

Conference Lay Leader Nominee

Name: Andy O'Donnell **Local Church:** Renton UMC



Please list your experience for this position.

- 2004-2021: Member, Nominating Committee / Lay Leadership Committee / Nominations & Leadership Development Committee (N&LDC) - Renton (First) United Methodist Church (R[F]UMC)
- 2004-2014: Young Adult Representative, RFUMC
- 2004-Present: Member (various roles), Church Council - R(F)UMC
- 2009-2013: Member, Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries (CCOYAM)
- 2014-2021: Vice-Chair, N&LDC - R(F)UMC
- 2014-Present: Periodically visited United Methodist churches throughout Seattle / SeaTac Missional District (STMD), Pacific Northwest Annual Conference (PNWAC), and Greater Northwest (Episcopal) Area (GNWA), including occasional non-United Methodist church visits
- 2015-2018: Lay Leader, RFUMC
- 2017-Present: Certified Lay Servant, R(F)UMC / Completed Lay Servant Ministry (LSM) Courses
- 2017-2018: Audited Certified Lay Minister (CLM) Courses
- 2019-2022: District Lay Leader, STMD
- 2019-Present: Member, Board of Laity - PNWAC
- 2019-Present: Member, Nominations Committee - PNWAC
- 2022-Present: Associate Conference Lay Leader, PNWAC
- 2022-Present: Member, Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders (AACLL)

What is your vision for lay ministry in the Pacific Northwest Conference?

As I started doing in the SeaTac Missional District during my time serving as District Lay Leader (particularly once the pandemic began as a way to keep us from feeling isolated), we had monthly “gatherings” (via Zoom only at that time) of the local church lay leaders (or, for those churches without official lay leaders, leadership representatives to fill that role) to share with each other the happenings within each of our own local ministry settings, and learning from each other different ideas that we could apply within our own contexts. This expanded to us alternating between such meetings one month and another month having a broader training opportunity open to those beyond just the lay leaders where we would have multiple topics for people to learn from others about. Thankfully, this has continued beyond my term in that role, and I plan to keep this up into the future.

How will your gifts align with this vision and the needs of lay ministry in the Pacific Northwest Conference?

I have always been about justice, diversity, and inclusion, so these have been key principles in how I serve in any role. Therefore, it is important to me that I always have an ear open to differing perspectives and cultures, even when they may conflict with my own personal views -- it's not about me, but the Body of Christ as a whole and ensuring that we all have equal voice, even -- perhaps especially -- when we disagree. As long as we respect each other despite those disagreements, we can love each other through the challenges presented, always keeping Jesus Christ at the center. I feel I am gifted at guiding us through such difficulties and ensuring that we don't lose sight of what really matters. Additionally, I feel my gifts in the area of technology can help guide us through those challenges that arise, as well.

With the M.I.L.E., Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth offered a vision for ministry in the Greater Northwest Area. How do you see the 'L' - Lay Ministry Enhancement - being implemented and what role could conference lay leadership play in it?

As mentioned, I want to continue and expand upon the work we have already done within the SeaTac Missional District, other districts, the PNW Conference, and even the Greater Northwest Area, to offer opportunities for laity to increase their knowledge and leadership skills in various ways that speak to them in ways they feel called to ministry. We also must recognize that we all have different spiritual gifts, and discovering those gifts is a critical piece in understanding how we can best serve within our local communities and beyond, as well as learning how our various gifts can work together with each other to offer our best selves to those whom we serve. Nancy Tam Davis, Bishop Cedrick, our district lay leaders, fellow conference lay leaders, and I have already been laying the framework for this important ministerial work, and I look forward to it continuing to grow and flourish!