



2018 EPAUMC Laity Academy

August 3-5, 2018

Quakertown UMC

Class, Registration & Hotel Information will
be posted after April 1

More Information:

Conference Webpage

<https://www.epaumc.org/ministry/lay/>

Christ Servant Minister web page

<http://christservantministries.net/>

us on Facebook!



The 35th Laity Academy's theme is 'Pass It On – Spreading God's Word Through Action! Recall the most recent themes of the 34th Laity Academy, 'Embrace the Journey – Step Up – Step out', and for the 33rd Academy theme was 'Follow That Star – Make It Happen!' As members of Christ's Church we all have a role to play – no matter how small or large – Paul says it very directly in Corinthians 12 where he tells us that every part of the body of Christ has a role and that the body does not consist of one member but of many. 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."

Over the last few years our themes have kept this thought in mind, combined with the purpose of the Laity Academy which is to educate and guide our Laity through their personal journeys in Christ's Church. The 33rd Academy Theme of 'Follow That Star' was meant to energize each of us to realize that each of us is on a journey, a walk with Christ. Then by Embracing The Journey many of us realized that we needed to not only follow the Star (Christ), but we should truly experience the journey we are on. I have heard of stories where someone in our Church family will say I can't or won't do something; then with some loving support, and encouragement, this same person will in fact try or 'step up' to doing what has been asked.

So what does our 35th Academy theme represent? What does the image of relay runners passing the baton say about our event and our mission? What our image does *not* show is one runner beating all the others by crossing the finish line first to claim the prize for him or herself. Clearly Paul's message in Corinthians is NOT about one, but about many! This is clearly a representation of a relay event, where all the runners on a team work together to achieve a common goal. Everyone on the team shares equally in the prize, so our image is not about simply winning or losing.

Our image shows the moment that the baton is passed between two runners on a team - that split second when they both have a hand on the baton and when it is most likely that the baton can be dropped. It matters not whether one of the runners is faster than the other. In order to successfully pass the baton they have to be in perfect sync, running together in perfect time at the moment of the handoff, no matter how fast or slow they run during the rest of their leg of the race. This is no easy feat. It's the relationship between the two that matters more than their speed or running ability.

Paul understood the importance of pacing his message for the people to whom he ministered, in running alongside them, no matter what their background or belief. In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul states *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.*

Paul is not preaching down to people, but walking alongside them, offering his life and his faith as examples of the gospel. He works with them, meeting them where they are, acknowledging that starting place but offering something more. This is nothing more than how Jesus himself taught. For three years he walked alongside his disciples, living and eating with them, teaching by example as well

as stories and Scripture. There was no hierarchy of leadership among Christ's disciples. There was only Christ and those who followed Christ. The priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of all believers are the only two leadership positions mentioned in the New Testament. In John 21, Jesus tells John to feed his sheep – not to lead them. When we talk about being Christ like or Christ followers, it's this kind of a life we are trying to emulate. The baton is the message of life and hope that we have in Christ that we are actually commissioned by Christ to pass along.

So 35th Academy theme is to simply walk alongside our fellow Christians and “feed each other” – to pass on everything that we can about our faith, give others the opportunity to do the same. This is servant leadership. It's doing with, as well, as for others, emphasizing relationships rather than positions.

Remember, Paul tells us that we all are given different gifts – which may include administration, preaching, and teaching – but no one gift is more valuable than any other, and we are all to use our gifts as followers of Christ to build up the body of the church. There's a place for all of us in the race to make disciples. Our Laity Academy strives to provide the education, the fellowship, and the nurturing for each of us to not only embrace our gifts from God, but to use those gifts to help others in their walk in Christ.

Let's celebrate what God has done and continues to do for us, and then use all our diverse God-given talents and abilities, our gifts, to make sure that the baton we've been given – the command to teach, preach, and make disciples of Jesus Christ - gets passed safely from our hands to the others who will keep running the race until the day of Jesus' return. Let our success be judged by how well we all keep pace with and support each other in Christian love during every moment of our personal “race.”

Extracts taken from a 2018 Laity Academy planning team devotion presented by Brenda Binns