

Iowa Annual Conference
The United Methodist Church
SCHOOL FOR LAY MINISTRY

Syllabus

The School for Lay Ministry of the Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is a program to facilitate the growth of Iowa United Methodist Churches and their Christian ministry by providing an alternative, supplemental source of educated leadership to local congregations and communities. The School for Lay Ministry identifies, trains and nurtures lay persons who meet entrance criteria and who have the desire to serve in, through and beyond the church in various ministries.

The goals of the School for Lay Ministry are to provide:

- Trained and motivated laity to contribute to the fulfillment of the mission of the Annual Conference to “prepare leaders of the church for the transformation of the world.”
- Lay persons to serve with ordained clergy in complementary ministries of various kinds.
- Spiritually nurturing experiences for persons wishing to further their faith pilgrimage and explore their Christian vocation.
- Lay leadership to assist with programs and ministries pursuing Christ’s mission.
- Continuing education for laity employed by the local church.
- An affordable, accessible program for persons to discern their calling and prepare for a variety of ministries: as local church or district workers or leaders, Certified Lay Speakers, Certified Lay Ministers, lay parish assistants or as candidates for ordained/licensed ministry.
- A significant, transforming impact on the ministry needs of congregations and communities in the Iowa Annual Conference today and into the future.

Twelve class sessions are designed to provide a comprehensive background and training for students. School for Lay Ministry is a two-year program. The Basic class is offered every January. All other classes are offered on an every-other-year basis. A class missed in 2025, for example, will be offered again in 2027.

Each session meets on a Saturday via zoom from 9 am until 5 pm. Students are expected to participate and engage fully in the session.

There will usually be a paper to be written and submitted to the instructor before class and there will always be a paper to be written after the class and submitted to the Dean or Associate Dean. The questions to be answered post class will be sent within two days of the class. Responses should be sent within two weeks of the class.

An application form for each class will need to be filled out before the assignment for the class is sent. The schedule for classes can be found on the Conference website.

The topics for the sessions are:

1. **Introduction to Lay Ministry and Spirituality (Basic Lay Servant Class)**
 - a. GOAL: To understand the context of lay leadership in the ministry of the local church.
 - b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Understand the importance of covenant community.
 - ii. Demonstrate knowledge of mutual (team) ministry.
 - iii. Explain how United Methodists approach local church ministry.
 - iv. Understand their own role as a spiritual leader.
 - v. Be aware of their own deepening spirituality.
 - vi. Understand the stewardship of our lives through prayers, presence, gifts and service in the ministry of the church.

2. Worship

- a. GOAL: To understand significant ways that Christians express, share and grow in their faith.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Explain the traditions and rituals of United Methodist worship services, both traditional and non-traditional.
 - ii. Analyze the relationship between the individual worshiper and the service as a whole.
 - iii. Evaluate the role of liturgy, Scriptures, prayer, and music as part of the worship service.
 - iv. Serve as liturgist and participate in various roles within the worship service.
 - v. Make worship lively and meaningful; describe ways to make people want to be there.
 - vi. Assist in providing basic pastoral services, e.g. funerals.
 - vii. Tie together all elements of the worship service; working with a theme.

3. Proclamation and Sharing the Faith

- a. GOAL: To become effective in the primary ways that the teachings and applications of his/her faith are communicated.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Lift up scripture lessons in a personal, interesting and meaningful way.
 - ii. Tell stories that have ethical, value-related meaning.
 - iii. Speak more fluently, clearly and confidently.
 - iv. Use the sermon or other speaking occasion to reflect about personal challenges as a role model to others.
 - v. Recognize opportunities to share their faith with others, in and outside of their church.
 - vi. Utilize a variety of approaches in faith-sharing or evangelism in encountering others.

4. Care and Nurturing

- a. GOAL: To provide support for others as a result of their spiritual commitment.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Demonstrate deep listening skills.
 - ii. Explain why lay pastoral care is important and outline the essential components of a structured lay pastoral care program.
 - iii. Understand of the need for confidentiality and the need to establish healthy boundaries in caregiving.
 - iv. Lift up scripture and prayer in a way that brings healing.
 - v. Recognize that most caregiving involves dealing with grief in some way and that all of us are caregivers at some point.
 - vi. Develop the ability to make calls to home-bound or hospitalized persons.
 - vii. Develop the ability to meet people where they are on their grief journey

and walk with them as they find a way forward.

5. Stewardship, Christian Ethics, and Conflict

- a. GOAL: To gain the perspective of faithful life stewardship, to learn methods of ethical reflection and decision making, and to function well in conflict resolution.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Teach others the perspectives of stewardship as a way of life involving time, talent, treasure and the created world.
 - ii. Practice disciplined, planned, proportional Christian giving.
 - iii. Recognize the cultural values that conflict with or challenge Christian commitments.
 - iv. Reflect on ethical decision-making in the practical challenges of life, including aging and end-of-life issues.
 - v. Assist others in understanding how moral choices are made.
 - vi. View self as a member of a team and work collaboratively with others.
 - vii. Demonstrate skills in consensus-building, solving problems, building trust and rapport and managing conflict.

6. Developing Theological Perspectives

- a. GOAL: To understand the roots, axioms, and applications of their faith.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Explain the Trinity and the relationship between God and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - ii. Discuss the meaning of the Sacraments and their proper administration by clergy and laity.
 - iii. Describe what makes United Methodism different from other faiths and sects.

7. Nurturing through Christian Education

- a. GOAL: To act upon their faith as teachers/learners.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Teach and learn with others of all ages and/or specific needs.
 - ii. Affirm the values of the Scriptures in their personal and corporate lives.
 - iii. Encourage and affirm intentional faith development of all persons through Christian Education.
 - iv. Understand the role of Christian Education in the outreach of the church.

8. Missions and Social Concerns

- a. GOAL: To affirm their own faith by taking it beyond themselves.
- b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Act upon the life and teachings of Jesus as an example of the need for social responsibility.
 - ii. Challenge traditional dogma so as to question its continuing relevance.
 - iii. Respond to the pain of those who are victimized and forgotten.

- iv. Value the dignity and autonomy of all of God's children.
 - v. Approach multi-cultural settings with understanding and respect.
- 9. Church History**
- a. GOAL: To understand the relationship of the church in the past and in the world today.
 - b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Describe and analyze the traditions of the church.
 - ii. Place United Methodism within the broader context of the Judeo/Christian tradition.
 - iii. Articulate the relationship at any moment in time between church and cultural context in which it finds itself.
 - iv. Affirm the resiliency of faith in the face of external challenges.
 - v. Accept the inevitability of change over time.
- 10. Church Leadership, Doctrine and Polity**
- a. GOAL: To appreciate the connectional character of United Methodism and serve as a church leader with understanding of church belief systems and organization.
 - b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Define how the church is organized and governed.
 - ii. Know about and take advantage of opportunities for leadership in the church.
 - iii. Value all components of the church as a system.
 - iv. Provide opportunities for others to participate in programs and activities.
 - v. Demonstrate command and knowledge of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.
 - vi. Compare and contrast The United Methodist Church with other denominations.
 - vii. Discuss with others their questions about United Methodist doctrines.
 - viii. Participate in the conferences of The United Methodist Church where policy changes are discussed and acted upon.
 - ix. Work effectively within political processes of the Church.
- 11. Methods of Biblical Interpretation**
- a. GOAL: To understand the Bible as an evolving text subject to changing interpretations.
 - b. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Personally interpret Scriptures and explain others' interpretations.
 - ii. Use methodology to interpret Scripture rather than leaving it to personal conjecture.
 - iii. Draw their own informed conclusions rather than just accepting conclusions of others.
 - iv. Demonstrate knowledge of the content of the Scriptures.
 - v. Interpret the Scriptures within today's context.
 - vi. Describe the historical-cultural context or setting against which the Scriptures take place.

- vii. Compare and contrast the Hebrew and Christian traditions as illustrated in the Old and New Testament.
- 12. **Shaping the Prayers of the People**
 - a. **GOAL:** To learn the basics of offering intercessory prayer in public
 - b. **COURSE OUTCOMES:** Upon completion of the course, graduates will be able to:
 - i. Learn and use a basic pattern of public prayer
 - ii. Learn and use the 5-section pattern for prayer
 - iii. Learn how to explore one's context for prayer
 - iv. Learn how to use resources/Hymnals for prayer
 - v. Learn and practice extemporaneous prayers

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