

## Lay Servants Corner

June, 2016

Greetings to you! General and Annual Conference are now over and it is time to move forward with the work before us. Change is on the horizon, yet much remains the same. As lay servants, we walk beside the church leadership in caring, communicating, and leading. The work of the laity is vital to the life of the congregation. The changes in the lay servant program made at General Conference do not in any way change the nature and purpose of our work. The structure has been made simpler and clearer. The words from Isaiah 43:19 linger in my mind as I prepare this article. The verse says, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." True, it sometimes feels like the only constant in our lives is change. Even though we are still living into the changes made at the 2012 General Conference, I feel the recent changes are for the better. The challenge will be to communicate them effectively and broadly. Your help with that challenge will be appreciated.

The first of the two significant changes involves the initial level of lay servant ministry. There will no longer be Local Lay Servants and Certified Lay Servants. They are blended into one category—a certified lay servant. The requirements for this category remain the same. A person must complete the BASIC course and an advanced course. Renewal is achieved by completing an additional class every three years. The local lay servant category has been removed to streamline the process. It has been found that local lay servants are usually taking an advanced course for

renewal, and therefore, were fulfilling the requirement for certified lay servant. The difference between the local and certified lay servant ministry was that the local lay servant desired to serve in the local congregation while the certified lay servant may also serve beyond the local church. However, the change does **not** mean that a certified lay servant **must** serve beyond the local church. I know there are persons who qualified for the certified lay servant status but did not seek it at charge conference because they wanted to only serve the local congregation. Rest assured, having certified lay servant status will not mean a person needs to change the place in which they serve. In Iowa, we will begin living into this change at charge conferences this fall. Local lay servants and certified lay servants will both use the certified lay servant form. Lay speakers will continue to use a separate form. The lay speaker process remains the same.

The second change involves the certified lay minister status. The person receiving this designation remains laity, and the change makes that clear. The process for becoming a certified lay minister remains the same up to the final approval. The certified lay minister will still be interviewed and recommended by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. The recommendation will then be passed on to the Conference Lay Servant Committee for final approval and the Conference Lay Servant Committee will issue the certificate.

The changes outlined condense the areas of lay servant status to three: Certified Lay Servant, Lay Speaker, and Certified Lay Minister. The following link takes you to a chart that clearly outlines the purpose, requirements for certification,

and requirements for recertification of each. [http://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/laity/LSM\\_InfoSheet2016.pdf](http://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/laity/LSM_InfoSheet2016.pdf)

The District Committees on Lay Servant Ministries have been active in providing classes and certification for persons involved in the various processes. We are grateful for the persons who answer the call to lay servant ministries and those who support them in their efforts. At the laity session of Annual Conference, thirty-one new lay speakers were recognized! We are indeed blessed with gifted laity that have a heart for service.

Blessings,

Colleen Petaros

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