Young, The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, TN, 1993. Stories and background for every hymn.

The Worship Resources of the United Methodist Hymnal, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1993. Background and uses for the worship texts found in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Hymns of the United Methodist Hymnal, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1989. Brief hymn stories for every hymn, designed for photocopying for use in bulletins or newsletters.

Scripture index that helps worship planners find appropriate music to accompany the texts for each Sunday.

Significant additional scriptural indices are available in print and online for our official hymnals, *The Faith We Sing* and *Songs of Zion*. Print resources include *Hymns for the Revised Common Lectionary 2007* (available annually) and *The United Methodist Music and Worship Planner* (Abingdon Press, also available annually). The General Board of Discipleship's worship Web site (<http://www.gbod.org/worship>) includes a weekly selection of lectionary-based hymn selections. Those planning several weeks in advance may find that the print resources will be more valuable, as the Web resources are posted only for a limited time.

Often, worship planners may find that the hymns suggested in the above resources are set to tunes that are unfamiliar to the congregation. This is where the Metrical Index, included in most hymnals and song collections, becomes very useful. In *The United Methodist Hymnal*, every hymn includes a meter indication directly under the tune name on the lower right side of the page. This set of num-

bers or letters indicates the number of beats in each line of the verses. Texts with the same meter may be sung to any tune with the same meter.

Hence, while the tune to “Heal Us, Emmanuel, Hear Our Prayer” may be unfamiliar to your congregation, it is in common meter (CM), so it may be sung to the tune of “Amazing Grace,” “O, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” or over twenty other well-known hymns. Singing a familiar tune to an unfamiliar text is one way to help expand your congregation’s worship vocabulary. Just be sure to select a tune that fits the mood of the text you’re singing. Though the meter matches, you would probably not want to sing the Lenten hymn, “Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days,” to the tune of “Joy to the World!”

Many congregations are now using additional resources for congregational music, including a variety of more recent choruses, songs, or song settings not available in the hymnal or *The Faith We Sing*. Certified lay ministers should work with their worship planning team to ensure that whatever music you choose, you are all clear about three issues.

First, the text should have theological integrity. Second, the congregation needs to be able to sing it, and its worship leaders perform it—or be learning to perform it—well. Whether it is a Bach cantata or the latest praise music from the hottest indie band, if the choir cannot sing it or the band cannot play it, it should not be presented in worship until the choir and/or band has mastered it. And third, but not least, all issues of copyright must be properly addressed when using or reproducing any music in worship.

A variety of companies provide licensing services to local congregations at a fee, but these licenses only cover the specific versions of the music in their agreements, and then only under specific circumstances. It is important that you read the copyright information on every piece of music you plan to use or reproduce. If you have any questions about whether the license your congregation has purchased covers your intended use, be sure to talk to the licensing company. Churches are not exempt from copyright law, and worship does not constitute “fair use” to allow a congregation to reproduce the words, music, or images of copyrighted materials. Failure to comply with copyright law is not only illegal, it can expose the congregation to fines large enough to lead to bankruptcy.

The General Board of Discipleship provides several articles online that deal with issues of church music and copyright at http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?loc_id=17,19&act=nav_loc.

Whatever music congregations currently use, worship leaders are right to continue to seek to teach new texts and tunes. To do so well, however, takes patience and careful planning. Most congregations are able to learn one or two new songs a month at most. It is seldom wise to ask a congregation to sing more than one unfamiliar piece in any service. If you will be singing something new, it is a good idea to introduce the text and the tune to the congregation prior to the service, so they can gain some familiarity with it before they sing it “for real.” For fairly simple choruses, this may be all that is needed.

Many congregations sing a new hymn or song several weeks in a row, often in a “hymn of the month” plan to introduce new music. A “hymn of the month” plan may work as follows.

On the first Sunday, a worship leader introduces the hymn by sharing some background information, then a soloist, small vocal ensemble, or choir sings it for the congregation. On the second Sunday, the soloist, small ensemble, or choir sings the hymn again, and worshippers are invited to hum or sing along. On the third Sunday, worshippers are invited to sing the entire hymn, according to their comfort level. By the fourth Sunday, the congregation should know the hymn well enough to sing it with confidence and joy.

The Sacraments

In The United Methodist Church, only ordained elders and licensed local pastors are authorized to preside at the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, with the latter only performed within the context of the congregation or congregations to which they may be appointed. While certified lay ministers may not preside, they may teach the United Methodist understanding of the sacraments and assist those who are presiding in a variety of ways.

Exercise

As a worship preparation team, discuss John Wesley's "Directions for Singing," found on page vii of *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

Develop a plan for evaluating the theological integrity, the singability/playability, and the copyright issues involved in the music you currently offer in worship.

Develop a one-year plan for introducing new music in worship. This will involve deciding which pieces are most important for you to introduce and the best ways to introduce them to your congregation. Remember that most congregations cannot handle more than one or two new pieces per month.

Holy Communion

There are several words and terms used to describe Christian worship at the Table of the Lord. The different words emphasize different aspects of this worship. "Holy Communion" reminds us that here the Holy Spirit makes us "one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world" (p. 10). "Lord's Supper" reminds us that "Christ our Lord invites" us (p. 8), and this is his table. "Eucharist," from the Greek word meaning thanksgiving, refers to our primary action as we come to the table. "And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us" (p. 10). (Quotes are from "A Service of Word and Table I" from *The United Methodist Hymnal*.)

John Wesley taught that Holy Communion is one of the means of grace. Wesley cites the following blessings for all who partake of the Lord's Supper:

- an increase of the grace of God
- communication of "the atoning blood of Christ"
- spiritual grace
- righteousness
- peace
- joy in the Holy Ghost

(Sugden, Vol. 1, pp. 251-3)

One of the distinctive practices of Holy Communion in The United Methodist Church is the “open table,” meaning that all who “earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another” are invited to receive. United Methodists strongly affirm the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion. United Methodists generally use grape juice instead of fermented wine. This is part of our denomination’s traditional concern about alcohol abuse and a desire to eliminate temptation for those who may struggle with alcohol addiction.

“This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion” is the official teaching document of The United Methodist Church on Holy Communion. As such, it is the primary reference to consult for guidance and answers to questions about the theology and practice of Holy Communion in our church. All who lead services of Holy Communion in our church are expected to use the services in *The United Methodist Hymnal* and *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.

The most likely role for certified lay ministers at Holy Communion may be to help prepare and clean the table. Preparing the table may involve securing the elements (bread and wine or grape juice), ensuring that the chalice, paten (plate for the bread), and other Communion ware are thoroughly cleaned and ready for use, and that the appropriate table coverings are in place.

The bread to be used for Holy Communion should be recognizable as bread. The bread may be made of any grain, but it should not include coloring, frosting, nuts, raisins, or other fillings. Gluten-free bread is acceptable for those with gluten allergies, though care should be taken to maintain the symbolic unity of a single loaf.

Grape juice is usually substituted for wine. It is recommended that a single cup or chalice be used for drinking or intinction (dipping pieces of bread into the cup) in order to symbolize the unity of the church.

There is no clinical evidence that using individual



cups reduces the possible spread of disease. Indeed, if each individual cup and its holder are not thoroughly washed and individually dried before and after each use, this method may pose a greater sanitation risk from the accumulation of germs on water spots. If, in your setting, it appears that individual cups must be used, filling them from a single pouring chalice at the time of administration will still express the unity implied in the sacrament.

In a time that has recently experienced SARS and may soon see outbreaks of the avian flu, the importance of proper sanitary precautions should not be understated. According to the Centers for Disease Control's recommendations for non-health-care settings, anyone who is preparing the table or serving should wash his or her hands by wetting them with water, then rubbing them with soap for at least fifteen seconds, then rinsing them prior to handling the bread or cup. If a sink and running water are not available nearby, then provide a clean antibacterial liquid soap dispenser, a pitcher to pour water for wetting and rinsing, a basin to catch the water poured, and individual clean towels for the presider and each server to use, perhaps during the offertory.

Alcohol-based hand rubs may be used instead, but some product labels indicate they should not be used immediately prior to handling food. Read the labels, and use good sense. It is significantly more sanitary and more theologically consistent with our teaching for a server with clean hands to place the piece of bread into the hands of those receiving, rather than expecting each person to tear a piece of bread from the loaf for him- or herself, unless each person receiving is able to wash his her hands immediately prior to touching the loaf.

The coverings for the table may vary to some degree in each congregation. While there is no one right way, the standard ecumenical practice is for the table to be covered with a parament in a color that matches the liturgical season and for the place on the table where the Communion elements will be placed to be covered with a "fair white linen," often called a "corporal," a symbolic reminder of the shroud that enclosed Jesus in the tomb. In most instances, a piece no larger than a standard-sized linen napkin will accommodate a chalice, paten, and pitcher for pouring (if you use one). A white cloth or a cloth matching the color of the liturgical season may cover these items until they are brought out for use in the service.

Another option is for the entire top of the table to be covered in white. In some congregations, particularly those where Communion is offered no more frequently than once per month, the entire chancel area may be covered in white linen. You should learn and discuss the current practices of table covering with your worship leadership team, your supervising minister, and your local congregation, so you know how you may best serve if you are asked to prepare the table.

After Communion, you may also be asked to assist in cleaning up. “This Holy Mystery” strongly encourages the most reverent disposal of the bread and wine/juice. What remains may be consumed at the table, packaged for distribution later that day to those unwillingly absent (more on that below), or returned to the earth by pouring the grape juice on the ground and sharing the leftover bread with birds and other wildlife, as long as this is done with dignity. The bread and wine/juice should not be thrown in a trashcan or simply poured into a sink. Neither should leftovers be frozen or otherwise stored for later use.

Certified lay ministers may “extend the table” to persons unwillingly absent, following a service of Holy Communion led by an authorized presider. This may include those who are homebound, hospitalized, in prison or other institutional settings, or in nursing-home care. The appendix of the study guide edition of “This Holy Mystery” (The Upper Room, www.upperroom.org) includes a service for use in such situations.

Certified lay ministers may preside at a Love Feast, sometimes called an Agape Meal. The Love Feast is a fellowship meal that calls us to remember the meals Jesus shared with his disciples. This meal expresses the community, or *koinonia*, that we share and enjoy as the body of Christ.

In the early church, Love Feast celebrations were closely tied to the Lord’s Supper. The Love Feast consists of prayers, Scripture, sharing or witnessing to the Scripture, passing bread, collecting for the poor, circulating the loving cup (in this case, not wine or grape juice), testimonies, exhortation, and singing. For more information on the Love Feast, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, pages 581-584.

Service of the Baptismal Covenant

As with Holy Communion, the ritual of baptism may be led only by United Methodist elders or persons functioning as licensed local pastors in our churches. Certified lay ministers are not authorized to baptize. While family calendars may have some bearing on the timing of baptism or confirmation, these rites are most appropriately offered during times of major celebration in the life of the church, including Easter, Pentecost, Baptism of the Lord, and the First Sunday of Advent. (Baptism is *not* appropriate on Good Friday or on the Saturday before Easter.) Scheduling baptism to correspond to these occasions wherever possible will enable you and your equipping clergy to create several opportunities for appropriate preparation of candidates and their families throughout the year, and it will allow those being baptized and their families to more easily plan their schedules and participate in the preparation and the celebration.

Persons being baptized are being baptized into Christ and his living body on earth, the church. For that reason, it is appropriately celebrated and witnessed in the gathered community of the church. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* and *The United Methodist Hymnal* both contain services of baptism to follow. "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism" provides a thorough discussion of the meaning and practice of baptism in our church. It is available for free download at http://www.gbod.org/worship/articles/water_spirit and may be purchased as a study guide from Discipleship Resources.

As a certified lay minister, you may assist the presiding clergy with the baptism. You may do this by ensuring that everything needed for baptism is prepared and ready.

Clean towels should be provided. These may or may not be white. Some congregations provide the family with a candle to be lit on the anniversary of the baptism each year. All congregations need to provide an appropriate certificate of baptism to be presented by the pastor at the time of baptism. While certified lay ministers are not authorized to sign these certificates, you may prepare it for signature by the baptizing pastor. Other congregations provide additional keepsakes. Be sure to ask your congregation and the baptizing pastor what they prefer to use and how they would like you to provide it.

In addition to providing for these items, it may be your role to help in preparing the baptismal font and water. The font should be placed where it is visible to the entire congregation, and, if possible, kept in that location. An increasing number of congregations are placing the font near the entrance to the sanctuary as a sign that we enter the church through the waters of baptism. In many of these congregations, clean water is placed in the font prior to every service, except those that will include baptism, so persons can use it to remind themselves of their baptisms as they enter and leave. Others place the font near the pulpit or the Table of the Lord. Wherever the font is placed, it is important that it be thoroughly cleaned before the worship service.

In services that include baptism, water need not be placed in the font until it is poured during the “Thanksgiving over the Water,” as indicated in the baptismal service (see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, p. 90). A certified lay minister may pour the water but should not administer it. Whoever pours or administers the water is encouraged to use a generous amount as a sign of God’s abundant grace and power to save (see the study guide *By Water and the Spirit: Making the Connections for Identity and Ministry*, p. 20).

If baptism is to be done by immersion, it will take some rehearsal by the presiding clergy presiding and the assistant. The person performing the baptism should place one hand high on the baptism candidate’s back and the other on a shoulder or chest, gently push him or her backward into the water, and then bring him or her up quickly so that the person is not left underwater for more than a second or two.

Another option is to have the person kneel, and then lean him or her forward. This is especially helpful when the candidate for baptism is larger than the celebrant and/or assistants.

A very natural place where certified lay assistants can provide help when immersing youth or adults is by standing opposite the pastor in the water and physically helping support the person to be baptized. Give the candidate a clean handkerchief to place over the nose and mouth as they are being lowered into the water.

A natural setting, such as a lake or pond, may be preferable to

a swimming pool. If you are using a natural setting, be sure to rehearse there so you are aware of any issues, such as water temperature and possible drop-offs.

Confirmation is the ritual of public profession of Christian faith using the services of the baptismal covenant. While certified lay ministers are not authorized to preside at services of confirmation or to receive members into the local congregation, they may be involved in organizing mentors for or teaching classes to persons preparing for confirmation and professing membership. Certified lay ministers may lead services of reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant (Baptismal Covenant IV), as long as no professing members are being received in these services.

Excellent resources for studying and teaching about the sacraments are provided below.

This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism. Gayle Carlton Felton, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2005.

Sacraments and Discipleship, Mark Stamm, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2000.

Let Every Soul Be Jesus' Guest: A Theology of the Open Table, Mark Stamm, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2005.

By Water and Spirit: Making Connections for Identify and Ministry, Gayle Carlton Felton, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1997.

Weddings

Certified lay ministers should consult with the appropriate government officials in their states to determine whether they are authorized to preside at weddings. If your state will not allow you to perform the wedding vows, you may still take part in the service by reading Scripture, leading prayers (other than those related to the vows), providing a brief homily, and in other ways you negotiate with your equipping clergy, even though he or she will need to perform the vows and any ritual actions connected directly with them. If you do preside, remember that the wedding service needs to follow the ritual provided in *The United Metho-*

dist Hymnal and *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. (See Judicial Council ruling 694.)

Same-sex blessings, unions, and marriages are not authorized in our church or on any church premises. Premarital counseling is the responsibility of the equipping clergy assigned to the congregation you serve.

Whether you preside or otherwise participate in the wedding, plan to attend, and assist as appropriate during the rehearsal. Helping everyone who will be part of the wedding service learn what they will do when puts everyone at a greater sense of ease on “the big day.” You may also wish to ask your equipping clergy or another neighboring pastor if you may sit in on a couple of rehearsals (with the couple’s permission) to learn, and perhaps practice, some rehearsal techniques.

Funerals

Either laity or clergy may conduct funerals. Services and many other resources for funerals may be found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. The introductory essay to the section on Services of Death and Resurrection provides valuable guidance in understanding the theology and practice of these services in our church. (See pp. 139-140.)

While the service may take place in a variety of settings, it is always for us a service of worship that follows the Basic Pattern of Worship and, while strongly acknowledging and leaving room for the expression of human grief, focuses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of resurrection for his disciples. This is why *The United Methodist Book of Worship* strongly suggests that the casket be closed prior to the beginning of the service and remain closed thereafter.

It will be important for you to spend significant time with the family prior to the funeral and, if at all possible, prior to the visitation if there is to be one before the funeral. Listen for important themes in the life of the person, as well as significant stories that you may share with the family’s permission. The sections of the funeral service called “Naming” and “Witness” will enable you and family or friends, as appropriate, to share important events and stories. Remember that the funeral service is neither simply

a eulogy (an extended speech in praise of the life of the deceased) nor an evangelistic service, but rather an opportunity for the church to gather in worship to share its sorrow, support, and hope in God with those who grieve.

It will be good for you to meet the funeral directors in your area early in your ministry, preferably prior to the time you or members in your congregation need them. Funeral directors will be glad to share a description of their services, the kinds of options they offer families, and how they set up space for viewings and funerals at their locations or at your church. Some families may look to you for advice on selecting a funeral service. If you understand the various services and providers available, you will be in better position to help them make in-formed decisions.

Finally, the importance of advanced planning for end-of-life needs cannot be underestimated. Encourage members of your congregation to explore and understand their options for end-of-life care, living wills, organ donation, trusts, funerals, cremations, and burial services. Our call to be wise stewards of the gift of life extends to the ends of our lives as well. Attorneys in your congregation, hospital chaplains, funeral directors, and financial planners may all be good sources for you and your congregation to live as those prepared to die.

Local Traditions

Nearly every congregation has its own local traditions in worship and community life. You may discover some of these by asking leaders in the congregation how they usually celebrate various events. It is particularly wise to ask leaders about major celebrations, such as Easter, Christmas, and All Saints' Day, as well as civil observances such as Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, and Memorial Day. It is also good to ask about such activities as how ushers, readers, prayer leaders, and communion stewards are trained and selected, and what roles they play in the service.

Unless you ask, some people may assume that their observances are common everywhere and that you automatically know how to do things their way. You will discover other local traditions only by experiencing them with the congregation. Wherever you may do so with integrity, it is wise to find ways to honor and support the local traditions of the congregation you serve.

Including All Ages in Worship

You and your worship team should discuss how people of all ages, cultures, and abilities can both participate and feel valued in the worship services you offer together. In many congregations, whether intentionally or not, worship is designed as an adults-only, or middle-age, or seniors-only experience. Age is no barrier to the font or the table. Nor should it be a barrier to the fullest possible participation in the entire service of worship.

It will be important for you to work with your worship planning team to become aware of possible age-related barriers to full participation in your worship services. If you made a video of your service from two angles, as described in a previous exercise, review the video together, looking for signs of whether and how well people of various ages appear to be participating in worship.

Are children and youth engaged and offering leadership at appropriate places? Do you see places where a child, youth, or older adult could offer leadership but isn't currently doing so? If there is a children's sermon, does its message and content really connect with children, or does it seem to be aimed more at adults? Are older adults able to read from the hymnal, bulletin, and screens, or do they seem to have difficulty seeing? Are people of all ages connecting with the sermon and the music in age-appropriate ways? Does it seem as if the content and presentation of the music, sermon, and other rituals are connecting well with people in age-appropriate ways?

To be sure, there are some instances where it becomes difficult for some congregations members to be part of the entire corporate worship experience. Churches do well to provide safe nurseries for infants and special care for persons, whether children or adults, whose mental or behavioral status may make it difficult for them or others to worship. Some churches develop a separate learning/worship setting concurrent with the sermon during the regular worship service for younger preschool children. In these settings, the children are often brought back to share Communion and the benediction with the entire church family.

But if all elements of the service, including the sermon, are designed with all of the participants in mind, even young children

will find ways to connect. Simply being with a parent, guardian, or grandparent as she or he sings hymns, reads or responds to the Scriptures and sermon, prays the Lord's Prayer, or receives Holy Communion can have a powerful impact on a younger person.

The United Methodist Hymnal and *The Faith We Sing* each offer a wide variety of hymns that are written for an elementary-school-age vocabulary. You may want to ask a teacher, preferably at the elementary level, to look through these resources and identify the hymns that children in grades one and higher could read and understand easily. If you have children attending worship, it would be wise to sing these hymns frequently.

Resources for Including Children in Worship

Forbid Them Not: Involving Children in Sunday Worship, Carolyn C. Brown, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1994. This resource comes in three volumes, one for each lectionary year (A, B, and C).

Always in Rehearsal, James Ritchie, Jr., Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2005. A foundational resource designed to help leaders think through the inclusion of children in the worshipping life of the congregation.

Children Worship! MaryJane Pierce Norton, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2005. Thirteen-session worship-education resource to help congregations incorporate young children into the worshipping community.

You Can Preach to the Kids, Too! : Designing Sermons for Adults and Children, Carolyn C. Brown, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1997.

GBOD's Children's Ministries Web site: <http://www.gbod.org/children>

Resources for Including Older Adults in Worship

Designing an Older Adult Ministry, Rick Gentzler, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1999.

GBOD's Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries Web site: <http://www.gbod.org/coa/>

Biblical Reflections: Worship

Psalm 95:1-7

O come, let us sing to the Lord;

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all Gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth
the heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it
and the dry land, which his hands
have formed.

O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

Reflection Questions

“Let us make a joyful noise...” is a call to energetic worship. Are you enthusiastic in worship? What are the ways you can help others view worship as a celebration?

“Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!” What role does Praise play in most worship services? How can we more faithfully praise God in worship?

How do we show God our thankfulness in worship? What can be done to emphasize our thanksgiving?

“...come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!” Worship should be a time of submission to God. Think about ways to show God our sincere submission to our Creator. How can this be conveyed in worship?

Prayer

Gracious God, angels sang at the birth of the Christ. They offered glad tidings to those who needed comfort and hope. Those who heard the angels responded in joy.

Open us to receive your good news of redemptive grace today so that we may also sing, speak, and praise you. Open us to believe and live in your love. Banish our fears, and encourage us to witness to you as people who follow the Christ. Amen.

Section 2: Preaching

Facilitator's Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to prepare the CLM for faith-sharing in preaching the Gospel for an understanding of exegesis, sermon preparation, and delivery.

Learning Goals

At the end of this course, the participant will be able to:

1. Discuss the purpose of preaching.
2. Understand the appropriate use of Scripture in developing a sermon.
3. Make skillful use of print and electronic resources in sermon preparation.
4. Demonstrate the ability to design a sermon appropriate for the setting and the text.
5. Demonstrate skills in sermon delivery.
6. Show growth through the evaluation of sermons and sermon delivery.

Module Plan

Begin with prayer, both individual and as a group, as each person is comfortable praying aloud. Work through the material, either by reading it together or noting each section if the material has been read previously. Do the exercises located throughout, sharing insights and questions as you discuss the material.

Materials Needed

1. One copy of the workbook for each person.

2. Bibles (several translations), Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible handbooks, *Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, maps, printed copies of Internet preaching resources.
3. Whiteboard or large white paper and markers on which to notate special insights, questions, etc.

Participant's Guide

Introduction

As a certified lay minister, you may be required to preach often. Prior to your assignment to a pastoral charge, discuss how often you will provide pulpit supply. This should be covered as a part of the covenant formed with the Mutual Ministry Team and your equipping clergy person. (See Module 1.)

There is no one definition of preaching that fully describes its function or importance. Some scholars speak of the preacher as a witness, describing what he or she has experienced and knows to be true; others think of the preacher as a messenger, bearing a word that comes from God. Some see the preacher as the group therapist convening patients on Sunday morning; others assume the persona of the storyteller who relives events from olden times. Fred Craddock, a major voice in preaching, offers a helpful definition for our purposes: *preaching is making the revelation of God present and appropriate to the hearers.*¹

Preparation

Your preparation for preaching did not begin with a speech class; it began with your life and witness as a mature Christian on a journey toward Christian perfection, to use Wesleyan language. It continues as you turn your attention to a particular text with an open heart, ready to hear what the text offers you and the congregation for your journey together. Part of your preparation is to *experience* the text that you plan to share with your congregation.

Robert Mulholland, author of *Shaped by the Word*², encourages us to rethink the way we read and study the Bible. Many of us were taught to dissect the text, squeezing it for hidden meanings and nuances until we felt that we had mastered all that there was to learn about the passage. By contrast, Mulholland suggests that we sit under the text as one sits under a tutor, allowing the text to tell us (individually and collectively) about ourselves. Instead of reading the word, allow it to read us! Such an

¹ Fred Craddock, *Preaching*, p. 51

² Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word*

approach produces sermons that hold the potential of being part of a larger encounter between God and the people in the context of worship.

Personal Preparation: Read, Pray, Meditate, Imagine

Spend time reading the lectionary texts (or other texts that you have selected) for the week you will preach. Pray for guidance.

As you prepare to write your sermon, you might think your first step is to study biblical commentaries and other aids that explain the passage. Wrong! God speaks to us through the Scriptures and through prayer.

Read the Scripture out loud several times. Read it from several different Bible translations, and note any differences you discover. Take a walk, or sit and meditate on the Scripture passage. As you prayerfully approach the text, think about the Bible characters you encounter.

Remember that the Bible was written about real people, not caricatures. Think about how the people you encounter felt, spoke, or reacted. What do you think motivated them to respond the way they did? What emotions influenced their actions and thinking? Were they believers of great faith, of some faith, or of no faith at all? How would it feel to walk in their shoes? How would you react?

Experience the passage through the eyes of one of the characters. How does it feel to be Mary, the mother of Jesus—teenaged and pregnant—now forced to travel to pay taxes to a foreign government? How does it feel to be Zacchaeus, up a tree, perhaps hoping that no one would notice that he was present?

What was it like for Jairus to bury the pride of his religious office in order to ask Jesus to come to his home to heal his dying daughter? What if you were Mary, Zacchaeus, Jairus, or even Nathan preparing to confront King David about adultery and murder! Remember, the Bible was written to address the issues of real people, with real emotions.

Make notes from your own time of prayerful study.

- What did you notice or realize for the first time about this text and its characters? For example, one day it occurred to me that the woman with an issue of blood in Mark 5 technically rendered Jesus unclean when she touched the hem of his garment, thus creating a problem for Jairus, the religious leader. Once this happened, should he have allowed an unclean man to touch his daughter?
- Do you have any questions about the sequence of events? Was it the whirlwind or the chariot and horses that carried Elijah into heaven in 2 Kings 2?
- Were you troubled by potential relationship problems between characters in the selected text? Was it so wrong for the elder brother to be resentful of his younger brother's reception in the Story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15?
- What else do you remember about the Bible characters from previous times of study? For instance, do you remember anything from Mary Magdalene's past in Luke 8?

The sermon begins with your own prayerful study of the text. After you have lived with the text and allowed it to speak to you, then you are ready to see what others are saying about the text.

Sermon Resources

There are many fine resources available in Christian bookstores that will enhance your sermon preparation. We recommend that you begin with the following basic resources:

Bibles. *The New Revised Standard Translation* is currently being used in many United Methodist churches. Consider comparing this standard translation with other recent translations like *The New International Version* or with modern versions, such as

Basic Resources for Your Personal Library

- Bibles (several translations)
- A Bible dictionary
- A Bible handbook
- *Manners and Customs of Bible Times*
- Maps
- Commentaries

The Good News Bible, The New Living Bible, or The Message, that attempt to render the ancient text in everyday language. If members of your congregation use the King James or New King James Versions, make sure that you are aware of their variations as you prepare your sermon.

Bible Dictionary. A Bible dictionary helps with word meanings and identifies people and places.

Bible Handbook. Look for a Bible handbook that provides background information on the books of the Bible, chapter themes, and other “big picture” information that is helpful in interpreting smaller portions of Scripture.

Manners and Customs of Bible Times. We are several millennia removed from the culture and customs recorded in the Bible. A book describing biblical customs will help you understand the significance of some details recorded in the text.

Maps. Where was it? How far away was it? Was it Gentile or Jewish territory? Who lives there now? A good set of biblical maps, found either in a study Bible or in a separate resource, is indispensable. As you study the Bible passage, note carefully where it occurred and what was unique about the geographical setting. How did the geographical setting affect what was happening in the passage?

Commentaries. Bible commentaries are expensive. Before purchasing one, find out what is available in your church and public libraries. Consider asking an ordained or licensed pastor for suggestions regarding which texts you might purchase for your own use. If your church does not have a biblical commentary in

The General Board of Discipleship maintains an excellent worship resources Web site at <http://www.umcworship.org>. Another excellent site is <http://www.textweek.com>. The indexes at these two sites should lead you to a wealth of practical resources for your sermon. If you do not own a computer, most public libraries have computers available for public use at little or no cost.

Distribute sample copies of resources for the next Sunday's lectionary readings from both of these sites.

its library, you may want to request that it consider an annual budget line item for the purchase of commentaries and other Bible study aids.

Internet Resources. The list of quality Internet resources for preaching is growing exponentially. There are many excellent Internet resources that may prove helpful as you develop your sermon. Some sites even include sample sermons. These are helpful, but do not be tempted to use one of these in place of writing your own sermon. There is no substitute for an authentic sermon preached by an authentic Christian.

Study resources are designed to enhance, not replace, your own personal prayerful consideration of the text. Evaluate what you read, and decide whether you agree or disagree with how biblical scholars interpret the text. Look for particular words in the text that have powerful meanings, and discover how they have been rendered in various Bible translations. Use your own head and heart as you begin to develop a deeper understanding of the Scripture.

Exercise

In pairs, discuss the kinds of study resources that you find most helpful.

What am I looking for? When Philip encountered an Ethiopian finance minister reading the book of Isaiah on the road to Gaza in Acts 8, he asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” At the end of your sermon, people present should be able to understand something about one of the texts that they heard that morning. While preparing your sermon, ask yourself the following questions:

Why was this written? For example, the Apostle Paul’s letters to the churches were usually in response to a question, situation, or even an argument taking place. The events in the Gospel were written as a report of what eyewitnesses had seen. Often, the first chapter of a book in the Bible will give you clues as to why the book was written. For example, in the preface to Luke’s Gospel, Luke explains that his Gospel was written to share the results of his personal research with his friend Theophilus.

What do the words mean? At times, the language of the Christian church can be confusing. When the Bible mentions “salvation” or “grace,” what did those words mean to the original audience? Are there differences between what we think the original writers meant and the way we have come to interpret theological terms?

What is the context? The Bible was written in a particular region of the world to a particular audience in ways that address universal life concerns. Though we are looking for those universal elements, the context in which they are discussed is also important. Therefore, geography, world history, and culture are important elements of your study. The fact that Joseph and Mary were required to go to Bethlehem to pay their taxes becomes more meaningful in light of the fact that this tax money went to the Romans, who occupied Israel at the time.

Interpreting the Text

This is where we move from learning what the text says to what the text *means*. There is no objective reading of the Bible. Biblical texts are best seen through the lens of personal experience and local context.

What is the text saying to you? What does this text suggest about your relationships with God and with people here and everywhere? When the text reads you, to use Dr. Mulholland’s imagery, what does it reveal? Does the text change you in any way? Every encounter with the Bible holds the potential for positive change.

What is this text saying in my context? In other words, what might people in my faith and local communities hear in this text? What is going on in people’s lives, and how do they need to hear the Word to help them deal with their joys and sorrows?

Since most certified lay ministers serve part-time, you may not have a lot of time to listen to your parishioners and will therefore need to develop some creative listening tools. As you make your home or hospital calls, listen carefully to what people are telling you. Read the local newspaper, and see what is going on in your community. You might even develop an online forum, where people can give you sermon feedback and ideas.

One pastor maintains a list of all the people in her congregation, with notes about what is currently going on in their lives. This has become an important sermon-development tool that shows the congregation she is listening to them. A word of caution, however: confidential information must remain confidential!

Finally, what is this text saying to the entire human family? We are not alone in this world; we share the planet with billions of people with whom we hold much in common. The Bible transcends age and time, ethnicity and politics, and it speaks to the universal human predicament. What about this text is common to all of us, in spite of our differences?

Preparing Your Sermon

There are as many techniques for preparing sermons as there are people who write them. Kennon Callahan, in his book *Preaching Grace*, suggests that the best technique begins with an awareness of the preacher's working style.³ Some people study all week and write their sermons at the end of their preparation time, while others put their sermons together in bits and pieces along the way. Some people set appointed times to spend with their sermons each day, while others work marathon-style from start to finish, emerging with complete sermons after a night (or two) of wrestling. There is no one correct way to write a sermon. It is more important that you discover what works best for you.

Sermon Construction

There are many ways to put a sermon together. As you develop your preaching skills, you will become adept at determining the most effective way to put yours together. There are, however, certain elements that should be present in most of your sermons.

A Clear, Understandable, Relevant Main Point

What's the point? Why are you planning to preach this sermon? After spending time with the text in prayer and meditation, studying the text, and considering the context in which your sermon

³ Kennon Callahan, *Preaching Grace*

Sermon Construction Checklist

- Clear, understandable, relevant main point
- Good introduction
- Relevant illustrations
- Summary (both within the sermon and at the end)
- Memorable conclusion
- Appropriate invitation

will be preached, it is time to identify *one main point* for your sermon.

Many sermons lose impact because they attempt to cover too many points in a short period of time. It will be impossible to share all that you have gained from a week or more of prayerful study. Good memorable sermons focus on one major point that is illustrated in as many ways as it takes to convey its meaning.

A Good Introduction

Begin well. The opening illustration sets the tone for the entire sermon. What do you need to do or say to prepare the congregation for your main point? Be deliberate in planning your first and last sentences. You only have one chance to catch everyone's attention.

Relevant Illustrations

Look for clear, relevant, tasteful ways to help the congregation understand your main point. Sermon illustrations need not be limited to an oft-told story, a joke, or a news article. There are innumerable ways to illustrate a sermon. Think of creative ways to illustrate your main point and any subpoints you may have.

Consider using music. Invite worshippers to sing portions of hymns at different points throughout the sermon. Write a portion of your sermon in poetic rhyme or in rap, and invite young peo-

ple to accompany that portion with instruments. Write a chorus that the congregation can read from the printed bulletin at a specific time. Try writing a sermon based on a psalm text that includes prayers, hymns, and other responses found in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Think of projecting media, such as PowerPoint presentations, as illustration tools. Instead of projecting your sermon outline, use images, sounds, and media clips that illustrate your main point. These are just a few examples of ways to illustrate your sermon. The sermon never has to sound the same Sunday after Sunday. The Bible uses a wide variety of literary forms, and these can and should be reflected in sermon preparation.

Summaries

Summaries at the end of complex sections or at the end of the sermon are good for both preacher and listener. Summarization gives the preacher the opportunity to list the points that were presented, and it offers an additional opportunity for clarification.

Summaries are also helpful for many listeners. These days, a number of worshippers come to church with pad and pencil, expecting both an outline that they are able to follow and main points that are clear and understandable.

A Memorable Conclusion

You only have one opportunity to bring the sermon to a lasting conclusion. A conclusion answers the question, “So what?” Many preachers know how to prepare sermons, but do not know how to end them. They drag on and on, repeating themselves, until the sermon seemingly runs out of gas.

A sermon is more than an interesting exposition of biblical facts and character sketches. It answers the question, “What does the sermon imply for us present today?” This is your final opportunity to make your main point relevant to the listener.

An Appropriate Invitation

If a conclusion answers the question, “So what,” then an invita-

tion answers the question, “Now what?” At the end of your sermon, offer ways for members of the congregation to apply any invitation implicit in the text.

The text shapes invitations. Does it invite people to express hospitality or to care for the needs of the poor? Does it invite people to forgive one another or to experience God’s forgiveness? Does it invite people to embrace a new lifestyle or to share their faith with the neighbors? Does it invite people to faith in God through Jesus Christ? Though you may be preaching to the baptized, do not ignore this invitation when it appears in the text. There are times when even the baptized feel moved to respond to a call to discipleship.

The invitation is also shaped by the context. For example, a sermon on the prodigal son might suggest that a congregation think of ways to receive a former church member who has been released from prison. A sermon on the Gadarene demoniac may challenge another congregation’s attitudes toward a member who secretly struggles with mental illness. At another church, a sermon on forgiveness might pierce the hearts of feuding families. To repeat, the invitation is shaped by the context. What could members of these congregations do at the end of a sermon?

Your relationship with the congregation is another factor demanding attention. How much do you know about the worship style of the congregation, and how well does the congregation know or trust you? If you are the assigned leader of the congregation, think of the invitation at the end of your sermon as the beginning point of pastoral care.

For example, if you preach a sermon on forgiveness to the congregation with feuding families, be prepared to make pastoral visits to both sides of the great divide. If you are a visiting preach-

Invitations Are Shaped by the Text

How have you experienced invitations given at the end of sermons? Has an invitation ever touched your heart? Has an invitation ever made you uncomfortable? Discuss the connection between preaching and encouraging persons to engage in spiritual formation.

er, your invitation will probably be limited to a time of prayer at the end of the sermon. Whether you are visiting or the assigned leader in residence, be alert for opportunities to invite worshippers into deeper relationships with God and each other.

There are many ways to invite worshippers to respond to the sermon's message. You may want to give them some quiet time to pray silently in the pews. Another way is to sing a hymn that reflects the message of your sermon, inviting the worshippers to begin singing while seated, but then to stand as the word or words are sung that most reflect their hearts at that moment. Other times, you may wish to provide pieces of paper on which worshippers can record their thoughts and prayers, perhaps bringing them forward to the Communion table or rails.

Be sure to plan how you will invite responses to your sermon, and know what you will do if some choose to respond. It takes good planning and a thorough understanding of your congregation to know which sermon-response styles work best. This is an excellent topic to discuss with your ministry planning team.

Delivery

How will you deliver your sermon? Options include a written manuscript, an outline, or from memory. A written manuscript allows you to perfect your thoughts before presenting the sermon. If you decide to preach directly from the manuscript, it should be double-spaced. Some preachers use larger print or color-coded areas of the presentation copy of their sermons. Practice reading your sermon several times before the worship service so that you may maintain some eye contact with your congregation. A general rule is that about five 8.5" x 11" sheets of double-spaced text will provide you with a fifteen- to twenty-minute sermon. One benefit of a written manuscript is that you can give a copy of it to a parishioner or a shut-in.

Some preachers prefer using sermon outlines. An outline lets you note key points and words without writing out each sentence. If you are comfortable with public speaking, an outline might be right for you. Some preachers perfect their thoughts in a manuscript and then prepare an outline for use at the pulpit.

It is becoming increasingly common to preach without notes.

Doing so does not mean that you do not carefully prepare your sermon. In fact, you will need more preparation to use this style well.

When you preach without notes, don't worry about memorizing every word of your sermon. Think in terms of memorizing your sermon outline and briefing yourself on the main ideas that go with each part of the outline. Remember that you are not reciting a sermon, but interacting with members of your congregation. The benefits of this presentation style are increased non-verbal communication with the congregation and the ability to adjust the sermon as you watch for signs of understanding from your congregation.

There are three keys to delivering your sermon effectively: practice, practice, practice! Your congregation should not be the first to hear your sermon. Preach it to the birds in the woods, your dog in the family room, or the wall calendar in your office. Even better, if you live near the church, go into the sanctuary on Saturday, and preach it to the pews. Note passages that go well and those that need a little more refinement. Practice will help your presentation on Sunday morning sound much more polished.

When using a manuscript or notes, some preachers find it helpful to color-code various sections for emphasis. Using colors gives you an opportunity "to look ahead" and prepare yourself for areas that need special emphasis or for relevant illustrations like music or video.

Practice what you will do with your hands. Beginning preachers often clasp each side of the pulpit and simply hold on! You may want to practice in front of a mirror to find natural postures and gestures. Have a friend or relative videotape one of your sermons. Then privately review it, and evaluate your posture and gestures.

When the Unexpected Happens

Few things ever go as planned. There will be moments at the pulpit when your nose unexpectedly runs or a fly lands on your forehead. Keep tissues under the pulpit for such times. If something truly funny happens, acknowledge it to the congregation,

and then continue with your message. If a fire or police siren suddenly sounds loudly, simply stop and wait until the siren ends. The same is true for outside radio transmissions that might somehow be heard over your sound system.

Then there are those infrequent times when someone in the congregation has a medical emergency during your sermon (or during some other part of the worship service). If this happens, retain your composure, and let trained emergency medical professionals do their work. It may be appropriate to suspend the order of worship and have the accompanist quietly play hymns while asking the congregation to pray silently in their pews. Your congregation will be looking to you for spiritual leadership during such an event, so be especially mindful of their concerns and needs, as well as those of the person in medical crisis.

The preparation described above takes time, but think of time as your friend. As you preach, the task will become a little easier each week, and, in time, the preaching challenge will become the preaching skill.

Evaluation

Pay attention to both the verbal and nonverbal feedback that listeners give you about your preaching. What do they say as they leave the sanctuary? Do they appear to be attentive or bored while you are preaching?

Develop an evaluation tool designed to give you helpful feedback. Periodically, ask different members of the congregation to complete it and give you the results. Ask questions about content, delivery, and sermon style, as well as whether the sermon was helpful to them or not.

An excellent way to evaluate your sermon is to have someone videotape your preaching, and then view it with your ministry team. Discuss what you see and how you can improve. Do not be afraid of constructive criticism.

If public speaking terrifies you or if you simply want to learn how to present your sermons more effectively, consider taking a public-speaking course at a nearby community college, enrolling in a Dale Carnegie class, or joining a toastmasters group.

The Occasional Sermon

From time to time, you will be asked to preach a sermon other than the typical Sunday morning worship sermon. See the “Worship” section of this resource for ideas about crafting eulogies.

An increasing number of couples are requesting a short sermon as part of the Service of Holy Matrimony. Other opportunities for the occasional sermon include school baccalaureate services, prison ministries, nursing homes, and civic celebrations and observances.

Exercise

In small groups, discuss ways to select the text for a funeral sermon, a wedding homily, or a sermon at a school event, like a baccalaureate service. Pay particular attention to the fact that many non-Christians attend these services.

Discuss ways to be faithful to the Gospel in these situations, yet respectful of other cultures, faiths, and peoples.

Resources

Faith Sharing Revised and Expanded, Eddie Fox and George Morris, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1996.

From Your Heart to Theirs: Delivering an Effective Sermon, Tony Franks and David Carroll, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2007.

Go Preach, John “Jack” Gilbert, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2002.

Preaching, An Essential Guide, Ronald J. Allen, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2002.

Additional Resources

Imagining a Sermon, Thomas H. Troeger, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1990.

Preaching, Fred Craddock, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1985.

Preaching Grace, Kennon L. Callahan, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1999.

Shaped by the Word, M. Robert Mulholland Jr., The Upper Room, Nashville, TN, 2001.

The View from the Pew: What Preachers Can Learn from Church Members, Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 2004.

Biblical Reflections: Preaching

II Timothy 3:16-4:2

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message, **be persistent** whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and **encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching**.

Reflection Questions

1. “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching...” In what ways will you seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit when using Scripture passages in sermon preparation?

2. How have you been “equipped for every good work” and encouraged? How will you equip and encourage others?

3. Think about what being “persistent” means to you in your ministry. How will you stay the course? Where will you be able to find support?

Prayer

Come, divine Interpreter,
Bring me eyes thy book to read,
Ears the mystic words to hear,
Words which did from thee proceed,
Words that endless bliss impart,
Kept in an obedient heart.

All who read, or hear, are blessed,
If thy plain commands we do;
Of thy kingdom here possessed,
Thee we shall in glory view
When thou comest on earth to abide,
Reign triumphant at thy side.

Charles Wesley, 1762

Section 3: Faith Formation and Discipleship

Facilitator's Guide

Part One: Your Personal Journey and the Primary Task of the Local Congregation

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to understand the process of faith formation from both an individual and a corporate perspective.

Learning Goals

At the end of this section, participants will be able to:

- Reflect on their own journeys of faith and discuss ways they have influenced their discipleships.
- Describe the primary task of the local congregations to which they are assigned.

Module Plan

- Begin and end with prayer.
- Read the material.
- Complete the assignments. (**Note:** CLMs will need to share the questions ahead of time with MMT members so they can prepare their responses as well.)
- After completing the assignments, meet with the MMT to share ideas.

Required Texts

None for this section.

Part Two: Evangelism

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to explore the meaning of faith-sharing from both the responsibilities of the individual and of the congregation.

Learning Goals

At the end of this section, participants will be able to:

- Describe the evangelistic role of the local congregation
- Distinguish the difference between being an “evangelist” and being a “witness”
- Articulate a personal witness in the “GRACE” method of faith-sharing

Module Plan

- Begin and end with prayer.
- Read the section material and the following selections from the required texts: Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6 from *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*.
- Print out the material on the noted Web site links.
- Complete the assignments

Required Texts

The Faith-Sharing Congregation: Developing a Strategy for the Congregation As Evangelist, Roger K. Swanson and Shirley F. Clement, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1996.

Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation, Revised and Expanded, H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1996.

The Faith-Sharing New Testament with the Psalms, H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris, Preparers, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1996.

Part Three: Membership

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to examine the ways in which people are incorporated into the membership of the local congregation and determine how these ways meet basic human needs.

Learning Goals

- Become acquainted with the membership system of the local congregation
- Be able to describe the system used by your own congregation, including its rituals and ceremonies
- Assess the benefits and drawbacks of the current system

Module Plan

- Begin and end with prayer.
- Read this material and Chapters 3 and 4 of *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*.
- Complete the assignment, and share the results with your Mutual Ministry Team.

Required Text

The Faith-Sharing Congregation: Developing a Strategy for the Congregation As Evangelist, Roger K. Swanson and Shirley F. Clement, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 1996.

Part Four: Discipleship

Purpose

The purpose of this section is to explore the traditional means of faith formation in the local congregation.

Learning Goals

- Discover how the habits of discipleship formation are taught and reinforced
- Apply a variety of approaches through the teaching role, Bible study, Christian education, and small-group ministries

Module Plan

- Begin and end with prayer.
- Read this material and extra selections as noted.
- Complete the assignments as listed.

Required Texts

From the collection, *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About...*:

- “Theology”
- “Faith Language”
- “The Bible”
- “Teaching”
- “Curriculum”
- “Living the Faith”

Accountable Discipleship: Living in God’s Household, Steven W. Manskar, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, 2000.

Participant's Guide

Part One: Faith Formation and Discipleship: Your Personal Journey and the Primary Task of the Local Congregation

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).

We're familiar with these verses from Scripture. They are excellent definitions of faith and statements of the relationship between trials and faith development.

Scripture tells us how people came to faith upon personal encounters with Jesus, but how does faith develop in an individual today? What do children need in order to nurture their natural curiosity and questioning? How is it that some young adults fall victim to cults and fringe groups, yet others turn to denominations and become active members of local churches? What do we say to an adult who considers his or her lifelong participation in a local church as lacking something when comparing it to the radical conversion of a friend who came to faith in late adulthood?

Faith develops at different rates for different people, and numerous theories propose various stages of the formation process. Some correlate faith development to age-related human development. Others correlate the process to cognitive or psychological development. Perhaps a simple means of describing individual faith development would be to see it in three phases: conforming, probing, and growing.

Conforming faith. This level of faith is an accepting one, because it looks to others for cues as to what to believe and how to behave as determined by the community of faith. The need for a sense of belonging is reflected in this level of faith, and participating in familiar activities provides comfort. We typically see

children living at this stage, trusting parents and the people and things they know for their sense of what is right and wrong.

Probing faith. This stage of faith development comes when the individual begins to question previously held assumptions, which gave comfort in the conforming stage. This pursuit of answers can lead people in many directions as they encounter and test various theologies to find what works for them. If the individual's experiments do not produce satisfactory answers, the result is a choice of no theology. It is common to see this phase of behavior in youth and young adults.

Growing faith. At this stage of development, the individual has sorted out the basics and chooses to be a person of faith. This stage will last throughout the remainder of the person's life. It has the capacity to be constantly on the rise, increasing in knowledge and application and possibly exercising leadership and mentoring for persons at earlier stages of faith development. A common term for this stage is "spiritual maturity."⁴

Assignment

Contact the members of your Mutual Ministry Team, and share with them the questions below. Record your answers to these questions in the space provided. When the team gathers, each person will share his or her responses to the questions.

1. Think back on your own faith development. Describe your life and family situation during your conforming faith stage. What was church participation like for you?

⁴ Based on: John H. Westerhoff III's *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, Revised Edition, Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000.

- Nurturing them in the development of their faith, and
- Sending them out as disciples for the transformation of the world.

If we were to correlate this to the life of the church, the progression would be expressed as:

- Evangelism—people are sought and invited to experience the community of faith
- Membership—people are brought into fellowship with the body of Christ and incorporated into a specific community of faith
- Discipleship—people are taught the spiritual disciplines and how to live lives of obedience following the example of Jesus Christ
- Ministry—people are equipped for service and supported as they serve within the church and through outreach ministries beyond the local congregation.⁵

We must exercise caution to not see these four functions as discrete elements. While we can certainly see people moving through this pattern, the boundaries between the four functions are permeable and flexible. Not all persons go through a timed movement, spending, for example, one month coming into the membership of a local church, and one year acquiring the spiritual disciplines.

Faith formation is the chief work of the local congregation. All phases of the primary task must be functioning effectively, but not independently of, each other. If we work hard on evangelism but, after bringing people into the fellowship of the body of Christ, we leave them as they are, we stunt their spiritual growth. If we are good at nurturing people in their knowledge and practice of spiritual disciplines but never challenge them to take their faith into the world, we risk becoming a cozy club that focuses solely on itself without turning an eye toward a hurting world.

At its heart, the primary task reflects the practices of Christ. First,

⁵ This resource will address the first three parts of the primary task. The ministry function is lived out in the lives of the members.

Jesus said, "Come, follow me." He went to where people were, at work or just going about their daily lives, and challenged them with an astonishing message: follow me. As the disciples spent time with Jesus day after day, he never wavered in trying to help them understand the character of God expressing love through grace. He also expressed numerous ways of explaining the nature of God's kingdom. As their relationships developed with Jesus and each other, the disciples saw their leader practicing the spiritual habits we now call the means of grace. Finally, Jesus released them into ministry with the Great Commission and instructions to do even more in his name.

When the primary task is functioning effectively, people grow closer to God and live out their faith as they offer themselves in service in God's name. They acquire and practice spiritual disciplines in ways that are healthy and that produce growth through health. In the primary task, the local congregation is fulfilling and modeling the practices of Christ—practices that produced disciples who received the Holy Spirit and saw the church born.

Assignment

Interview several laypersons at the church to get a listing of the various ministries in which the church is involved. Then, working with your Mutual Ministry Team, list on Chart One (following the assignment) the ministries of the congregation in each of the corresponding functions of the primary task. Examine the list, and discuss the following:

- How would you characterize the distribution of ministries throughout the task?

- Are any of the parts of the primary task heavier on ministries than other phases?

- Is any part missing attention?

- What age groups do the ministries reach—children, youth, young adults through older adults?

Then, discuss how effective you believe those ministries function. Assign a value to each:

3 = highly effective

2 = moderately effective

1 = not effective

Assess the overall effect of the primary task in the church.

- What do these ministries say about the local congregation and its presence in the community?

- How do they reflect the culture and capacity of the local church?

Primary Task	Ministries We Do	Who They Reach	Effectiveness Score
Discover and Invite (Evangelism)			
Relate to God (Membership)			
Nurture in Faith (Discipleship)			
Send into the World (Ministry)			

Part Two: Evangelism

While each stage of the primary task must function collaboratively and fully, we must also understand that one function will require extra effort. Consider this example: Students pursuing advanced degrees in business often consider the field of consulting to be an attractive option. It allows them to use their expertise and affords them a lifestyle of travel and glamorous contacts with the Fortune 500. But there's a catch.

As they speak with practicing consultants, they hear that their idea of a glamorous lifestyle requires them to spend half their time contacting potential clients and trying to sell their services. Successful consultants are willing to pay the price of engaging in business-development activities in order to reap the benefits of the work they desire to do. They know that if they are not constantly developing new business, they will soon have no business.

The lesson is clear: churches unwilling to put a priority on witnessing for Christ and inviting people into a relationship with God will lose their health and eventually die.

A key mistake congregations make is to think of evangelism as

a program of the church. “Faith-sharing is not a program of the church. To the contrary, the church, when it is authentic, is a ministry of faith-sharing.”⁶ Programs have definite beginnings and will end at definite times. The call to bear witness, to evangelize the nations, is our ongoing response to God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

It would be a mistake, however, not to consider the unique role of the congregation in faith-sharing. The congregation lives out its attitude toward unchurched persons every day in the communication it offers, in its involvement in the community, and in the unique way it expresses and practices hospitality.

In their book, *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*, authors Robert K. Swanson and Shirley F. Clement address the role of hospitality in what they term the “welcoming ministries” of the church: “The essence of hospitality is to be known and welcomed, needed and loved.”⁷ Hospitality is not something we can take for granted. Welcoming someone is what we do every time we see that person, but having people feel they are known requires ongoing action on the part of individuals to get to know the people who come to our churches. Welcoming ministries are those ministries the local congregation uses to reach out to people and convey to them the idea that they are honored guests at our table. These ministries can be as involved as personal visits to deliver fresh-baked bread or as simple as how ushers or greeters function on Sunday morning.

While it is easy to think of welcoming strangers in this concept, we cannot forget that welcoming needs to happen repeatedly for all of us during times when our life circumstances change and we feel disconnected to things that were once familiar. Consider the woman who has recently lost her husband. She may be struggling with how to live as a single person after spending much of her life as part of a couple.

Divorce poses challenges to couples who considered themselves friends of another couple. When that couple divorces, who gets the friends? To a person experiencing divorce, a group in which he or she was formerly an active member may suddenly seem foreign and uncomfortable.

⁶ *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*, p. 28

⁷ *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*, p. 17

Assignment

Part A: To be completed independently. Reflect on your own life, remember the times when you were made to feel welcome by a group, and note your responses to the following questions.

1. What was the situation or group you entered?
2. Did the group offer anything that made you feel welcome? What was it?
3. How long did it take for you to feel as if you were a real member of the group? What helped or hindered your progress?
4. If the group did not do much to welcome you, what would have made you feel welcome? What could they have done? What would have been the result?

Part B: To be completed with your Mutual Ministry Team.

1. List the welcoming activities that occur in the church you are serving. Whom do they reach—strangers, or those in need of renewed welcome?

has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:6-8

Here is the key distinction: *some* are called to be evangelists, but *all* are called to be witnesses. We bear witness to Christ in our lives, based on the personal experiences we have of the encounter and receiving of Jesus as personal savior. We bear witness to God's grace in our lives as we mature in our faith.

While the congregation has ministries that enable the local church to fulfill an evangelistic function, it ultimately comes down to the individual who takes personal responsibility for sharing with others how God has worked in his or her life.

In the life of a typical congregation, we see signs of a variety of ministries happening, but we usually see a shortfall in the ministry of evangelism. Why is this?

Very often, people view evangelism as the pastor's task alone. Others feel that religion is such a personal issue that it's "not my business" to ask about a person's spiritual life. Still others feel that the weekly worship service is the time for evangelism, with the order of worship being the invitation. After all, there is a time for the "Call to Christian Discipleship." If people want to profess their faith, they'll do so at that time.

How can we overcome these attitudes? By examining what is at the heart of them. Most often, these perspectives are born out of fear on the part of laypersons. When asked why they do not personally share their faith with others, most people provide one of the the following two reasons:

- I don't know how.
- I'm afraid I'll be asked a question I can't answer.

Both these issues can be addressed. People can learn to effectively share their personal stories of how God met them through Christ and changed their lives. As the leader of your local congregation, you are responsible for helping lead laypersons toward a healthy attitude and practice of faith-sharing. Check

out the *Faith-Sharing Initiative Participant's Manual* on GBOD's Web site at <http://www.gbod.org/evangelism/fsparticipants.pdf>. The approach used in this material is based on building relationships with people and becoming an effective listener who can then respond from a personal faith-story. The *Faith-Sharing Initiative* also recommends the use of *The Faith-Sharing New Testament with the Psalms*. This resource includes a section in the front titled "Basics of Christian Conversion and Discipleship," which provides twenty-four basic questions and includes short answers and Scripture references. Following the Psalms is a section at the back titled "The Essentials for Leading a Person to Christ." It includes guidelines for witnessing and offers a model for personal faith-sharing that can help build confidence.

Additional Resources

The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship, Scott Jones, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2003.

Call and Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism, Walter Klaiber, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1997.

Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community, Robert E. Webber, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003.

Part Three: Membership

The second stage of the primary task involves the process by which an individual chooses to be incorporated into the body of Christ; that is, to join a church. This step is significant because it signals an individual's choice to make a public proclamation of faith and begin the journey of discipleship. This is a pivotal point for individuals, as their early habits can become a springboard for vital spiritual growth. These habits, however, can just as easily erode into a person who is nothing more than a name on a list, living with a stagnant faith.

How extensive is this problem? "As many as one half of the adults who join mainline churches drop into inactivity in their first

year of membership.”⁷ What is most disturbing is the frequency with which churches often consider this condition normal; we automatically assume we will not have a 100-percent effectiveness rate for helping people grow spiritually as they participate in the community of faith.

Yet there are churches where the trend is just the opposite. In these churches, people immediately get on a path of growth in discipleship. Consider the possibilities of such a church culture:

- People would understand what it means and what is required to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- People would understand what makes The United Methodist Church distinctive.
- People would understand what is expected of them as members of a particular community of faith and be able to make informed decisions about membership and their future roles in the congregation.
- People would begin moving toward accountability for practicing their faith and living out personal ministries.

To paraphrase the late Dr. W. Edwards Deming, sometimes referred to as the Father of the American Quality Movement, every system is perfectly designed for the results it produces. Therefore, if the results are not what we want, we won't change them by working harder, but by instituting a new system.

What would such a system look like? Swanson and Clement suggest an effective system would include the following elements:

1. A time of testing and consideration of membership would be required, so that people could make certain their decisions were based on a true “fit” theologically, as well as with the people of the local congregation.
2. Persons would become part of a small group of other newcomers as they explored what it meant to be members of the local congregation.
3. The act of “joining” would be accompanied by a “ceremo-

⁷ *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*, p. 38

ny that gives stature and dignity to church membership, rather than being inserted at the end of the service like an afterthought.”⁸

Obviously, such a system would need to be adapted for the culture in which it would operate, and we would need to be sensitive to people who come into our midst. We cannot approach it as a “one size fits all” system of membership. People express belonging in different ways, and only they can tell us when they feel as if they truly belong to the local church. Only they can tell us what helps them understand what it means to be people of faith and what they need most to begin living as disciples.

Assignment

1. Working with your Mutual Ministry Team, list the current ways you bring people into the membership of your local church.
 - A. What are the benefits of the system you now use? (Consider the roles of the worship hour, Sunday school, and any outreach functions in your community.)
 - B. What are the drawbacks of your current system?
 - C. How can you use the positive elements of the current church culture to make the membership experience most effective?
2. Discuss with your team the various rituals and ceremonies that are part of your local congregation. Consider all age groups in the community. How do these activities help peo-

⁸ *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*, p. 39

ple feel part of the church family? How can you help newcomers know and understand the history of your congregation and its historical place in your community?

Part Four: Discipleship

The third element of the primary task includes all the activities and processes that help nurture people in the development of their faith. This element plays a large role in the journey toward spiritual maturity. Discipleship typically includes:

- The teaching role of the pastoral leader,
- Bible study by the individual and in groups,
- The work of Christian education, usually practiced in Sunday school, and
- The small groups that may be part of the local church.

The Teaching Role

When we consider education's role in faith development, the first things that comes to mind are the Bible and the role Bible study plays in discipleship formation. It is in Scripture that we encounter the history of the ages and the accounts of God's Son Jesus, as he came in human form for the redemption of humanity. We anguish at his death but rejoice at his resurrection. We are amazed at the coming of the promised Holy Spirit and of its effects upon the apostles. We learn of the early days of the church and of the struggles the first generation of believers faced in order to proclaim, practice, and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This great story of God's love is also recounted in the liturgical seasons of the Christian year. Just as each season of nature

has a purpose to fulfill and the task of preparation for the next season, so do the liturgical seasons. The Christian year begins with Advent and then proceeds through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Let's look briefly at each one of these major seasons and note its primary message.

Advent. The meaning of Advent is found in the word itself. Synonyms for advent include "beginning" and "arrival". Israel had longed for a Messiah to give them deliverance and, therefore, this season reflects the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. The Charles Wesley hymn, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," describes the spiritual longing for the Savior and the expectation of his return. The season is observed for the four Sundays prior to Christmas.

Christmas. The Messiah is born! The prophecies have been fulfilled, and God has sent his only Son to live among us in the fullness of humanity.

Epiphany. With Epiphany comes the revelation that Jesus has come for both the Jews and the Gentiles. In the Bible story, this season commemorates the visit of the Wise Men, as told in Matthew 2:1-12. The gifts they present the infant are those that would be presented to a king. The babe of Bethlehem is King over all. Epiphany Sunday is the Sunday nearest or on January 6.

In the time following Epiphany that leads up to Lent, we reflect on the active ministry of Jesus. It is during this time that we remember the calling of the twelve and the many miracles and incidents of healing. We recall the personal encounters various individuals had with Jesus, as well as the effect of his touch on them and how many lives he changed. It is during this time that he prepared his disciples for their own ministry in his absence through teaching and modeled behavior.

Lent. The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and continues for forty days, not counting Sundays. The final Sunday of the Lenten season is Palm Sunday.

During Lent, we journey with Jesus toward his death. During this somber time, we often participate in his suffering by fasting. The fast can be from food or from another earthly practice or habit. For example, some choose to abstain from TV during Lent.

Lent ends at sundown on Maundy Thursday. At this time, we enter into the three-day observance that commemorates the arrest of Jesus, his trial, his suffering, and his crucifixion on Good Friday. Saturday recalls the time he was in the tomb.

Easter. Alleluia! Christ is risen! We celebrate Jesus' victory over death and his ascension to the heavenly throne. The season of Easter continues for fifty days and reminds us that we, too, will experience victory over death through Jesus. We proclaim to the world we are resurrection people.

Pentecost. The season of Pentecost marks the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church universal. In the time after Pentecost, we observe the spread of the Gospel message and the trials and struggles of the early Christians.

The journey through the Christian year is also detailed in the *Lectionary*. The *Lectionary* is a three-year design of Scripture readings that traces the Biblical narrative through these seasons. It is typically used as the basis for preaching throughout the year and provides opportunities for ongoing study outside of worship. The worship section on GBOD's Web site provides the *Lectionary* readings for the year and offers worship planning and preaching helps that enhance the Scripture message of the day. The address is <http://www.gbod.org/worship>.

Assignment

Read "Theology," "Faith Language," and "Living the Faith" from the *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About...* series.

Bible Study

Studying the Bible is a lifelong habit. Daily reading is essential, with time dedicated each week to going deeper. There are a variety of methods for personal Bible study, including devotion-al, chapter summary, character study, theme-based, biographi-cal, topical, word study, and many others. Experiment with sev-eral in order to appreciate the variety each one offers.

You may discover that some topics work better using one method over another. For a detailed explanation of each of

these methods, check out Rick Warren's book, *Personal Bible Study Methods: 12 Ways to Study the Bible on Your Own*. It is published by The Encouraging Word (1981) and can be ordered from www.pastors.com. In his book, Warren gives clear instructions and offers examples of Bible study through twelve different methods. A template and suggestions for study subjects concludes each method discussed.

See also:

- "Discipline" in *The Upper Room Dictionary of Spiritual Formation*
- "Stages of Spiritual Growth" in *The Upper Room Dictionary of Spiritual Formation*
- *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*, by Steve Harper

As a certified lay minister, you will be responsible for leading members of your congregation through Bible study programs. Each of the personal methods listed above can also be used with small groups in study. Try several methods, but keep in mind the culture of the congregation you are assigned to serve. If the congregation is accustomed to long-term efforts, then a topical or thematic study might work well. If the congregation is more accustomed to short-term activities, then you might start with a devotional or a chapter-summary method.

Assignment

Read "The Bible" from the *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About...* series, and complete the "Personal Reflection" at the end of each chapter.

Christian Education

We teach so others may learn, and it is often said that the sign of learning is a change in behavior. Growth in spiritual maturity is all about behavior change. We leave the old self and put on the new as we grow deeper in the knowledge and understanding of God's love as revealed in Christ Jesus.

Teaching is a basic means of discipleship formation, as you help people become able to reflect on the world around them from a theological perspective. To get a good overview of building capacity for theological reflection, read the article titled “Me? A Theologian?” by Dr. Diana Hynson, which can be found on the Web at <http://www.gbod.org/education/articles.asp>.

Our diversity as human beings is a wonderful gift from God, and it is reflected in the ways we learn. Think back on your own educational experiences. Were some topics easier to learn, or at least more interesting in class, because of the method the teacher used? Some people learn best through listening to a lecture, while others learn best when they are actively involved in a discussion or by working with a team on a project.

Assignment

Read the booklets titled “Curriculum” and “Teaching” in the *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About...* series. Pay particular attention to the section “Many Ways to Teach.” It includes a good discussion of learning styles and methods to try. After you have read the booklets, try your hand at what you’ve learned by doing the following activity.

1. Working with your favorite Bible story, select one of the ways people learn from the descriptions beginning on page 35 of “Teaching.” Think about your story from that perspective.
2. Next, go to the listing of methods on pages 38 through 41, and select at least two methods you could use for your story. Make sure to select the methods that will best enable you to work with the learning style you have chosen.
3. Based on your choices, develop a plan to teach your favorite story.
4. At your next session with your supervising clergyperson and Mutual Ministry Team, demonstrate what you have developed. Ask for feedback.

Small Groups

Almost any church, no matter its size, can have small groups. After all, a small group is just a group that is smaller than the size of the worshipping congregation. A small-group ministry doesn't have to be a complex system; what it does need to be is intentional.

If your congregation has teams or committees that perform ministerial or administrative functions, you have small groups. We may not think of them as such, because we tend to see them as agenda-based groups, whose members come together for specific activities. They can, however, easily incorporate some of the spiritual disciplines into their work patterns. Here are two examples:

1. The trustees are responsible for maintaining the church property so it expresses safety and a sense of welcome. They might include a short Bible study on the subject of hospitality.
2. The finance committee might agree to practice fasting one day a week as they prepare for the annual stewardship campaign.

What other examples can you think of? Look around the congregation you serve. Can you identify the small groups that are already present? Do you see:

- A prayer group?
- A United Methodist women's circle?
- A Saturday-morning men's Bible study?
- An informal group that seems to gather when they discover someone in the community is in need, perhaps during an illness or in times of crisis?

These are all small groups. Each one listed above has a particular function: prayer, mission, Bible study, or outreach. There is also something going on in the group beyond its stated purpose: people are strengthening the bonds within their community of faith.

John Wesley recognized the power of small groups for faith formation, and believed there should be no solitary Christians. He devised a small-group system for accountability in spiritual growth, and for “watching over one another in love.” The basic unit was called a “class,” and each class had a leader whose job it was to keep in contact with each member of the class and provide spiritual, and sometimes temporal, care for the class members. Each person was required to adhere to three General Rules:

- Do no harm.
- Do good.
- Practice the ordinances of God (prayer, Scripture study, worship, Holy Communion, and fasting).

Today, this system is a type of group commonly known as a Covenant Discipleship group. In this modern adaptation of Wesley’s design, the General Rules are lived out through a covenant agreed to by the group’s members. The covenant is based on the General Rule of Discipleship, as it is partitioned into Works of Piety and Works of Mercy. These two elements are further divided into a private act and a public act.

Works of Piety

Public—acts of worship
Private—acts of devotion

Works of Mercy

Public—acts of justice
Private—acts of compassion

Each week, members discuss how they are doing with regard to the covenant they have made and pray for each other. Meetings are short, with one hour being the recommended time. While there are many groups in existence in a typical congregation, it is the accountability for faith formation that distinguishes the Covenant Discipleship groups.

Assignment

Read Chapter 4 of *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God’s*

Household. Write down your responses to all six questions on page 99. When you next gather with your Mutual Ministry Team, share your responses in discussion.

Biblical Reflections: Discipleship

Romans 12: 9-18

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Reflection Questions

1. John Wesley spoke of “holiness of heart and life.” What practices help you to be more holy/righteous? How can you encourage others to become more holy and move on to perfection?
2. Discipleship is following the example of Jesus. What areas of your life do you need to improve in order to be more like Jesus? What spiritual disciplines can you practice to help you model Jesus in your life?

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Reflection Questions

1. John Wesley organized small groups to support believers between pastoral visits by the circuit rider. How does a small group or covenant group support you? How can you work to form covenant groups within the congregation?

A Litany

L: Forgiving God, we know the love of Christ.

R: Let us follow him in purity of heart.

L: Holy God, we watched Jesus minister in Galilee.

L: Let us follow him in purity of heart.

R: We watched Jesus teach and heal, preach and comfort.

L: Let us follow him in purity of heart.

R: Loving God, we watched Jesus go to Jerusalem.

L: Let us follow him in purity of heart.

All: Sustaining God, we saw Jesus on the cross and then the empty tomb! We heard Jesus invite us to go to all nations. Help us to go in purity of heart.

Section 4: Pastoral/Congregational Care

Facilitator's Guide

Part One: The Church Is a Caring Community

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the concept of the church as a caring community and the certified lay minister as a leader of that care.

Learning Goal

At the end of this session, participants will:

- Understand that one purpose of the church is to care for those within the community of faith (and learn that such caring extends beyond the church), and
- Consider ways to develop caring ministries within the church.

Module Plan

Open your meeting by leading the Mutual Ministry Team in prayer for your church and your certified lay minister.

Have a Bible, some newsprint, markers, and tape available for making and posting lists or observations during the session.

Pastoral Care

Have everyone read the introductory paragraph on page 95 silently, and then ask, "What is a good basic definition of pastoral care? What specific skills do you believe are necessary to provide effective caring in a congregation?"

Give everyone who wishes a chance to respond, and write the responses on the newsprint.

Ask, “How much time do you expect our CLM to spend each month on pastoral care in our congregation and community? What would be some ways that we, as part of our CLM’s team, could work to partner in the ministry of pastoral care?”

The Church Is a Caring Community

Invite someone in the group to read 1 John 4:7-12 aloud. Say, “The early church believed deeply in the sense that God’s love is revealed in our love for each other. Do you believe that is still true today? Do you believe people join the church community so that they can love and be loved?”

Have someone read the same Scripture, but this time have him or her substitute the word “care” or “caring” each time the word “love” appears. Explain that caring is the way we express love for one another in all that we do. Ask your certified lay minister how much differently he or she would see his or her task of caring, knowing that it becomes the task of each person in the church community.

Looking at Your Church

Using the newsprint and markers, have all members of your ministry team take turns writing the names of persons in your church and the ways in which they specifically take on a caring ministry, either for an individual or for the church as a whole. Let each member write one name or a couple at a time until you have exhausted the names of the caring persons of your congregation. This list will become invaluable to the certified lay minister as he/she taps into the caring life of the congregation. Give your CLM suggestions on how best to use these names and to respect the work and ministry that is occurring.

As you close this session, offer a prayer of thanks for each person listed on the newsprint and for your certified lay minister in the work ahead for the coming week.

Part Two: The CLM Cares for and with the Congregation

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to help the CLM and the MMT become effective, caring leaders of the congregation.

Learning Goals

Describe and discuss the role of the pastor as “key” caregiver.

Module Plan

As your MMT meets, open with prayer by the CLM.

You may wish to have newspaper, markers, and tape available as you review ways in which you can connect more effectively with your congregation.

Presence

Have everyone in the MMT read this section silently, or if this is an independent study, read it yourself.

The leader should ask the CLM, “Which activities described as ‘helping you become present in the community’ would be comfortable for you to do today? What other activities can you think of?”

Write the answers on the newspaper. Ask the rest of the group to brainstorm about additional ways to connect with the community.

Ask the group, “Is there a problem with being the new person in this town? What barriers will the CLM have to overcome?”

Service

Have a member of the MMT read this short section aloud as others follow along.

Talk as a group about how the CLM might be able to participate in service activities in the community. List on the newsprint some service possibilities that follow a yearly cycle.

As you are aware of the limited time the CLM has to do ministry in your community, develop a reasonable expectation of which service tasks the CLM might do. Is this a good use of the minister's time in your community?

Listening

Invite someone to volunteer to share information about his/her life in front of the CLM and the group. Tell the person that this is not a time to reveal too much personal information but to share a story from his/her life that would have detail and interest. Ask the CLM to listen carefully.

Next, ask the CLM to summarize and reiterate the story, the person's feelings, and the story's importance.

As a group, talk about possible gaps or holes in what the CLM heard, as well as which key parts of the story the CLM successfully heard.

Ask, "How hard is it to listen carefully, without trying to add your own story to someone else's?"

Think together about how the CLM and the Mutual Ministry Team can develop and maintain care folders on members/families of the congregation, and do so with respect and confidentiality.

Visits

As a team, look carefully at the CLM's time and schedule in your parish. Decide together on a reasonable number of hours, either weekly or monthly, that the CLM should spend visiting in the parish. Include hospital and nursing-home visits.

As you meet regularly, review the visitation plan and time the CLM spends on visits, and monitor these to see if they are reasonable and effective.

A Few Final Thoughts

Have the group silently read these various thoughts about being a key caregiver in the congregation. Use the newsprint, summarize each of the bullets listed, and talk more about how to either avoid poor choices or to be more effective with the CLM's visits. If you can think of other important guidelines to follow, add them to the list.

Be sure to focus on talking about prayer and its role in your own lives and the life of your congregation. Ask, "Is this a praying congregation, or will people feel uncomfortable being prayed for by the CLM?"

Close by having everyone sit in a circle, and, beginning with the CLM, have each person pray aloud for the person to his/her left, ending with someone praying for the CLM.

Part Three: Hospital and Nursing-home Visitation

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to learn effective methods and procedures for hospital and nursing-home visitation by the CLM.

Learning Goals

- Discuss methods of pastoral visitation.
- Become acquainted with HIPAA regulations.
- Discover techniques for visiting during difficult circumstances.

Module Plan

In preparing for this session, make plans with the hospital chaplain or administrator to visit the hospital that serves your area, and be sure to tour the ICU and emergency room. This tour should take place following this lesson.

As your group gathers, ask someone to offer an opening prayer.

Have newspaper, markers, and tape available as you review methods and visitation procedures.

Be Aware of Where You Are

Invite members of your mutual ministry team to briefly share accounts of any pastoral visits they have experienced in the hospital. Both good and bad accounts are encouraged. Invite someone to write down brief characteristics of both good and bad visits, and review the list as a group, adding to the characteristics.

Ask the CLM to rate his or her comfort level with hospital and nursing-home visits on a scale of one to ten, with one being the lowest. Ask the CLM to talk about what might increase his or her comfort level, and write down these suggestions. You may want to review these at a later meeting to see how helpful the suggestions were. Possible suggestions include having someone go on visitations with the CLM and carrying a resource to use for prayer and Scripture.

HIPAA and Confidentiality

If you have someone on your mutual ministry team who is a health care professional or who is acquainted with HIPAA, ask that person to come prepared to explain the confidentiality rules to the team and how they affect visitation. If no one is available, search the Internet for sites that briefly explain the rules and restrictions.

Invite a member of the team to read this section of the manual aloud as others follow along, and write down questions you wish to ask the hospital administrator or chaplain as you take your tour.

Scheduled Visits: Hospitals

Ask everyone to read this section silently, and then invite anyone who wishes to write on the newspaper at least one important hint or suggestion they read concerning visits to the hospital.

Review the list, and talk as a group about what you all think is most important during these types of visits.

Does your CLM have a nametag or small identification card to leave at the bedside? If not, be sure to check with your treasurer about funds for purchasing these important items.

Emergency Visits: Hospitals

At this point in your session, assemble the group, and travel to the hospital for a visit and a tour. Bring your questions concerning HIPAA, procedures for finding the names of parishioner patients, entry into limited-access areas, and the protocol for wearing gowns, hand-washing, etc. This visit can provide the entire mutual ministry team with valuable insight into the work and ministry of the CLM as a pastoral care provider.

Visits: Nursing Homes

If you wish and have the time, schedule a visit to a nursing home in your area. Meet with the administrator about the home's procedures and preferences in terms of pastoral visitors.

If you are unable to arrange a visit, take time as a group to review this section of the manual, and talk about the issues of time and of honoring the past as an important part of nursing-home visits. Ask if this seems to be an accurate description of many persons in the nursing home. Also, review the best time to visit the home.

A good resource to supply to your CLM is a list of persons from the church who are residents in nursing homes or who may be homebound. Together, develop a schedule of reasonable visitation, and talk about how the congregation could participate in a system of visitation as well.

Close your time with prayer for the team, your CLM, and the persons who will receive pastoral visits in the coming month.

Part Four: Funeral Care

Purpose

The purpose of this session is to identify specific skills and pastoral care aspects of death, dying, funerals, and aftercare.

Learning Goals

- Discuss pastoral care aspects of funerals.
- Demonstrate awareness of steps of funeral preparation.
- Discover funeral home procedures and regulations.

Module Plan

In preparing for this session, contact a local funeral home or mortuary, ask for a time during which your team can tour the facility, and spend some time with the funeral director. Be sure to explain the purpose of your team and the role of your certified lay minister.

You will gather first at the church or other meeting area. Have newsprint, markers, and tape available to record thoughts and ideas generated by this session for your CLM.

As you begin your session, as the leader, you should ask for any particular prayer requests from the group, and then open with a prayer.

Last Illness/Hospice

This section may trigger some deep feelings among the team members concerning the death of a loved one. Invite folks to be sensitive to this possibility. If any team members have experienced a loved one's dying, ask them to talk about the things that were most helpful from a pastoral care provider or what they wished would have been done to make the experience better. List their answers briefly on the newsprint. Ask your CLM if he or she has experienced the death of a loved one, and, if so, what aspects of that experience would be helpful to remember when handling a death in the parish.

First Contact

Invite the members of the team to read this section silently, and then, as a group, list aspects of funeral preparation that they see as especially important to keep in mind. Were there any new insights reached? Anything that they would not see as important? Identify everyone's roles and their various tasks, listing them on newsprint. Include the CLM, funeral director, organist, custodian, UMW, family, and any others.

As a group, discuss memories of particularly "good" funerals and what made them so. Invite the CLM to share with the group which aspects of this section will be helpful for him or her to have handy when preparing for a funeral.

At this point, travel as a group to the funeral home, and take time to meet with the director at her or his convenience. Ask questions about the director's procedure in meeting with families, setting funeral times, working with ministers, etc.

A visit to a funeral home may be a first for some of the members of your team, outside of attending a funeral. Be aware of and sensitive to their feelings surrounding death and the business aspects of a funeral home.

The Funeral Itself

Following the tour, if a room is available, continue this session at the funeral home. Other wise, return to your usual meeting site for the rest of the session.

The worship and preaching aspects of a funeral are covered in other areas of this manual, but for now, ask the group what the most powerful aspect of a funeral is. Is it the music? The sermon? The visual picture? The committal service? Help the team and the CLM see that people respond in different ways to the various parts of a service, and an effective pastoral care provider keeps this in mind when preparing and leading a funeral.

Aftercare

Discuss as a group how you can develop a system of aftercare

for a person experiencing a death in the family. Come up with a plan to support your CLM, and perhaps take on some of the work of tracking and recording yourselves.

Close your session with a prayer for all persons who have experienced the death of a family member or close friend in the last year.

Part Five: Responsible Boundaries and Other Things to Remember

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to reinforce the understanding of ethics and boundaries in pastoral care for the CLM.

Learning Goals

- Identify workable boundaries for ongoing pastoral care situations.
- Discuss the CLM's understanding of confidentiality.
- Develop a plan for dealing with mistakes in pastoral care.

Module Plan

Invite your certified lay minister to open this session with prayer for each of the members of your team.

Once again, have newsprint, markers, and tape available to record conversations and ideas for effective boundaries, as well as any need for improvement in the church.

Confidentiality

Have a member of the team read this section of the manual aloud while others follow along silently. Ask if everyone understands the concept of confidentiality and its limits. Ask someone to form a one-sentence definition of confidentiality as it pertains

to pastoral care. Write it on the newsprint. Next, invite persons to identify times in which confidentiality must give way to expose wrongdoing.

Ask your CLM if she/he clearly understands the concept and if there are presently any problems in how the CLM may be able to maintain confidentiality, even within the team's support and the meeting concept. For instance, does everyone understand that, even though there is a team to support the CLM, much of what is discussed in a pastoral setting will never be shared with the team?

Safe Sanctuaries

Perhaps your church or conference already has a clear policy on Safe Sanctuaries. If not, contact your district superintendent for more information, and bring this information to the team session. Take time to discuss how you as a team and as a congregation can do more to ensure that all areas and settings of the church's ministry are a safe place for persons of all ages.

List on the newsprint present deficiencies in your church's physical structure or process of meetings that should be addressed, such as doors without windows and meeting with children or youth when only one adult is present.

Ask the question, "As the primary pastoral care provider, how does the CLM take the lead in making sure these areas are safe? How can we as a team assist in that important work?"

Referrals

As a team, talk for a few minutes about what would constitute an ongoing or extended pastoral relationship. Is it fair to say that if someone needed to meet more than three times, then a referral should be made? What about when a family comes with multiple, unrelated pastoral care issues? Who would be a good referral for the CLM to have handy? How can the Mutual Ministry Team assist in making sure the CLM is kept from being overloaded with counseling yet is still the most effective in his/her use of time allotted for counseling?

Talk within the team about other training that the CLM could receive to bring additional skills into pastoral conversations.

Boo-boos

Have everyone read this section silently, and then ask the group to identify and write on the newsprint possible events or acts that might constitute a “boo-boo” in pastoral care. Ask, “How can we as a team and our CLM independently avoid most of these?”

Ask the certified lay minister to talk with the team about how he/she is taking care of him-or herself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Ask how many days off the CLM takes, and, if the CLM has another job, how that is balanced with the demanding work of the congregation. Ask how you as a team can help alleviate some of the stress and work and keep the CLM focused and balanced so as to avoid mistakes and errors.

Come up with a plan or policy on how you as a team will address mistakes that might be made and how to deal with parishioners who are offended or hurt. Be sure to include the practice of regular contact that the CLM must have with a supervisor.

Close this session and module with one person leading a prayer for the care and gifts of your CLM, and close with the Lord’s Prayer.

Participant's Guide

Part One: The Church Is a Caring Community

Pastoral Care

What is pastoral care? Does it require a secret handbook of tricks and techniques to help you attend to the needs of your congregation? Do you have to be a hospital chaplain, a professional counselor, or a trained spiritual advisor to offer pastoral care?

Of course not. Certainly, we have persons trained in specialized ministries who do much good, and, overall, pastoral care does require skills in listening and relationships, as well as an awareness of what is happening in particularly emotional situations. At the root, however, pastoral care is simply caring for persons in loving, honest, and Christlike ways.

During this learning module, we hope that you, as the certified lay minister candidate, will learn specific, helpful ways to care for others in need in your role in the congregation. We also hope that your Mutual Ministry Team, and, indeed, the entire congregation, will be able to learn and utilize a system of congregational care, where, as partners, we nurture and attend to each other's needs as God's gathered people.

The Church Is a Caring Community

Let's think for a little bit about what it means to be the church. Since the very first days in Jerusalem, early Christians were known for their love of one another and for the way in which they cared for members of their group when the need arose. The church exists as the body of Christ in the world, and so in a real sense, when we live out the commandment to love one another, we extend the very arms of Christ to a hurting world.

It's not complicated; we love one another in the example and command of Christ, and we do so in very concrete and helping ways. That's what it means to be the church.

Now some congregations grab hold of that understanding and live out the commandment very well. They find joy in their work

and lives together, and they understand that each person has both a responsibility to care and the right to expect to receive care from others. Other congregations, however, forget that valuable piece of their ministry, and they begin to expect that only specific persons will “do the caring” for the group. The first person on the list is usually the person who serves as the pastoral presence. It may be an elder, a local pastor—or you, as the certified lay minister. Churches with this mindset run into trouble, because one person cannot—and should not—do it all. Most likely, in your setting, you simply will not have the time to take care of everyone’s needs, nor is it a reasonable or fair expectation for you to do so.

Instead, as you think about being part of a caring community, always envision this image: you are part of something much greater than you are. We help our churches function more strongly and closely to their original purpose when we are able to change the model from “one person caring for all,” to “each person caring for another.”

Looking at Your Church

If you have been assigned to a small congregation, take time to think about the systems of caring that already exist. You will discover some persons who are already congregational caretakers. You will find relationships, families who seem to watch out for each other, and lifelong friends who check up on each other regularly. Certainly, you will also find some persons who are in need of regular, almost constant care from someone in the congregation. That’s part of our lives together. As you identify these caregivers, with the help of your Mutual Ministry Team, acknowledge and celebrate where caring happens, and encourage more caring and communication among each other to work to make sure that persons are not left out of the caring circle.

Developing a Ministry of Caring

In “building up the body of Christ,” no more important work exists than finding the way and developing the methods whereby the church community can become a caring and attentive community. This is never a quick fix—a one-hour workshop cannot transform us all into caring and loving persons, alert and atten-

tive to the needs and concerns of our faith community and the larger community in which we live. As we look to find ways to help our certified lay minister do his or her job more effectively, however, we can make use of some helpful, worthwhile material as part of our training.

Dr. Duane Ewers, with Bishop Fritz Mutti, has developed *A Ministry of Caring* workbook and eleven-session class that begin to offer the skills to assemble a group of trained, sensitive members of your congregation to become a “caring core.” The outline is simple. The eleven sessions are one to one-and-a-half hours each, with the first four sessions providing the skill development, and the following seven describing the different settings in which someone in a caring ministry might find him or herself.

This module recommends that the certified lay minister assemble a group of persons—between eight and fifteen—to undergo the training for a caring ministry. We recommend that at least some members of the Mutual Ministry Team be part of the training, although not all would need to participate. Persons who agree to be part of the training should also agree to commit themselves to being part of the core group of the caring ministry in the weeks and months to come.

As a means of helping the certified lay minister grow in leader teach the *Ministry of Caring* course. The course includes both participants’ workbooks (one per person) and a leader’s guide. The leader’s guide provides clear session outlines, activities, discussion questions, role-plays, and more to expand and develop the material found in the workbook itself. Please be sure to read the introductory material, and follow the plan, from the time allotted per lesson, to room set-up and other material, in order to make the training sessions as successful and effective as possible. The *A Ministry of Caring* workbooks and leader’s guide may be ordered from Discipleship Resources (www.discipleship-resources.org) or from Cokesbury (www.cokesbury.com or 1-800-624-1789).

Again, be sure to allow eleven to eighteen hours of training time for this course, with time in between the sessions for assignments and practical experience. When you have completed the sessions, feel free to continue with the rest of this module.

Part Two: The Certified Lay Minister Cares for and with the Congregation

Well done! You and your Mutual Ministry Team have come to a good strong understanding of the church as a caring community, and you have worked to develop a system of caring for one another as an entire congregation. This will continue to grow under your leadership. Your work, however, is far from done.

As a certified lay minister, you are still seen as a key person and leader in terms of pastoral care in your congregation and community. People will usually come to you first, especially in times of significant need or transition in their lives. In later sessions, we will talk more about these significant times, such as hospitalization, funerals, and more. The purpose of this session is to offer you and your ministry team insights into the ways you can become an effective, caring part of the larger community.

Presence

Without a doubt, one of the major ways in which you can care for your congregation is by being present in the life and events of your community. Members of your church enjoy seeing their church leader out and about in the community, and those who are not members will relate in seeing “that minister from The United Methodist Church” in activities that are part of the town’s life. What are some ways you can be part of things?

- Attend sporting events.
- Have coffee or lunch at the café.
- Make sure you bank in the town you serve.
- Visit any stores on your main street.
- Take a walk!
- Think about getting a post office box, even if you have curbside delivery.
- Be aware of important community holidays or celebrations

- Volunteer to speak to a class about an appropriate subject

Your Mutual Ministry Team can help to clarify HIPAA regulations, and your hospital should have the information for you, as well. You can also find it on the Internet.

The key is to make contact, to have conversations, and to build relationships among not only your congregation, but the neighbors of your congregation's members. (Churches like to be proud of their ministers, so be sure to dress appropriately for events, and be well groomed.) Purely by accident, in one town I served, my wife and I volunteered to run the concession stand at a basketball game. What an unbelievable number of conversations I had, and good relationships began.

Be aware, of course, that if you are assigned to a community that is not your home community, it sometimes takes a great amount of time and effort to move past being the new person in a town. If you are consistent and open, however, folks will eventually open up to you.

Service

Although your time might be limited in your work as a certified lay minister, a good investment of that time can be made in working alongside the congregation or community in its projects. Is there a communitywide cleanup day? Help in some capacity, like picking up trash or repainting a building. Do something that puts you in connection with other people, however, to allow for conversations and relationship-building.

I recall one congregation in which members spoke of their former pastors. They were quick to relate stories of two types of leaders. One type always seemed to be around, involved, and caring in some way. These folks were well remembered! The second type, however, never seemed to be part of the community.

One story went that a group of the men of the church were cleaning and painting around the outside of the church, and the pastor walked right by them and up into his study. Granted, perhaps the pastor had work that needed to be done, but all the men remembered was the pastor's unwillingness to get his

hands dirty. Serve your people as you are able, and make them opportunities to build the relationships.

Listening

“So, how are you doing today? Did your daughter enjoy the basketball game on Saturday? You know, I’m not sure I know all of your family. Who are your family members again? Are you related to the other Jones?” And on it goes.

One of the undeniable truths of life is that people enjoy talking about themselves to people who ask questions and seem genuinely interested. When you do come into contact with someone on the street, at the store or the game, or working side by side, think ahead of time, and create a repertoire of open-ended questions that you can comfortably ask.

Imagine yourself interviewing a very important celebrity for a talk show or national magazine. Your goal is to get to know as much about the person as possible and to listen carefully to that person’s answers. Your goal is *not* to tell the person all about you! Listening and keenly keeping track of important information (life events, recent changes, relationship breaks or beginnings, illnesses, deaths, other changes in family, etc.) will place you in a position to care for and tend to your members. When people talk about themselves, they will come to trust you, and it will enable you to care for them more honestly.

A good practice to develop, especially if you don’t have a great memory, is to keep a pen and a notepad in your pocket. When you have completed a conversation and are by yourself, make some notes about the exchange, including key pieces of information. Do not, however, take notes while you are talking with someone! Carefully protect these notes, since, in your role as a minister, people may share confidential information with you, because they trust you.

It might help to develop some care folders of the families of your congregation, where you can keep records of conversations, life events, and ways to remember families’ particular needs and histories. You can refer to these folders if you ever need to care for them.

Visits

Decide how much of your time you will devote to making visits in your parish. This is an excellent conversation to have with your Mutual Ministry Team. If you are establishing an active caring committee, your visits may be best focused on areas that are not strongly met by the caring members.

For instance, if you have folks who do a great job of visiting nursing homes, it would not make sense for you to spend all of your time there too if homebound or hospitalized persons are being neglected as a result. Again, determine your visitation practices with your team, and then be sure the congregation knows where you will be spending your time. And rest assured—no congregation has ever complained because its minister visited too much!

Make sure that your visits are effective. Spending an entire afternoon having a friendly chat while missing the opportunity to see someone in intensive care is probably not the best decision. Again, your team can be very helpful in creating visiting guidelines.

A Few Final Thoughts

Each of the following is worth thinking and talking about as you care for your congregation:

- Avoid the Savior Complex. People will share deep parts of their lives with you, and some will want you to fix them. Recognize that your expertise does not extend to making everyone's troubles go away. You simply can't, nor should you, see yourself as the great healer of everyone's pains and problems.
- Keep confidences. If someone shares something in confidence with you, it is meant for your ears only. Unbelievable damage can be done to a ministry when a confidence shared with a minister later gets back to the individual from another source. Under these circumstances, you would be participating in gossip, not pastoral care!
- Know when not to visit. Are you sick? Make a phone call if you like, but sharing your cold is not caring!

Do you have enough time to finish your sermon, to attend your committee meeting, or to meet with your ministry team? It may be that some weeks, few visits will occur because your time is eaten up by other urgent matters.

Are you in a mood that would make it better for you to be by yourself? That's okay. Don't make a bad or uncaring visit. Get back to the visits when you can.

- Pray. Become comfortable in praying for someone else. Think about what you are praying to God about. Sometimes we pray for healing, but other times, the best prayer to offer is one for peace, strength, love, and God's presence and care when no one else can be there.

Learn to pray out loud for someone and to do so without putting that person to sleep! Prayers don't have to be long for God to hear them. Learn as well how to pray when you are by yourself for the different members of your church who need the caring act of holding them before God. Prayer is your most important tool and your most-needed access to the presence of God as a minister.

Part Three: Hospital and Nursing-home Visitation

Some of the holiest, most powerful moments in your ministry will come as you make hospital and nursing-home visits. These visits, however, can be fraught with danger if they are made by unaware, uncaring, or ill-prepared visitors! When should you visit? For how long? What if a doctor or nurse is in the room? What should you say? What if the person is sleeping? What if family is there?

It takes practice and a whole lot of common sense to make effective visits to these important places. In this session, we will learn some helpful, easily remembered suggestions about visitation.

Be Aware of Where You Are

It may sound silly, but the first important rule for visitation is to

remember where and who you are. That is, it is vital to remember that you are not visiting someone at the church or even at his or her home. You are visiting him or her at another institution, which functions with its own set of rules that may vary from what you are used to. Also remember that you are a visitor in this place and that your ministry is to add to the healing and caring ministries already taking place.

Some pastoral visitors end up with horrible reputations when they visit, expecting everyone and everything to function around their schedules and activities. This is not appropriate. As you prepare to visit, center your thoughts by praying, not only for the visit that you are going to make, but also for the persons who are currently caring for one of your members. We cooperate in our ministries in Christ's name.

HIPAA and Confidentiality

In 1996, legislation was passed that, in part, guarantees the security and privacy of health information. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, known by its initials of HIPAA, has transformed the way in which many hospitals, doctors, nurses and nursing homes release information about patients and clients. There are many aspects to the law, but the gist of it is that there is a new culture of very limited, very secured access to patient health information. A doctor or nurse is generally not allowed to share a patient's health status with you, nor are you permitted to read hospital charts.

Most hospitals today have their own systems of information-sharing in terms of knowing who is a patient and from where. These institutions generally do not refuse access to pastoral visitors, but they are careful about how and with whom the information is shared. The best suggestion is to check with the hospital chaplain's office or the front desk to learn their rules. You may have to wear an ID tag or some other means of identifying you as a pastoral visitor. You are generally not allowed to visit anyone you wish, but are limited to visiting persons under your pastoral care—either members or constituents of your church or their families.

HIPAA regulations also mean that we must be prudent in how we share any information we receive. Unless we have a

patient's permission, we are not allowed to divulge information about the reason for his or her hospitalization or even about the hospitalization at all. Normal confidentiality applies at this point, as we realize we don't have to share every detail of a person's medical condition, even if we have permission to share that he or she has been in the hospital. Your Mutual Ministry Team should be able to determine what can be shared with the congregation about someone's medical situation, as well as how to secure permission from the member before it is shared.

Scheduled Visits: Hospitals

Most pastoral visitors develop routine of when to make regular hospital visits. Your Mutual Ministry Team can help you determine which days of the week are best for visits and which hospitals should be visited. Many pastors make visits early in the week (Tuesday) and later in the week (Friday), and then ask family members to call if someone enters the hospital in between times. There is no strict time of the day to visit; however, most doctors make rounds first thing in the morning and then again at close to five p.m., so your best chance of finding your church member may be in the afternoon or late morning.

Again, recognize that you are a visitor in a place that is very busy with tests, procedures, nursing care, and other activities. Your church members may not be simply waiting to see you! If they are out of their rooms, ask a nurse when he/she expects them to return, and either visit someone else, come back later, or leave a card with a short note. Make sure that you have both a nametag and some kind of card with room to write a note on the back that lets the patient know that you have been there. It is helpful to leave the card even if you visit with the parishioner. It should include your phone number and the time and date that you visited. Sometimes patients are taking medication or lose track of who has visited and when, and it is good for family members to see the card and know that the visit has occurred.

How long should you stay? Not long. Many patients receive little sleep in the hospital, and rest is important. You may find a patient who is relatively fine and eager to chat, but that still doesn't mean the visit should be long (especially if another patient is in the room). Most hospital visits can be meaningful and still be accomplished in ten minutes. You may wish to share a Scripture

verse and a prayer, after asking what they would like you to pray about. As you visit, listen carefully to the parishioner's feelings and thoughts, and respond in a caring manner. You may find that you are talking about health concerns, but, more often than not, the topic will be something else entirely. Ask the permission to share the patient's hospitalization with your congregation before you leave.

If you are in the room when the doctor arrives or the nurse needs to attend to the patient, you should excuse yourself and wait outside, or, if it will be a long procedure, offer a short prayer, and let the parishioner know you will visit him or her at a later date.

Find out what restrictions exist before you go in to visit. Some situations will require that you wear a gown, gloves, and a mask or that you not touch the patient. Abide by the hospital's rules.

Wash your hands! Wash them before going in to see any patient, and wash them again after you leave. Even if you are going directly to see another patient, get into the habit of washing. Spread of disease occurs frequently because people ignore this practice.

Don't sit on a patient's bed. Sometimes people in the hospital have tubes or other appliances attached as part of their treatments, and you won't know if you are impairing their operation. If there is no chair, simply stand.

When it is time to leave, leave. Be sure to thank the nurses at the station for their work in caring for your parishioner. They will remember you if you do.

Emergency Visits: Hospitals

One of the more jarring times in a pastoral visitor's life is when an emergency phone call comes from the hospital requesting pastoral care. These are urgent moments that require prayer and a fairly quick response. Make sure that when you receive the call, you find out precisely which hospital the parishioner is in, where in the hospital he or she is (emergency room, ICU, etc.), and who from the family will be there to meet you.

At some point during your regular visits to the hospital, take time to acquaint yourself with the locations of the ER, ICU, obstetrics department, and pediatric ward. Knowing where these are will allow you to focus on what you are going to say and do during an emergency, instead of trying to find the various departments.

At this point, you have the gift of sharing of a calming presence. Family members, friends, and even the medical staff can be very agitated and anxious, especially in a life-or-death emergency. Speak in a calm yet caring manner, and don't take on the anxiety of those around you. Help to keep emotions as calm as possible with prayer and your presence.

You may not be able to visit with the patient, or the patient may not be conscious. This is a very important time to care for the family. Listen to their fears, and address these fears as you pray. If you are granted access to the patient, don't make a dramatic production. Prayer, presence, and then leaving are gifts you can bring to the entire area.

In emergency situations especially, do not stay for extended periods of time in the ICU or even in the regular ward. By creating a rhythm of being present and absent, you can enter the situation and bring hope, prayer, and a calm spirit over and over again. If, on the other hand, you decide to stay throughout the whole ordeal, you lose the ability to bring a renewed sense of calm and instead become part of the family. Let the family know that you are available and will stop by again, but after a reasonable amount of time, leave. "How about if I stop back in about an hour?" and "I'll call you in a couple of hours to see how things are" are good parting statements.

Visits: Nursing Homes

You may visit someone in a nursing home who is sick or dying, and when that occurs, employ the same techniques as you would during visits to the hospital, including length of stay, topic, calm presence, and prayer. Again, if you are called because it appears death is imminent, be sure to find out where the parishioner is. Some nursing homes transport a resident to the hospital if he or she is very sick, and others will treat the person in his or her own room. Knowing where your parishioner is will save a great amount of time and anxiety.

More often, your visits to a nursing home, assisted-living facility, or retirement center will be cordial home visits with your parishioners. You are visiting them in their homes, and it's good to remember that this is where they live and that you respect and enjoy them where they are.

The commodity that most folks in these living situations have is time. There may be many activities to keep them involved and interested, but in many situations, the health and mental awareness of the resident may make the activities unviable. Some parishioners may be wheelchair bound or even bedridden. Still, this is their home. The best visits come when you imagine you are interviewing a very important individual, and you wish to find out all you can about her or him. Story is very important to the minds and lives of nursing-home residents. In a sense, their lives are frozen, and they are not carrying on the activities of shopping, cooking, cleaning, working, or other new things. They can, however, recall, tell stories, and relate to the past and to family. Asking them leading questions and then listening to their stories can be a powerful experience. It can also be very draining and difficult to enjoy.

Don't go to a nursing home for a visit if you are tired or distracted. The people you are going to visit deserve better. Schedule your times either late morning or late afternoon, when naps are less likely to occur. Be aware of mealtimes, and realize that sometimes residents are set in place up to an hour before a meal is served.

The best advice for nursing-home visits is to be ready to care in a special way. Honor the past. Listen to the story. Care for the sadness and loss as they arise, and recognize that you are an important link to their church life.

Leave a card with a date so family members know you stopped by. Bring a bulletin or other special remembrance from the church. Stay for a while, and then leave with a prayer and the promise to return.

Part Four: Funeral Care

Perhaps no greater or farther-reaching impact will your caring for a congregation occur than when you lead a family through

the process surrounding the service of death and resurrection—the funeral—of a loved one. Entire textbooks and seminary courses address the specific details of pastoral care at times of death, but it is important for you, as a certified lay minister, to realize that you already possess the compassion, dignity, and care to assist a family during this time.

The purpose of this session is to offer some specific skills and reminders about how to approach the details of this holy time from a pastoral care point of view. (You have already studied the specifics of leading a funeral in earlier sessions.) This session is another excellent opportunity for you to work with your Mutual Ministry Team to develop a process of care and to help sharpen the tools you will need to be effective in pastoral care.

Last Illness/Hospice

The majority of the deaths you experience in your parish will come as the result of illness or old age. As part of your relationship with the congregation, it is important to become aware of the families who are witnessing the deaths of family members. Just as you employed the rhythm of presence and absence in your visits to the ICU, approach these families in the same manner. Frequent, short visits are much more effective than long visits.

By all means, take time to listen to the needs and feelings of those who are waiting on their family members, but also take time to talk with the persons who are dying. If they are able to talk, make your conversations more than talking about their deaths. Let them know what the weather is like outside, for example, since it is very possible they haven't been outside for some time, and it will stimulate their thoughts and imaginations. You are a guest in a holy place at a holy time, and you would be wise to be aware of the privilege given to you. What is happening is not about you; your role is to bring comfort, prayer, and hope to the family.

If hospice is provided during this time, be sure to offer the caregivers courtesy and respect for their work, since they are also caring for the one who is dying in specific and loving ways. For the first time, you may meet family members who are not members of your congregation and who may have strong contrary

feelings about death and their loved one. Be aware of the feelings and the conflicts that could arise within families at this time, and do your best to reduce the anxiety and stress with quiet words and without preaching in an attempt to change someone's feelings.

First Contact

It's very possible that the first call you receive from a family will come after the death of a family member, and it is at this point that your pastoral care begins. Often, the family has already contacted the funeral home, and your first notice of a death will be a call from the funeral director. At this point, recognize that you are not only the family's pastor, but also a representative of the church. Honestly, there are some interesting dynamics that arise as you try to be pastoral while simultaneously trying to make practical funeral arrangements. Be aware, be caring when you ask questions.

The first decision to make is when the service will be held. Since you will be working with the schedules of the funeral director and the church, as well as your own, be flexible, but also be aware of when the service works best for everyone involved. Some funeral directors state the time they have chosen, and they expect the church to clear the calendar for the event. Just as you would not operate that way with the funeral director, expect him/her to respect the church's schedule. Usually, though, there is a good give-and-take as to when the best time would be, and you and the director will be able to reach an agreement.

Never set a time with the family without consulting the funeral director. The business schedule may not allow for a particular time (if, for example, there are already two funerals scheduled for that time). In addition, families generally have more flexibility in setting either a morning or afternoon time.

One important recommendation is that, early on in your time in the parish, you visit with the directors who will most likely handle funerals for your church members. Discuss in advance, apart from any specific funerals, how you can work together, your preferences, and areas of agreement. Forging these relationships will make your work with the families much easier. Remember that for some families, a funeral director may have

made multiple funeral arrangements over more than one generation, and he or she has a good relationship with your church members.

Set up a time to meet with the family, preferably at their home, and ask for all persons who will make decisions about the funeral to be present. Call the organist/pianist of your church with funeral date and time, and let him/her know that music selections will be provided as soon as possible. Call your UMW or care group that might serve a lunch after the funeral to let them know the time and date, and tell them you will provide lunch preferences as soon as possible as well. Notify your secretary, custodian, and others who might be able to help or who need to know in order to prepare for the service.

As you visit with the family, be sure to cover the following funeral components:

- Music for the service—hymns, special solos, soloists.
- Lunch—perhaps have the family call the person in charge to make this arrangement.
- Special Scripture to be used. Be prepared with some suggestions.
- Other special things to include in the service, such as family members speaking or special fraternal rituals. (The rituals are best done following the benediction of the Christian service or at the graveside.)

The most important part of your visit with the family is to gather the story of the person's life, so that it can be shared in the context of God's love and grace during the service. You may know the deceased well or not at all, but it is still important to ask questions that reveal the person, at least in the eyes of family members. Ask questions such as:

- What did he or she really love in life?
- What special hobbies or joys did he or she have?
- What did he or she not like?
- Are there any special stories that describe the person well?

- Are there any special nicknames or name preferences (e.g., don't use the deceased's given name of "Quincy" in the service if he always was called "Sam" or "Buddy" for his entire life!)?

Make sure everyone present has a chance to talk if they have a story or remembrance. Some members may wish to create an image of the family member that is unreal, but you have the advantage of gathering the larger story from many sources. Before you leave, be sure to go over the order of the service, and reconfirm the time, date, place, and when the family should arrive.

Spend time forming your sermon, not to glorify the individual but to give thanks to God for this special and unique life, and to help the participants remember that God's love and grace extends to them especially at this time.

The Funeral Itself

The worship and preaching parts of the funeral are covered elsewhere in this material. Your role most important role before, during, and after the service is that of a calming voice. You will perhaps witness a strong outpouring of emotions. Remember that you are the leader of the service and that you have the last word, and it should be a word of grace.

Be sure to greet the family members, checking on their frames of mind and feelings. Double-check with the funeral director to make sure the arrangements, the order, and the procedure for the service are set. Gather the family in a room, and share a word of hope and a prayer prior to the service.

If you are having a graveside service, make sure to keep the time there relatively short; don't make it a second service. It's a chance for final goodbyes and for the family to physically move beyond the death and begin to live in resurrection.

Aftercare

As a pastoral care leader, your work with the family doesn't end at the graveside. A key aspect of death is remembrance, and as

a certified lay minister, you can care in very simple and specific ways by employing that remembrance. On your calendar, make simple notations for the one-month, three-month, six-months-, and one-year anniversary of each death. These notes become pastoral visiting opportunities, especially at the one- and three-month marks. For the others, you may wish to make a phone call or send a card, letting the family know that you remember. You can be certain that they are remembering, and they will appreciate your care and attention to that detail.

Holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and other special times are also difficult for grieving families, especially during the first year. You may not be able to keep track of all of them, but as much as possible, connect with the families at these times to honor their grief and help them to move ahead in their lives by letting them that someone else cares. You and your Mutual Ministry Team can develop a system of recording and tracking these important dates for members of your congregation.

Part Five: Responsible Boundaries and Other Things to Remember

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the covenant that exists between the pastoral care provider and the parishioner. The pastoral care provider is able to function with the parishioner's trust that what is shared in confidence remains confidential. Information is not to be shared with one's spouse, family members, friends, church leaders, or even the Mutual Ministry Team. An atmosphere of trust allows for honest sharing in a safe place and knowing that the difficult things one has to say will not be revealed. Confidentiality extends to the way in which notes, records, conversations, and other means of communication are stored away from public view. Your office should have some way of securing confidential documents from anyone who might attempt to break a confidence.

It's important to note that confidentiality deals with things a parishioner tells you about him or herself, not what they may say about someone else. Confidentiality is not the same as secrecy. That is, secrets told about someone else are really gossip and should be discouraged.

There are some obvious limits to confidentiality. If someone tells you that they have been abused or mistreated, it is your moral obligation to seek help. The best way is to encourage the person is to accompany him or her to the appropriate authorities, so that they can stop the abuse and open the situation. Abuse happens in secret, and we as care providers cannot allow it to continue in any form. Similarly, if someone shared thoughts of suicide, expressed the intent to harm someone else, or confessed a crime, your responsibility as a CLM would be to ensure that the person came forward and began the process of reconciliation. At the very least, if someone is in imminent danger, your responsibility is to intervene and ensure his or her safety.

Safe Sanctuaries

The United Methodist Church participates in the program known as Safe Sanctuaries, in which a congregation makes every effort to ensure that the building itself, as well as every opportunity for gathering in the community, is a safe and danger-free setting. For more information regarding Safe Sanctuaries, contact your conference office, or talk with your district superintendent.

Among other things, counseling conversations, while occurring within a confidential setting, should be done with visual access to the outside world. Doors should have windows or be left ajar. If this is not possible, then find a setting in which a conversation can occur without it even appearing to be a setting for harassment or abuse. Protect yourself from claims of abuse by not placing yourself in a situation where abuse could be plausible. If you are visiting in a home, notify your secretary, spouse, or a member of your Mutual Ministry Team of your visitation plans.

Referrals

These types of pastoral conversations can be very valuable to people in need. It is important to realize that you are not a trained counselor, and if it appears that the issues being raised will require long-term counseling, then by all means, refer the person to a qualified counselor who has the skills and credentials to continue your work. The members of your Mutual Ministry Team can help identify capable, caring counselors. Use them. Your role is to care, and some of the best caring can come

when we know our own ability and training limitations.

Hygiene

Although it was already mentioned in the session on visiting in the hospital, it is critical to reiterate that we must be diligent in washing our hands and maintaining immaculate hygiene when in contact with our parishioners. If you have a cold or other illness, find another way to communicate than face to face. If you visit someone who is sick, be sure to wash your hands before visiting someone else. What a shame it would be for us to be so caring—while making others so sick!

Boo-boos

The final word in pastoral care is to realize that sooner or later, we will make a mistake. As careful as we are, we will fail to care, or we will accidentally experience an error in judgment, advice, or direction. Most likely, it will happen at those times when we are least equipped emotionally to be about the work of pastoral care. Something may be bothering us, and we ourselves are in need of care, yet we attempt to care for others, and we make a mistake.

Take care of yourself. Be aware of your emotional strength, your physical condition, your spiritual well-being. Be aware of how you form ideas, especially if you find yourself tempted to say or do something that would betray your role as a pastoral care provider. Mistakes in counsel or words and misreading pastoral needs are one thing, but when pastoral care providers abuse their positions, they abuse the very trust of the church.

In those times when you make an honest mistake (you fail to visit the hospital after promising to do so or you break a confidence, for example), it is your responsibility to seek forgiveness from the person who has been harmed.

It is also good to confess to your Mutual Ministry Team, to take time to sort out the circumstances in which such a mistake could occur, and to find ways to avoid these circumstances in the future. You may not always receive forgiveness for your mistake, but seeking reconciliation, even when it is difficult, is a good

example of being a servant-leader in the name of Christ. If you make a mistake, don't defend it. Instead, seek healing, move on, and, by your example, show others how to do the same.

Biblical Reflections: Congregational Care

Matthew 25: 31-40

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, **“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”**

Then **the righteous** will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?”

And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, **just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”**

Reflection Questions

1. When have you seen Jesus hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or in prison? How can you help others see Jesus in the poor, the stranger, the downtrodden?

Module Two: The Practice of Ministry

Authors:

Leading Worship and Preaching: The Rev. Dr. Deborah Cronin, South Indiana

Discipleship: G. Christine Harman, Lay Staff Director of Discipleship Development, Kentucky Annual Conference

Congregational Care: Rev. Randy Cross, Staff and DS Director, Connectional Ministries/Leadership Development Superintendent, Lower James River District, Dakotas Annual Conference

Contributors:

Biblical Reflection: Sandy Zeigler, Director, Lay Leadership Development, GBOD

Editors:

Taylor Burton-Edwards, Director of Worship Resources, GBOD

Safiyah Fosua, Director of Invitational Preaching Ministries Center for Worship Resourcing, GBOD

Art:

Virginia Rodgers, Lay, Ohio

GBOD/GBHEM Staff Project Team:

Julia Kuhn Wallace, Project Team Leader, Director of Small Church and Shared Ministries, GBOD - UMC

Rev Dr. Bob Kohler, Staff Assistant to the General Secretary, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

Sandy Zeigler, Director Lay Leadership Development, GBOD

For more information about the CLM Program, including resource coursework and additional material, please contact:

Web: www.gbod.org/clm

E-mail: clm@gbod.org

Toll Free Phone: 877-899-2780