

Empower Laity Leadership for Growth and Service



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INCLUSION (Defined)



Webster Dictionary

- “Inclusion refers to the act of including someone or something as part of a group”.
- containing as **part** of the whole being considered:
 - “the practice or policy of providing **equal** access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups”:

Biblical (The Bible says....)

- “ *refers to the act of **embracing and integrating** individuals into the community of believers, regardless of their background, ethnicity, or social status*”.
- “*The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ*”. 1 Corinthians 12:12
- “*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*”
Romans 15:7

Why is Inclusivity Important ?

- Inclusivity is a term that resonates deeply with Christians, yet it's something that we struggle with as a Christian community. For the **key element of inclusivity is to invite people into the conversation.**
- In a rapidly changing world, the term “inclusivity” has become more than just a buzzword—it's a core value that shapes our societies, workplaces, personal interactions, and churches.
- When people feel included, they are more likely to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.
- An inclusive mindset recognizes and values different perspectives. This nurtures a sense of belonging and respect, essential for personal growth and service.
- To build a solid and effective organization Inclusivity is important because it takes people, thoughts, ideas that may not have otherwise had recognition into consideration. Inclusivity allows everyone to be considered—not only those who fit within the scope of “what has always worked to those .” who have recognize that “what has always worked” is no longer working—hence new, fresh eyes are needed..

Biblical

- **Matthew 28:18-20** “ Great Commission” Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- Jesus’ Ministry is a Model of Inclusion

In Church

- Inclusivity in the church is important because it **reflects the Gospel's power to unite diverse individuals into one body.** It requires a commitment to biblical principles, recognizing the inherent worth of every person,
- The thoughts ideas and perspective of all individual matter. Note: it may require you to step outside of your comfort zone.

MISSION



- **Church** –The A.M.E. Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people. “The church is a congregation of faithful persons, in which the pure Word of God is preached and sacraments duly administered according to God’s ordnance “ (*Articles of Religion 13*)”.
- **Clergy** - “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you*”. **John 15:16 KJV** -

“The body of all people **ordained** for religious duties, especially in the Christian Church” (*Webster dictionary*). The mission of the A.M.E. clergy is fulfilled the mission of the A.M.E. Church (*to minister to the social ,spiritual and physical development of all people*) by spreading Christ’s liberating gospel through word and deed.
- **Laity**- “The Lay Organization is commissioned to teach, train and empower its members for lay ministry, global leadership and service following the tenets of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this organization shall be to organize and train the laity of the AME Church so that laypersons maximally utilize their God given abilities and skills to improve and extend the kingdom, to create happiness, peace and harmony among its members”. *1stdistrictlayorg/the-lay organization-mission*

Church leadership

key truths about church leadership

- “It’s the God-given responsibility of guiding, equipping, and serving others in the body of Christ to fulfill His mission”. theleadpastor.com/article/what-is-church-leadership/
- Make disciples, and discipleship requires leadership
- Every Christian is called to lead. As 1 Peter 2:9 reminds us, we are all part of the “royal priesthood,” responsible for sharing Christ’s light.
- **Leadership shapes how the church is seen.** Whether it’s a pastor preaching, a Trustee, Steward serving, or Laity/volunteers leading ministry, the world forms its view of the church through leadership.
- Healthy leadership happens at every level. From the pastor to laity, **everyone has a role in shepherding others toward spiritual growth.**



Words /Meanings/Glossary

(Webster dictionary)



- **Empower** –To give power or authority to someone, **enabling** them to take action or make decisions. It can also refer to providing individuals with the means or opportunities to improve their situation or capabilities.
- **Diversity** -While inclusivity is often associated with diversity, the two are not the same. **Diversity** refers to both the differences that help us see each other as distinct individuals and the similarities that help to connect us. whereas **Inclusivity** ensures that these differences are **embraced** and **integrated** in an **equitable** manner.
- **Incorporation** - The inclusion of something as part of a whole:
- **Trust** - Firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something:
- **Collaborations** -To work jointly with others or together to produce or create something
- **Leadership** - The art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal
- **Team** - People working together as a group in order to achieve something:
- **Team management** - Focuses on motivating a group of employees to work toward a common goal.

Clergy and Laity called to work together

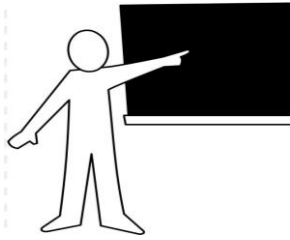
Partners in leadership



Clergy



Laity



Teaching Point

- **Is the distinction between clergy and laity biblical?**

Neither the word *clergy* nor the word *laity* appears in the Bible. These are terms that are commonly used today to refer to “the person in the pulpit” versus “the people in the pews.” While believers have different callings and gifts they are all servants of the Lord

(Romans 12:6 (NIV). “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith”);

(Romans 14:4 (NIV) “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand”.)

- Too many of us forget that the clergy are drawn from the laity,

Empower

People



Inspire

People



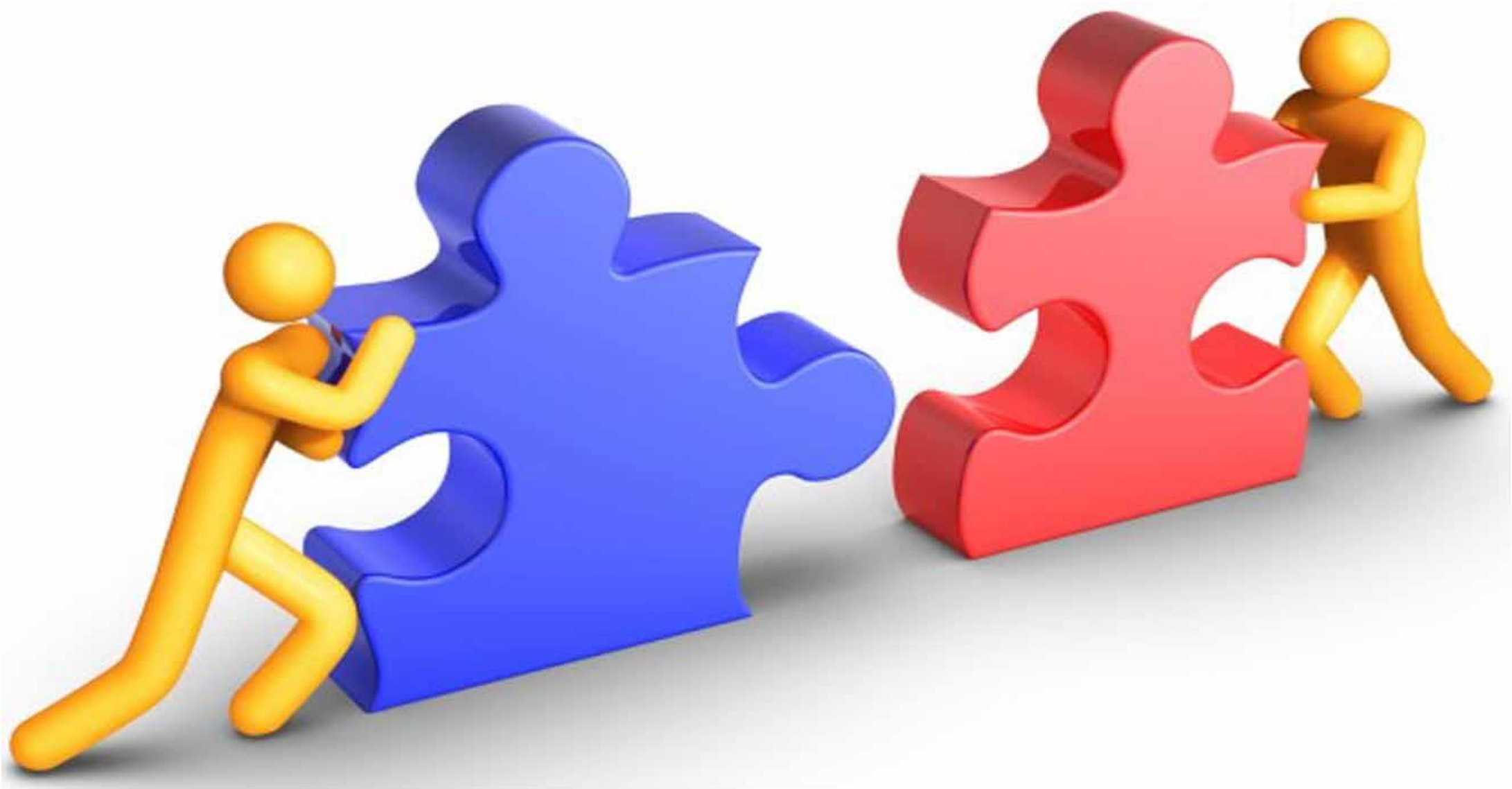
LEADERSHIP

Lead
Change



Share
Vision





For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^[d] or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many 1 Corinthians' 12: 12-14 (ESV)

Why is inclusivity essential for a unified body?

- *If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body” 1 Corinthians 12: 15-16 ESV*
- Every part of the body, no matter how insignificant it might seem, **is essential**. You might sometimes feel that your role in the church doesn't matter much, especially if it's not in the spotlight.
- God calls the church to be a vibrant ,powerful and fruitful and the way we do that is by **working together** in perfect unity.
- God is looking to build a church where everyone values interactive unity. The way we achieve that unity is by being **united under one banner**. There is no other banner that must be lifted high in God's house than the banner of Jesus' name.
- “ The God we serve is a God of unity who desires that His church live in unity and harmony built on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who draws us together and the power of the Holy Spirit that make our bond stronger”. *(Patrick Mabilog. The power of unity and why God calls us to be one ,May 2016)*

CLERGY/LAITY COMMONALITIES

- Serving the Lord unconditionally
- Equipping Saints for Ministry
- Building the Kingdom of God
- Effectuating Stewardship
- Availing self of God's bountiful blessings



Are we naturally Inclusive?

“Natural Inclusion refers to the intrinsic (Basic, essential) connection between people, nature, the planet, and the universe”.
(<https://inclusivevity.world>)

Why

- **Biblically, we are by nature inclusive of others.** The Bible encourages inclusion, reflecting God’s love for all people regardless of background, status, or ethnicity. Believers are called to reflect this inclusive love by accepting and welcoming others.
- **Galatians 3:28**
“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, *for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”
- **Isaiah 56:7**
“For my house will be called a house of prayer *for all nations.*”
- The **Christian view of human nature** is characterized by the belief that human beings are created in the image of God, with fundamental dignity and value. At the same time, human nature is also marked by a tendency towards sin and moral imperfection, which can lead to a separation from God.

Why Not (Naturally -NO)

- **We are not because inclusiveness requires us to make a decision whether to include or exclude.** Inclusivity is a decision making process. *Example: What makes you chose a person to be part of an organization. Yes we have volunteers, however we do ask people to be a part of an organization or group. Why do we do this?*
- **We gravitate to commonality.** *Example: Enter a room , not knowing anyone, what makes you go seat or stand by a certain person? What make you invite certain people sit with you?. People often connect easily with those who are similar to them, relating to those who are different comes less naturally.*
- **Not automatic.** Must leave the door open for others to come in. Unfortunately, there are many working to take that away, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

Is the organized Lay Inclusive?

- Per - the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2021 , page 107
- Membership in this organization is open to all Lay un-ordained members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- Organizations that **embrace** inclusivity benefit from a diverse pool of talent, which leads to increased creativity, innovation, and better decision-making. It also improves retention within the organization. People are more likely to stay in environments where they feel valued and respected.

Who/What does the empowering?



In Acts 1:8, Jesus promises His disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ESV

Empowering

WHO

Holy Spirit –

- **Equips** believers for service, witness and holy living. Empowerment by the Spirit refers to the **divine enablement** and strengthening of believers through the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's purposes and live a life that reflects His will.
- Acts 1:8 highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, enabling believers to bear witness to the gospel with boldness and effectiveness.
- Empowerment by the Spirit is also manifested through spiritual gifts, which are given to believers for the edification of the Church.
- The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in fostering unity in the Body of Christ. It's the Spirit that empowers you to love, serve, and support one another selflessly. By yielding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you can cultivate a deeper unity within your church.
- **What the Holy Spirit's empowerment does –**
- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, there is less of us, our wants, our desires, our sins, and our influences. **It's not about you.**
- The Holy Spirit strengthens our inner beings: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...” ([Ephesians 3:17](#)).
- To be empowered by the Holy Spirit all you have to do is embrace it with your heart, move toward the ministry, and get closer to Jesus Christ.

Empowering

Who

Pastor

- You are not a **Solo Leader** - The truth is Jesus was not a solo leader. He had people who forwarded his vision. You have people, too. You just have to look for them.
- Allowing gifted laity central roles in worship.
- Valuing their involvement in the ministry and service of local churches. **Be intentional about including laity in the development process.**
- Offering leadership development programs to **equip and empower** laypersons to serve in ministry. As pastor one of the roles is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry”.
- Developing laity ownership of sustainable. Working together (Clergy/Laity) in planning, developing pathways in discipleship.
- Create opportunities for spiritual growth.

How does it work

UNITY



Philippians 2: 2-4 “*Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”.*

Step 1 : Let nothing be done through selfish ambition: - In the flesh, we are often motivated by selfish ambition or conceit. Are we doing it out of love for others or out of our own desire for advancement or promotion. A good question to ask is ; Am I taking this position to further God’s agenda or mines?

Step 2 : Let nothing be done through conceit- Conceit is thinking too highly of one's self, of having an excessive self-interest and self-preoccupation. When we do things feeling we are so important, or so able, or so talented, we are out of God's will. We are working against the unity

Step 3: In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself - completely contradictory to the attitude of the world, because lowliness of mind is about the least attractive thing to the thinking of this world.

Step 4: Esteem others better than himself (don’t put people down, lift them up).(Humility)

Step 5: Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others

Step 6: Stop Calling in plays from side-line or observation booth. Join in.

Does the abuse or misuse of power and / or authority encumber (hinder) the unity of the Body of Christ? The growth of the local church. The Spiritual maturity of lay person.

- The Body of Christ loses effectiveness and power when the **voices of the "other" are excluded** when leaders fail to do the right thing in the context of using power.
- Great leaders **use less power and share more power** with others they lead, equipping them to serve others as well.
- As John Stott explained, “*Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who **humble themselves to serve.***”
- *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. ([Phil. 2:5–7](#))*

Unity Of The Body Of Christ

- Abuse /Misuse of power in the church can hinder unity of the body of Christ. **It loses effectiveness when others are excluded.** The scriptures reminds us that every believer, regardless of their role, is invaluable. As a member of the Body of Christ have a unique part to play. We need all parts working together. Whether you are a preacher, or laity your contribution is crucial.
- Abuse/Misuse of power can severely weaken the Body of Christ. Just as a physical body can become crippled if its parts are disjointed, **a church can become ineffective and stagnant if its members are divided.** You must strive for unity, always remembering that disagreements and differences should not sever the bonds you share with other believers. **You can agree to disagree and still be unified.**

Does the abuse or misuse of power and /or authority encumber (hinder) The growth of the local church



- Abuse /misuse of power within your church **could harm its overall mission**. It's important to approach disagreements with a spirit of reconciliation and love. This doesn't mean avoiding difficult conversations but rather engaging in them constructively.
- Abuse/Misuse of power when Clergy and Laity leadership **becomes more about power than purpose**. This can lead to toxic organization whereby you become more interested in control than opportunities for service. *Ministry was never supposed to be about power. It was supposed to be about service.*
- Abuse /misuse of power within churches can suppress discussion , stifle creativity, reduce participation /volunteering, Emotional hurt,

Does the abuse or misuse of power and or authority encumber (hinder)

The Spiritual maturity of lay person.

- Spiritual maturity involves a **deepening relationship with God**. **There is a difference between being a fan of Jesus and a follower of Jesus.**
- When Spiritual leadership used their position of authority in such a way that they **manipulate, bully, and intimidate** those under them as a means of maintaining their own power and control it hinders and cause negative spiritual growth. The people will stop focus on prayer , bible study and worship. (*Church hurt*)
- Some even question their belief in God. Religion vs Relationship.
- Stop attending church because they have lost their trust in people, especially church leaders and fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord.
- They become Non-contributors

Practical ways to promote inclusivity

- Be Open to Change: **Inclusivity is an ongoing process**. Being open to feedback and willing to be adaptable and flexible is key to creating a truly inclusive environment.
- Empower and collaborate between clergy /laity to lead the ministry
- Make it a continuous process
- Choose leaders who understand the importance of organization mission and values.
- Keep an open mind
- Help members feel comfortable expressing themselves
- Create a safe space for people's beliefs and opinions



Resources :

- AME website (Various)
- Bible gateway.com
- Bible stores hub. The Power of unity in the body of Christ, <https://biblestorieshub.com/the-power-of-unity-in-the-body-of-christ-1-corinthians-1212>
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- Lynda R, Byrd. “*The Laity Fix*”. Christian Faith Publishing, Inc. 2018.
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