



10 Minutes with a Lay Minister



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What does a lay minister do?

We spoke to Jeff, a lay minister at a Lutheran congregation in Illinois, about what it's like to be a lay minister. Here's what he shared:

1 **What are your primary tasks as a lay minister?**

My primary tasks are in the area of small groups, assimilation, education, worship, and Stephen Ministry. I also serve as the staff representative to the boards of Stewardship and Missions. Other lay ministers might serve in areas such as youth, outreach, or perform duties similar to those of a DCE. Occasionally, certified lay ministers may serve in a capacity similar to that of a pastor in a congregation that is vacant or too small to be able to call a pastor. In those situations lay ministers perform their duties under the supervision of a pastor in the area in which they serve, authorized by the District President.

2 **Describe your typical work day.**

As with most church work professions there is no such thing as typical. During a workday I might be preparing to lead a Bible study class, preparing for a meeting, researching and planning for an upcoming event, or handling phone calls from members regarding church happenings. Other days I may be helping to set up chairs and tables for a class or photocopying lesson materials. Often times I return to the church in the evening for a meeting but I try to limit that to no more than three times per week. On average I have an evening meeting or class only one or two times per week.

3 **What is the greatest challenge of your profession?**

Lay ministers are certified through Concordia University Wisconsin. Interested lay people can become certified either by taking the classes at the university and obtaining a bachelor's degree or through the university's Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program. The TEE program

is geared for second career people who already have a bachelor's degree and want to be certified for service in the church as a Lay Minister. This program involves 17 courses or a total of 47 credit hours.

4 **What is the greatest reward of your profession?**

Most often the greatest challenge is time. The weekly deadlines at times can be stressful. Sunday is going to come, your board is going to meet or your class is going to meet regardless of how many other things are going on in your week. It is important in those situations to have a team of leaders that you can delegate to if needed.

Another challenge is recruiting and training leaders who can share in the ministry of the church. We need to keep in mind that these are volunteers who have their own careers and job related challenges too. One of the challenges is to help them to keep their life in balance between family, church, and work.

5 **What is the average starting salary for a lay minister?**

The rule of thumb is that the salary was comparable to that of Lutheran school teachers. As a point of reference, 12 years ago I started at \$28,000 per year. That was comparable to what I made in my former career which was industrial television. For what it's worth, I have noticed that my current salary is slightly higher than the starting salaries for police officers and firefighters in my area. Although it is not the best paying job and I can't always give my family what others have, the Lord has taken care of us and blessed us with not only what we need but often with what we want, at times in abundance!

6 *How many hours do you work during a typical week?*

You know, I have never really counted. But usually my day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m. As I mentioned earlier there are typically one to two evenings when I return for a meeting. These usually last about 90 minutes. I usually have responsibilities in worship. These responsibilities could be for Saturday night, one service on Sunday, two services on Sunday, or all three. When I had more weekend responsibilities, I had a weekday off during the week. Now that my weekend duties are less, I have two weekdays off per month to make up for the evening meetings.

7 *How does your job affect your family life?*

I would say that my family life is enhanced by my job. While at times I may be away for several nights at a time, working in the church helps to integrate my life and family with the life of the church and the church family. I guess this could be a detriment if things are not going well at church or if there is some division within the congregation.

There is the sense though, as with all church workers, that you and your family are in the spotlight. You need to remember your position in church as you visit with friends who are also members at church. Your family, too, needs to remember this.

8 *In what ways are you able to help others as a lay minister?*

I am able to help others grow in their relationship with their Lord. This is done as the Holy Spirit works through the various ministries of the church.

In a practical sense I am able to help people as they come to speak to me about how they might best use their spiritual gifts and abilities. Occasionally I will talk with someone who is in need physically or spiritually and I try to

9 *What is the greatest reward of your profession?*

The greatest reward for me personally is to see the faith development of our members. It is very exciting to see the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of Christians. Over the span of years I have been able to see individuals mature spiritually and use their gifts to begin new ministries in our church.

It is rewarding too when a non-believer begins attending a small group and then later is baptized with their whole small group sitting in the front row! In short my greatest reward is being able to see God at work in so many people at the same time and to then see those people make an impact on His kingdom.

10 *And now a question for you . . .*

Have you considered that God might be calling you to serve the church as a lay minister? Here are some steps you might take to help you answer that question.

- Talk to your congregation's pastor. He's there to give you the guidance and support that you need.
- Call the Lay Minister office at Concordia Mequon, 1-888-628-9472, for more information about the training it takes to be a lay minister.
- Send an e-mail to the director of the lay minister program at albert.garcia@cuw.edu.
- Ask God to grant you guidance as you consider ways in which you can serve His church.

What are some of the characteristics of a lay minister?

- Enthusiasm for sharing the Gospel with others
- A desire for a strong worship and devotional life
- Compassion and concern for others
- Perseverance, patience, and humility
- Knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrine
- Good communications skills
- Self-discipline and sense of responsibility
- Willing to work in a team ministry

Where do I go to prepare for a church work career?

Concordia University
Ann Arbor, Michigan
800-253-0680
www.cuaa.edu

Concordia University
Portland, Oregon
800-321-9371
www.cu-portland.edu

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