

Introduction to the Guidelines

The Mission of the Church

The United Methodist Church has identified as its mission: “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶120). Each local church interprets and fulfills that mission within its own context, according to the God-given human and material resources available and the needs of the surrounding community.

In The United Methodist Church, we envision transformation occurring through a cycle of discipleship (see the *Discipline*, ¶122). With God’s help and guidance, we

- reach out and receive people into the body of Christ,
- help people relate to Christ through their unique gifts and circumstances,
- nurture and strengthen people in their relationships with God and with others,
- send transformed people out into the world to lead transformed and transforming lives,
- continue to reach out, relate, nurture, and send disciples . . .

Every ministry area and group, from finance to missions, engages in all aspects of this cycle. When you begin to consider all of the work you do as ministry to fulfill God’s mission through your congregation, each task, report, and conversation becomes a step toward transforming the world into the kingdom of God.

The Ministry of the Local Congregation

Paragraphs 201–202 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* define a local church and its function:

¶201. *Definition of a Local Church*—The local church provides the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. . . . Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.

¶202. *The Function of the Local Church*—The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. . . . The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate

in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church.

In a world of increasing divisiveness and polarization, the church has both the opportunity and responsibility to witness to and model “an even better way,” the way of God’s love (see 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:13).

The Purpose of the *Guidelines*

Every ministry group and leadership role in the church exists to ensure that the local church is functioning well to equip people to live as faithful disciples in the world. These *Guidelines* offer insight and instruction for the servant leaders who have agreed to help guide that crucial work and to coordinate their efforts for the common good of the congregation and the community.

There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.

Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. . . . If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12, 26-27)

The *Guidelines* will help church leaders (and ministry groups) begin to learn about the individual ministries of your congregation and the ways that all ministry functions, groups, and leaders work together to fulfill the church’s mission. The *Guidelines* cover twenty-six distinct ministry areas or functions of congregational life, some of which are required by our *Book of Discipline* (**bolded** in the following list):

- Adult Ministries
- Advocates for Inclusiveness
- Children’s Ministries
- Christian Education
- Church & Society
- **Church Council**
- Church Historian
- Communications
- Evangelism
- Family Ministries
- **Finance**
- Higher Education & Campus Ministry
- **Lay Leader/ Lay Member**

- Men's Ministries
- Ministries with Young People
- Mission
- **Nominations and Leadership Development**
- **Pastor**
- **Pastor-Parish Relations**
- Scouting and Civic Youth-Serving Ministry
- Small-Group Ministries
- Small Membership Church
- Stewardship
- **Trustees**
- Women's Ministries
- Worship

Your congregation may include some or all of the ministries listed; you may use different titles or language to describe ministry groups, functions, or roles. Please adapt the language to your context. If your congregation does not include a ministry area covered by these *Guidelines*, we encourage you to consider ways that your congregation attends to the ministry it covers.

How to Use the Guidelines

Resources

Each Guideline covers a specific ministry area. Many of them include information from and cross references to other *Guidelines* in the series. They all include references to relevant paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline* and, perhaps, to other denominational resources, such as *The Book of Resolutions*, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, *The Book of Worship*. All of the *Guidelines* also include a variety of biblical references or quotations that offer theological foundations for the ministry. Current editions of these resources and a full set of *Guidelines* should be readily available for reference and study in the pastor's office and the church library.

Distribution

In addition to the full set(s), available for reference, distribute the relevant, individual *Guidelines* to new servant leaders at the beginning of the year (calendar or program year, as appropriate in your context). You may choose to distribute printed booklets, or you may send or print PDFs (available at www.UMOfficialResources.com/Guidelines). Be sure each leader for an area has access to a Guideline he or she can annotate and highlight. For example, the "Guideline on Finance" includes information and guidance for three positions: treasurer, financial secretary, and chair of the committee on finance. Each of these people will need his or her own copy of the Guideline. Be sure to record the role and dates of service for each leader who agrees to serve.

Training and Evaluation

As chair of the committee on nominations and leadership development, the pastor should schedule and conduct training for new and returning servant leaders. See the Orientation Workshop (page 9) for possible approaches to this task.

The *Guidelines* are introductions to as well as resources for the ongoing work of ministry groups and servant leaders. A good orientation workshop will help people get started well, but ongoing coaching and evaluation help build confidence and strengthen community.