

General Board of Discipleship of
The United Methodist Church
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THE GENERAL BOARD OF
DISCIPLESHIP

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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*This is a periodic newsletter to resource
FaithQuest congregational leaders.*

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Looking ahead to January 2003

**FAITHQUEST
WILL BE
UPDATED!**



- ... a one-day orientation to FaithQuest
- ... FQ leader helps move to an updated website
- ... Bible study reprint based on your feedback

Among changes in the FaithQuest Bible Study reprint will be increased emphasis on the spiritual growth of leaders. FaithQuest principles for continuous improvement have been applied to FaithQuest! There will be the same 17 sessions, with a new way of thinking about

Luke, Acts, Ephesians, and the writings of John Wesley. You will find helpful editorial changes. The newest resources to help you with leading group sessions will be online: www.faithquest.net.

New price for FaithQuest Bible Study: \$24.95

FQ
NEWS
& NOTES
FOR
FAITH
QUEST

TOPICS

THEME:
LEADERSHIP
(add to Tab C,
Leadership, in your revised
Leader Notebook)

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 5

OCTOBER 2002

Never too old — Never too young

As we go about our daily responsibilities, we do not expect God to intervene in our lives. It is just such an unexpected occurrence that takes place in Exodus 3: God calls Moses to lead the people from Egypt to the land “flowing with milk and honey.” Surely tending sheep is as strenuous work as an eighty-year-old might want to undertake. Moses’ objection that he is hesitant of speech falls on deaf ears as God responds, “*I will be with you.*”

Jeremiah had a similar experience. Jeremiah protests that he is too young to undertake the work of God: “I am only a boy” (Jer. 1:6, NRSV). Like Moses, Jeremiah argues that his inability to communicate proves the inappropriateness of his calling. God counters that age and eloquence are not the issue. “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, Do not be afraid of them for *I am with you to deliver you . . .*” (1:7, NRSV).

Neither age nor public speaking expertise is a criterion for rejecting God’s call. Today our over-full calendars and scheduling ruts might likewise be discounted. Not *wanting* to do the job matters little. Certainly neither Moses nor Jeremiah was always happy with the job the Lord had assigned them. The work was hard and often unrewarding. Still, each had the assurance of God’s active presence in his life and work. Who could ask for more?

Perhaps God doesn’t pressure us so directly nowadays, though God still calls us and promises to be with us. *Chosen-ness*, being singled out for a specific work by God (no matter your qualifications), can happen before you were born (as with Jeremiah), or after the prayerful consideration of the congregation’s lay leadership committee. Have you ever considered that God can work through a church committee as well as a burning bush? So, when a request comes, hear the words of the prophets, “Thus says the Lord . . .” It might just be a prophetic word signifying a calling from God. Simply respond along with Isaiah: “Here am I; send me!” (Isa. 6:8).



Joan Newell, jnewell@gbod.org, is Coordinator of FaithQuest, United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, TN.

Help for the Committee on Lay Leadership (formerly the Nominating Committee)

In *The United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2000*, ¶1258.1, the stated task of the **committee on lay leadership** is “to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership for the local congregation.” The *Discipline* adds that the committee shall engage in biblical and theological reflections on the mission of the church, identify the spiritual gifts and abilities of members, and work throughout the year to guide the church council on matters regarding leadership (other than employed staff).

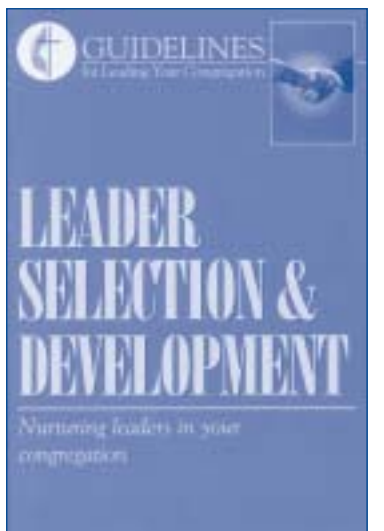
The committee on lay leadership has a year-round job! This newsletter will help the committee; and more help can be found in *Guidelines 2002-2004: Leader Selection and Development* (Cokesbury).

IN THIS ISSUE

Lay Leadership Committee

Spiritual Leadership

Leader Development



Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership is a term we hear with increasing frequency! What does it mean? Recently, staffpersons at the General Board of Discipleship were challenged to define *spiritual leadership*. This article summarizes the conversation. The staff identified these characteristics of spiritual leadership:

- **Practice spiritual disciplines.** Transformation by the gift of God's grace, observation by others of spiritual fruit, and continuing Christian formation are the foundation of spiritual leadership. Essentially, the Christian spiritual leader is on a journey to become like Christ. One's integrity of life actions and belief is seen by others and attracts others to explore the Christian faith for themselves.
- **Listen** (to others and to God). The critical importance of listening is stressed in Session 7 of FaithQuest.
- **Vision.** This is the ability to see possibilities for a future that includes elements of what we call the *Realm of God*. Developing vision requires (1) discernment in which the Holy Spirit is a partner and (2) conversation with others to build shared vision. Spiritual leaders are able to remind the whole congregation of the

shared vision and of the hope of building a future full of God's love, justice, and mercy.

- **Watch over (oversight).** Spiritual leaders take on the role of watching over the well-being of others, or *accountability*. This role requires seeing the big picture rather than focusing on details. "... watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28, NRSV).
- **Invite.** Spiritual leaders are invitational through the entire primary task. They invite people into fellowship, into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, into learning, and into roles of leadership as disciples.
- **Care.** Leaders embody the caring presence of God by building loving, caring relationships in the community of the congregation.
- **Covenant.** Spiritual leaders enter partnerships with others in the faith community. For spiritual leaders to be developed and sustained, congregations must be places where relationships are governed by trust, truth, and love.

- **Equip.** Spiritual leaders nurture and encourage ministry. They ensure that they and others are equipped with skills, tools, and knowledge to carry out the tasks at hand. They serve as teachers and mentors.
- **Discern.** Spiritual leaders listen deeply to others and to the Holy Spirit with a desire to know the will of God. Discernment begins with a deliberate centering on God and continues with careful recognition of cultural and historical realities in the church and the world. Centered in God, the spiritual leader can be released from captivity to his/her own cultural baggage and be open to God's leading.
- **Learn.** Lifelong learning is a passion of a spiritual leader. These people are continuously learning for personal growth, for equipping for the ministry at hand, and for mentoring others.
- **Build.** Spiritual leaders build and shape Christian community to be a place of trust, hospitality, and love where people can grow and change to become more faithful, effective disciples.

—Adapted from an article by Tim Moss in *Links*, May 1998.

A Model for Comprehensive Leader Development and Renewal



Betsy Heavner, General Board of Discipleship. This graphic may be reproduced with appropriate credit.

Sustaining Leaders with Training

For most of us, leadership is a lifelong process of responding to God's call and serving God and the congregation in various leadership roles. We may wear different leadership "hats" as the circumstances and needs of the congregation and the world change. Over time, leaders (lay and clergy) acquire knowledge and skills that can enrich the church and strengthen its ministry.

A comprehensive leader development plan includes learning and teaching qualities listed on page 2. The lay leadership committee works with the education/nurture committee and the church's lay leader to create a framework for leaders' lifelong learning.

The motivation and commitment level of congregational leaders increases as the committee on lay leadership takes its job seriously. These questions can be helpful for the lay leadership committee:

- Does everyone have a common understanding of the nature and meaning of leadership?
- Does everyone know how leadership – effective and ineffective – has led the congregation to where it is now?
- Is the group clear about its values and vision? Do they know how current ministries fit the values and vision?
- Are the gifts/talents/passions of congregational members continually being uncovered and celebrated? How does uncovering new gifts and skills lead to new ministries and leadership training needs?
- Does the lay leadership committee have a system to keep track of leadership potential and training needs? Is there a plan for bringing on new leaders?

Plan your efforts well. Remember, there are training opportunities in your district and conference and through the resources of the general church. Nonprofit agencies or local governments might offer some leadership training. You will not be able to accomplish everything at once, so be sure to have a long-range plan. As you plan development efforts and begin to carry them out, you will constantly discover ways to improve the process. Change the plan within the bounds of the vision and goals of your congregation. Starting will require some effort, but the outcome is worth it.



Thanks to Tim Moss, FaithQuest leader and former Director of Laity Leader Development, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, TN, for the conversation and articles that inspired this article.



Order FaithQuest materials toll-free: 877-899-2780, Ext. 7674.



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