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Module Four: Connection for Ministry

Purpose

To provide the certified lay minister with a basic review of United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity; exposure to the connection between the local church, district, conference, and general agencies of the denomination; develop plans for ongoing education; and conclude with a commitment service.

Learning Goals

At the end of this module, the participant will be able to:

- Describe and discuss the way in which the history and theology of Methodism have influenced its polity;
- Describe and build the relationships between the local church, district, and annual conference;
- Describe and discuss the connectional structure of Methodism, as well as the roles of the General Board, general agencies, and the Annual Conference as the basic unit of The United Methodist Church; and
- Design a local resource list for ministry and referrals.

Required Texts

- *Living Our Beliefs*, Kenneth L. Carder, Discipleship Resources, 2009. (available in Upper Room online bookstore and at Cokesbury.com)
- *United Methodism 101* (CD)
<http://www.umcom.org/learn/united-methodism-101>
- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, The United Methodist Publishing House
- *The United Methodist Hymnal*, The United Methodist Publishing House
- *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, The United Methodist Publishing House

Section 1: The Methodist Connection

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Goals

At the end of this session, the certified lay minister will be able to:

- Describe the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church and the roles of the General Board, general agencies, the annual conference, and the local congregation; and
- Develop a plan for holding a charge conference with a review of all appropriate and required reports.

Preparing to Lead This Section

Read Chapter 9, "Church: A Called and Committed People," in *Living our Beliefs*.

View Session Three, "Underlying Theology and Foundations of Basic Beliefs" and Session Four, "Organization and Structure of the Denomination" from the CD in *United Methodism 101*. (available from umcom.org)

Read from the *2016 Book of Discipline*, Part I ("The Constitution") and Paragraphs 701-724 ("Administrative Order").

Read I Corinthians 12:12-30, and reflect on it in relationship to the United Methodist connectional system.

Read through the facilitator's and participant's materials, and note any questions you need answered before the session.

Pray for each participant and that God will continue to use each life in ministry.

Gather the materials necessary for the session:

- Bible(s)
- *Discipline(s)*
- Means to utilize CD

Invite the district superintendent or a clergy member of the conference to attend the session, participate in the discussion of the Methodist connection, outline the process for holding a charge conference, and review the required reports.

Understanding Connection in The United Methodist Church

CLM: Read through Paragraph 203 of the *2016 Discipline*, and reflect on the meaning of being connectional as defined in this paragraph.

Facilitator: Discuss with the CLM any insights gained from reading Paragraph 203 and Chapter 9, *Living Our Beliefs*. What does the CLM see as the unique witness of The United Methodist Church? What are the strengths of connectionalism? What are the weaknesses?

CLM: Read through I Corinthians 12:12-30, and reflect on what it says about being connected in the body of Christ and with one another through The United Methodist Church.

Facilitator: View Session Three and Four of the CD, *United Methodism 101* with the CLM. Ask the CLM the following questions: What additional insights do you gain from viewing the sessions? What do you like about how United Methodists do church? Is there anything you don't understand or that confuses you?

CLM: Read through Part I of *The Book of Discipline*, "The Constitution," and Paragraphs 701-724 on the administrative order of the church.

Regarding "The Constitution," Paragraph 33, explain the meaning of the following: "The annual conference is the basic body in the Church." Discuss this with the district superintendent and/or the facilitator. What other insights does the Constitution give you with regard to the meaning of connectionalism?

What does the "Administrative Order" section of the *Discipline* suggest about the meaning of "connection" as expressed in the relationship between the Annual Conference, the General Board, and general agencies?

Facilitator: Ask the district superintendent to discuss the role of the superintendent in the United Methodist connection and the important programs, concerns, and emphases in the Annual Conference.

Ask the superintendent to discuss the organization of a charge conference and the role of the CLM in the process. The superintendent can clarify which reports are expected from the CLM and any other reports coming from the church served by the CLM.

Participant's Guide

Introduction

The United Methodist Church is a connectional church. Each congregation is connected with all other congregations throughout the worldwide United Methodist Church. And that connection with congregations is strengthened and enabled by districts, annual conferences, jurisdictional conferences, and the General Conference.

Read through Part I of *The Book of Discipline*, "The Constitution" and Paragraphs 701-724 on the administrative order of the church. Be prepared to discuss the meaning of "connection" as explained in "The Constitution" and in the "Administrative Order" section of the *Discipline* with your facilitator and district superintendent.

The Connection As a Living Organism

One might immediately think of a large bureaucracy to define the connection, but what if we imagined the connection as a living organism, rather than an organizational structure? Indeed, the connection is an expression of our understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Read and study 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. Each of the connectional parts has a distinctive function, yet they are all related and mutually supportive.

This living organism aids, supports, and encourages local congregations in their ministries. Clergy are provided to local congregations. General agencies develop a variety of resources for use in the ministry of the local congregation. Annual Conference staff, including the district superintendent, can be called on to help develop ministries.

When you meet with your facilitator and district superintendent, you will want to discuss the important emphases in the ministries of the Annual Conference and the role the superintendent will play in your ministry. Include your assignment in your conversation, and seek his or her reflections on your task. In addition, ask about expectations regarding the charge conference, date, reports, official forms, and your role in gathering this information.

The Connection As a Missional Strategy

This living organism aids, supports, and encourages local congregations in their outreach ministries. Bishop Carder emphasizes that “connectionalism” is also a missional strategy. The connection enables us to send missionaries and support and encourage schools, colleges, universities, seminaries and a multitude of outreach programs for the poor. (See *Living Our Beliefs*, p. 99.)

After you have met with your facilitator and the district superintendent to discuss the meaning of connectionalism in The United Methodist Church, you may wish to share some of your thoughts and insights with your Mutual Ministry Team. One way to do this is to begin with the reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, and discuss its meaning to you and the team. You then could view Sessions Three and Four from the *United Methodism 101 CD* with the team and consider the following questions: What new insights did you gain regarding how The United Methodist Church is organized? How would you define connectionalism and its importance to your local congregation?

Finally, you may wish to share some of what you have learned about the connective nature of The United Methodist Church with the membership of your church or church council. This could be done as part of a sermon, a Sunday school lesson, or a meeting of the church council. In sharing what you have learned, you could talk about your experience of connectionalism as a certified lay minister and what it means to the local church.

Section 2: Essential Beliefs and Faithful Living

Facilitator's Guide

Purposes

The purposes of Section 2 are:

- To review some key essential beliefs of Methodism;
- To explore the place of hymnody in conveying these beliefs;
- To have the CLM prepare and preach a doctrinal sermon;
- To understand "Our Theological Task" using what is often referred to as the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral"; and
- To review the General Rules and develop an understanding of accountable discipleship.

Learning Goals

At the end of Section Two, the CLM will be able to:

- Identify key essential beliefs of Methodism and lead the Mutual Ministry Team in a discussion of their importance;
- Identify hymns of Charles Wesley to support these beliefs;
- Plan and lead a worship service using the hymns and a sermon based on one of the essentials;
- Utilize the quadrilateral in his/her "theological task"; and
- Understand how the General Rules are a "Means of Grace."

Preparing to Lead This Section

Read Chapters 6, "Reconciled and Transformed by Grace"; Chapter 7, "Accountable Discipleship"; and Chapter 10, "Doctrinal Faithfulness and Continuing Exploration," in *Living our Beliefs*, by Kenneth L. Carder.

View Session Two, "History of The United Methodist Church: From the birth of a movement to a modern denomination" from the CD, *United Methodism 101*.

Read *The Book of Discipline*, Part II ("Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task").

Read 1 Timothy 6:11-21 and Ephesians 2:1-10, and reflect on them in relationship to accountable discipleship.

Read the facilitator and student materials, and make notes about any questions you need answered before the session.

Pray that each participant will be strengthened and transformed by the grace of God.

Materials Needed

- Bible(s)
- *Disciplines(s)*
- Means to view CD
- Hymnal(s)

Notes:

Understanding “Beliefs” in the Wesleyan Tradition

CLM: Read “Our Doctrinal Heritage” in *The Book of Discipline*, Part II, Section 1, and identify the distinctive beliefs of the Wesleyan heritage. Then read through “Our Theological Task” in Part II, Section 4, and identify what is unique about our theological method.

Facilitator: Discuss with the CLM any insights gained from reading “Our Doctrinal Heritage” and “Our Theological Task.” What does the CLM see as the unique contribution of Methodism to the theological task of Christians today?

CLM: Read 1 Timothy 6:11-21, and reflect on its relationship to accountable discipleship. Do you see any connection between this passage of Scripture and the theological task of United Methodists?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. What is the connection between this passage of Scripture and Wesley’s understanding of the grace of God?

Facilitator: Discuss with the CLM new perspectives on Wesleyan theology based on a reading of Chapters 6 and 7 of *Living Our Beliefs*.

Ask the CLM to talk about Wesley’s understanding of the prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace of God. Does the CLM see this emphasis on God’s grace in the local congregation? In the denomination?

Identify at least one of Charles Wesley’s hymns for each of the three expressions of grace. Read or sing each one, noting a phrase or image from each one that is especially meaningful.

CLM: How have you experienced the grace of God in your life? What does this say about our society that values works rather than grace? In Chapter 7 of *Living Our Beliefs*, Carder reminds us that obedience is necessary to maintain a relationship with God. How do you see this in your own life?

Facilitator: View Session Two, “History of The United Methodist Church: From the birth of a movement to a modern denomination” of the CD from *United Methodism 101*. Ask the CLM these questions: What new insights did you receive from watching this video? How has this discussion helped or challenged you?

Review Chapter 10, “Doctrinal Faithfulness and Continuing Exploration,” of the book, *Living Our Beliefs*. Explain the basics of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and why John Wesley proposed this method for growing in discipleship. Why is each element of the Quadrilateral important? How do all four elements work together? Why did John Wesley believe the Bible is the foundation of Christian faith?

Participant's Guide

Introduction

Beliefs in the Wesleyan heritage, function primarily in the service of character formation, faith development, missional engagement, and evangelization. It is not enough to talk about core beliefs or essential doctrines. We must live them. ...In other words, beliefs are to be lived; doctrine is to be practiced. That is the United Methodist way.

(Kenneth L. Carder, *Living Our Beliefs*, p. v)

United Methodist beliefs are shared by most other Christian denominations. Read Chapters 2 through 5 of *Living Our Beliefs*, and you will get a sense of that common heritage.

What Methodism has done is to place an emphasis on certain beliefs, such as grace. Wesley believed that grace manifested itself in three ways:

- Prevenient grace
- Justifying grace
- Sanctifying grace

Read "Our Theological Heritage," Part II, Section 1, *The Book of Discipline*; Chapter 6 of *Living Our Beliefs*; and view Session Three, "Underlying Theology and Foundations of Basic Beliefs" from the CD *United Methodism 101*. What new insights about John Wesley's theology did you gain from these resources? In what ways do we experience prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace today?

Using *The United Methodist Hymnal*, identify at least one of Charles Wesley's hymns for each of these three expressions of grace. Read each one, noting a phrase or image from each that is especially meaningful to you.

Exploring New Frontiers of Faith

The challenge we face is to develop a twenty-first century imagi-

nation in matters of faith. The time in which we live is vastly different from the century of the apostles or that of John and Charles Wesley.

United Methodism affirms the necessity of maintaining the truth of our historic doctrines while engaging in continuing theological explorations to understand God's will for us in our time. Read "Our Theological Task," Part II, Section 4, *The Book of Discipline*; and, Chapter, 10, "Doctrinal Faithfulness and Continuing Exploration," from Bishop Carder's book, *Living Our Beliefs*. Four "tools"—Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—are proposed as a way of engaging in theological discussion for the twenty-first century while maintaining sound doctrine. Discuss these tools with your facilitator. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Living Our Beliefs

How shall we live in response to grace? "Discipleship in the Methodist tradition involves discipline and accountability" (Bishop Kenneth Carder).

Read "Accountable Discipleship," Chapter 7, *Living Our Beliefs*, and a few pages from *The Book of Discipline*: "Doctrine and Discipline in the Christian Life"; "General Rules and Social Principles"; and "The General Rules of the Methodist Church".

Share with your Mutual Ministry Team the insights you have gained through your study of United Methodist beliefs. Discuss with the team what you have learned about accountable discipleship through your reading of Chapter 7, *Living Our Beliefs*, and the General Rules of the Methodist Church. Ask the team how accountable discipleship can be lived out through the ministry of the church, and ask them to propose a ministry that will address a significant need in your community for which you will be mutually accountable.

Part IV of the Discipline contains the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church. An excerpt follows:

The Social Principles are a prayerful and thought-

ful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit; however, they are not church law. The Social Principles are a call to all members of The United Methodist Church to a prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice.

How are the Social Principles understood and utilized in your congregation? Do you have access to *The Book of Resolutions*? These resolutions are ways the General Conference understands how the Social Principles address current issues and realities. Discuss a section of the Social Principles with a Sunday school class, or include it in a sermon on the subject in question. Have a group of church members look at one of the resolutions passed by the General Conference that relates to the Social Principle you wish to address. Let the faith response of the church members be measured against the resolve of the General Conference in a “studied dialogue of faith and practice.”

With your Mutual Ministry Team, plan and lead a worship service on one of the essential beliefs that became exciting for you as you worked through this part of module four. Choose appropriate Charles Wesley hymns, and plan to preach on the belief your team has selected. Involve members of the team in leadership for the worship service. Meet with the Mutual Ministry Team after the worship service to discuss what went well and what could have been improved.

Section 3: United Methodist History

Facilitator's Guide

Purposes

The purposes of Section Three are:

- To review the dynamics involved in the beginnings of Methodism;
- To identify the development of polity in relation to our history;
- To plan for continuing education; and
- To plan and participate in a commitment service.

Learning Goals

At the end of this section, the CLM will be able to:

- Identify the dynamics of the early history of Methodism and lead the Mutual Ministry Team in a discussion of its importance and relationship to our current polity;
- Plan and lead a one-hour session for new or interested members on the history of The United Methodist Church, using the Mutual Ministry Team as conversation partners;
- Develop a plan of continuing education; and
- Plan and lead a commitment service.

Preparing to Lead This Section

Read Chapter 1, "Why a United Methodist?," from *Living our Beliefs*, by Kenneth L. Carder

View or review Session 2, "History of The United Methodist Church: From the Birth of a Movement to a Modern Denomination" from the CD, *United Methodism 101*.

Read Hebrews 13:1-17, and reflect on its meaning for your ministry.

Read the facilitator and student materials, and make notes about any questions you need answered before the session.

Pray that participants may be faithful in their lives and in their ministries.

Materials Needed

- Bible(s)
- *Discipline(s)*
- VCR or DVD player
- *Book(s) of Worship*
- Hymnal(s)

Notes:

Understanding Our Wesleyan Heritage

CLM: Read Hebrews 13:1-16. What does this say about your ministry and the ministry of Jesus Christ? Discuss with your facilitator any questions the reading raises about what you have been called to do, whom you have been called to serve, and how your ministry is pleasing in the sight of God.

Read from the Historical Statement in *The Book of Discipline*, “Roots, 1736-1816.” What additional information does this give you on our Wesleyan heritage?

Read through the balance of the Historical Statement. What additional insight does this give you into the development of United Methodism as we know it today?

Facilitator: Read Hebrews 13:1-16 with the CLM, and help him or her reflect on what it says about his or her ministry. Talk about the Historical Statement in *The Book of Discipline* and any insight into our Methodist heritage that is new to you or the CLM. You may wish to discuss some of the divisions and unions that Methodism has experienced over the years. Especially look at the formation of the Methodist Church in 1939 and the union with the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968.

CLM: Read the preface and Chapter 1 of *Living Our Beliefs*. Reflect on Wesley’s statement:

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

Facilitator: Discuss with the CLM any insights gained from reading through the preface and Chapter 1 of *Living Our Beliefs*. How important is denominational loyalty to the CLM? Why is she or he a part of The United Methodist Church?

Are there any parallels between England in the 1800s and the experience of the CLM in the twenty-first century? How might

these similarities affect The United Methodist Church? The local congregation?

Facilitator: With the CLM, view Session One, “Wesleyan Heritage,” from the video, *What Does It Mean to Be United Methodist?* Ask the CLM the following questions: What new insights about United Methodism did you gain from watching this video? What unique traits and gifts did God give John that helped him in his ministry? What was the Aldersgate experience in 1738? How did it change John? Discuss the reasons for the rapid spread of Methodism in America.

CLM: Read through the Covenant Renewal Service in the *Book of Worship*. At the heart of this service is the “Covenant Prayer”. What parts of the Covenant Renewal Service would you choose to include in a commitment service celebrating your certification as a lay minister? Why are these choices important to you?

Facilitator: Have the CLM examine “An Order for Presenting Licenses to Local Pastors” of *The Book of Worship*, to identify some additional elements for inclusion in a commitment service for a certified lay minister. By simply substituting “certified lay minister” for “local pastor,” much of this order can be adapted for such use. Encourage the CLM to work with the Mutual Ministry Team in the development of such a service that will recognize his or her certification as a lay minister.

Discuss with the CLM plans for lifelong learning and next steps in the ministry journey. What additional training will be required for recertification every other year? Where can this training be found? What particular skills require additional attention? What assistance and support are available for the continuing formation of a certified lay minister?

Close with a prayer for the ministry of the certified lay minister. Express joy for the ministry that will be done through this person in the name of Jesus Christ. Send the person out with your benediction.

Participant's Guide

Introduction

“Methodism began as a mission and reform movement within the Church of England” (Carder, p. 4). Methodism did not begin out of doctrinal differences with the established church. The movement began out of persons’ desire to experience the grace of God and live as accountable disciples. John Wesley said that God raised up Methodists to “reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.” (*The Book of Discipline*, p. 49) The Industrial Revolution had increased the disparity between the rich and the poor, many children were exploited as workers in the mines, medical care was beyond the reach of most, and many of the poor were in debtors’ prisons.

The new movement spread quickly under the preaching of John Wesley, energized by the music of Charles Wesley. Thousands of people responded to the preaching of Wesley, were converted, and soon were organized into societies. The rapid growth of societies required more preachers and organization. Wesley began to use lay preachers and set them apart for the full work of ministry, with the exception of presiding at the sacraments.

Soon, the Wesleyan revival spread to America. Lay people such as Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge, Philip and Margaret Embury, Paul and Barbara Heck, Captain Thomas Webb, and Joseph Pilmore initially led it. Later, Francis Asbury sailed from England in response to Wesley’s plea for preachers to go to America. Other circuit riders like Asbury were responsible for the quick spread of Methodism in America.

Methodism As a Modern Movement

It would be helpful for you review the first two sessions of the CD *United Methodism 101* with your Mutual Ministry Team. This segment deals with our Wesleyan heritage. After viewing the video, consider exploring these kinds of questions: What new insights about United Methodism did you receive from watching this video? How did the poor feel about the church in eighteenth-century England? Why was there unrest and discontent? What does this suggest in terms of the mission of the church today?

You may also want to share some of the history of Methodism with others in the local church: a confirmation class, a Sunday school class, or a class of new church members. Discuss with your Mutual Ministry Team how best to share your knowledge of our Wesleyan tradition with other members of the congregation. Develop and lead a one-hour session on Methodist history wherever it would be appropriate.

Continuing Education

As a certified lay minister, you are required to take ATLEAST one 10 hour Lay Servant Ministries Advanced Course or other continuing education course. After you have had an opportunity to explore some of your opportunities for continuing formation with your facilitator, take some time to discuss the need for continuing education with your Mutual Ministry Team. Share what you see as additional growth and training needs. Ask the Mutual Ministry Team to comment on your plans for growth in your responsibilities as a certified lay minister. What do they see that confirms your intentions? What insights do they have that differ from your expectations?

Discover the many training opportunities that exist through Lay Servant Ministries and the Annual Conference. Some opportunities include *Disciple* training, Stephen's Ministry, Walk to Emmaus, and Companions in Christ. Hospitals and counseling centers often offer courses for laity. Contact nearby United Methodist colleges, universities, seminaries, and centers for Christian education to find out which regular courses they offer.

With the Mutual Ministry Team, explore how the local congregation will support and encourage you in terms of resources and time to continue your development as a certified lay minister. Include continuing formation as a certified lay minister in your ministry covenant with the church and the Mutual Ministry Team.

Commitment Service

One last task is suggested before completing Module Four, and this is to develop a commitment service to be held in your local congregation as a way to recognize your certification as a lay minister. Two services in *The Book of Worship* may assist you in this task: the Covenant Renewal Service and "An Order for Presenting Licenses to Local Pastors".

Commitment Service To-Do List

- Work with your annual conference and/or your Mutual Ministry Team to develop a commitment service that will recognize you as a certified lay minister.
- If possible, include members of the team in the service.
- Adapt the “Order for Presenting Licenses to Local Pastors” by changing the title to “Presenting a Certificate for Certified Lay Ministry.”
- Possibly include in the service a portion of the covenant you made with your Mutual Ministry Team at the beginning of your training process.
- Use a portion of the Wesley Covenant Prayer from the *Book of Worship* or the shorter version found in *The Book of Hymns*.
- Celebrate this affirmation of your call to ministry.

I freely and heartily yield all things
To thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Module Four: Connection for Ministry

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