
WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF WE TOOK THE MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED SERIOUSLY?

Let's look at the foundations of our United Methodist understanding of the ministry of all Christians. This is found in Part IV, Section II of ***The United Methodist Church Book of Discipline, 2020/2024***. Have your Bible close at hand.

The Heart of Christian Ministry - BOD ¶126

“The heart of Christian ministry is Christ’s ministry of outreaching love. Christian ministry is the expression of the mind and mission of Christ by a community of Christians that demonstrates a common life of gratitude and devotion, witness and service, celebration, and discipleship. All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment. The forms of this ministry are diverse in locale, in interest, and in denominational accent, yet always catholic in spirit and outreach.”

Consider reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 for a scriptural foundation.

The Ministry of the Laity - BOD ¶127

“The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ’s outreaching love. Lay members of The United Methodist Church are, by history and calling, active advocates of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); every layperson is called to be missional. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and The United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission.”

Remind yourself of the Great Commission by reading Matthew 28:18-20.

The Ministry of the Community - BOD ¶128

“The church as the community of the new covenant has participated in Christ’s ministry of grace across the years and around the world. It stretches out to human needs wherever love and service may convey God’s love and ours. The outreach of such ministries knows no limits. Beyond the diverse forms of ministry is this ultimate concern: that all persons will be brought into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ and be renewed after the image of their creator (Colossians 3:10). This means that all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free.”

Reflect on the words of Colossians 3:10–17.

Faithful Ministry – BOD ¶130

“The people of God, who are the church made visible in the world, must convince the world of the reality of the gospel or leave it unconvinced. There can be no evasion or delegation of this responsibility; the church is either faithful as a witnessing and serving community, or it loses its vitality and its impact on an unbelieving world.”

Ponder for a few minutes the words of Hebrews 12:1-3.

Ministry's Gift and Task – BOD ¶129

“This ministry of all Christians in Christ's name and spirit is both a gift and a task. The gift is God's unmerited grace; the task is unstinting service. Entrance into the church is acknowledged in baptism and may include persons of all ages. In baptism, water is administered in the name of the triune God (specified in the ritual as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) by an authorized person, and the Holy Spirit is invoked with the laying on of hands, ordinarily in the presence of the congregation. In this sacrament the church claims God's promise and the seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). Baptism is followed by nurture and the consequent awareness by the baptized of the claim to ministry in Christ placed upon their lives by the church. Such a ministry is confirmed by the church when the pledges of baptism are accepted through profession of faith and renewed for life and mission. Entrance into and acceptance of ministry begin in a local church, but the impulse to minister always moves one beyond the congregation toward the whole human community. God's gifts are richly diverse for a variety of services; yet all have dignity and worth.”

Use the words from Ephesians 1:11-19 as your prayer.

The Unity of Ministry in Christ - BOD ¶131

“There is but one ministry in Christ, but there are diverse gifts and evidence of God's grace in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-16). The ministry of all Christians is complementary. No ministry is subservient to another. All United Methodists are summoned and sent by Christ to live and work together in mutual interdependence and to be guided by the Spirit into the truth that frees and the love that reconciles.”

Look at Ephesians 4:4-16. What do you hear about “mutual interdependence”?

The Journey of a Connectional People – BOD ¶132.

“Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships. We are connected by sharing a common tradition of faith, including Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules (¶ 104); by sharing together a constitutional polity, including a leadership of general superintendency; by sharing a common mission, which we seek to carry out by working together in and through conferences that reflect the inclusive and missional character of our fellowship; by sharing a common ethos that characterizes our distinctive way of doing things.”

Reflect on the words of John 17:20-23.