

May the peace of Christ be with you. Bishop McAlilly, First Lady Lynn McAlilly, Honored Guests, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

my name is David Reed and on behalf of the Memphis Conference Board of Lay Ministry and the office of Memphis Conference Lay Leader, I am here to present the 2015 Board of Lay Ministry Annual Report.

The purpose of the Board of Lay Ministry is to prepare and encourage all people in a life of Christian discipleship.

In ¶631 of the 2012 Edition of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church ...it states the Board of Lay Ministry should:

- Foster an awareness of the role of laity both within the local congregation and through their ministries in the home, work place, community, and world in achieving the mission of the Church.
- Develop and promote stewardship of time, talent, and possessions within the Annual Conference in cooperation with the Conference Council on Ministries.
- Relate to, support, and assist in coordinating the activities of the following organized laity of the conference: Lay Servant Ministries, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Young Adults and United Methodist Youth.

Shortly after the conclusion of the 2014 Memphis Annual Conference, your Board of Lay Ministry spend a Saturday at Jackson First United Methodist Church with Bishop Bill McAlilly; the Rev. Tom Hazelwood - Director of the Connectional Ministry Team; Dr. Richard Clark – Jackson District Superintendent and Board of Lay Ministry Cabinet Representative, and the Rev. Sky McCracken - Paducah District Superintendent and co-founder of the Generative Leadership Academy. We had a day of worship, of fellowship and strategic planning around our work together for the coming year.

Bishop McAlilly challenged the Board of Lay Ministry to do its part in leading the United Methodist Church to reclaim our Culture of Call while we are in this season of rethinking the church. He pointed out that the church is only vital when engaged in mission.

The bishop emphasized the importance of each of us living into our newly adopted Mission Statement: *To discover, equip, connect and send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time.*

He encouraged us to stay grounded in our adopted Conference Values: *unrelenting love for all people, integrity, excellence, faithfulness, fruitfulness, and innovation.*

We explored ways to encourage congregations to engage 72+U, which is based on Luke 10:1-11, the story of Jesus calling 72 disciples, commissioning them and sending them ahead to every town in place of him.

Bishop McAlilly asked us that day, “What are the distractions that are keeping us from our task of being in mission to our neighborhoods and communities?”

The bishop emphasized that “Our shared dream for the people called Methodist must be, to set aside our fears, our petty politics, our cynicism and to step into the future unafraid; where every congregation is a mission outpost, every pastor is a missionary and every layperson is part of that mission advance.”

We agreed that one very important way the Board of Lay Ministry can encourage local churches to engage the children and youth in their mission fields is through Partner Today: an initiative introduced by our First Lady, Lynn McAlilly, to serve our neighborhood schools. www.PartnerToday.org

We explored ways we can better support the Annual Conference’s renewed emphasis on Youth Activities.

We agreed to provide leadership, during this past year, for the Nashville Episcopal Area goal of raising \$1,000,000 for the Imagine No Malaria initiative.

We agreed to help the Annual Conference reach its goal of starting 25 new churches in the next 5 years by promoting and supporting the 2 Benjamins initiative to generate new funding.

We talked about the significance of our local congregations engaging the 72+U initiative.

We all know that for the 72+ U effort to be able to transform our communities, it must be to a large extent, lay-driven.

Brothers and sisters, we are living in a broken and hurting world. I do believe that God is trying to get the church's attention.

I believe God is asking **us** the same question Bishop McAlilly asked us a year ago, "What are the distractions that are keeping us from our task of being in mission to our neighborhoods and communities?"

Friends, there are negative voices of all around us, telling us that we are living in a challenging time to be a faithful disciple of Christ, in any tradition.

But on behalf of the Memphis Conference Board of Lay Ministry I want to be a voice that assures you that this is an exciting time to be a United Methodist in the Memphis Annual Conference.

I want to be a voice who assures you that we are blessed to have a wonderful, Christ-centered Episcopal Leader who loves his people and who prays for us daily, who prays for revival – that we may come alive in Christ's love.

I want to be a voice who assures you that we have marvelous lay and clergy leaders in our local congregations who are hungry to help others come into relationship with Christ.

I want to be a voice who assures you that we have incredible youth and young adults who are passionate about telling others about the love of Jesus.

Bishop, I love what you said you are learning about us:

- God is up to something in us and in our congregations.
- Many of us are longing for revival—to Live Again.
- There is a holy longing emerging in our voices, in our spirits, in our very souls.
- We are making progress...and we know there is more that God wants to offer us and more that God invites us to share.

Friends, I know that we are hungry to wake up to love...to offer Christ to a hurting world...to create a revolution of love...

...not with the church, not with our particular agendas...but with Jesus.

In closing, let me leave you with a word of encouragement and my apologies to John Wesley for paraphrasing one of his famous quotes:

Let us covenant together, to create a revolution of love among the people living within the boundaries known as the Memphis Conference, by

Doing all the good we can,
By all the means we can,
In all the ways we can,

In all the places we can,
At all the times we can,
By offering Jesus to all the hurting people we can,
For as long, as ever we can.

Together we can do so much more than we can alone.

We are Well people... God is calling us... Let it start here... Let it start today...

David R. Reed
Memphis Conference Lay Leader