



## Harry Velasquez: Certified Lay Servant/Video Ministry

**How long have you been attending BUMC and how did you get connected here?**

*Harry:* I started attending BUMC when Rev. Ron Foster was our Senior Pastor, and I felt welcomed and right at home. The combination of spirited worship and fellowship hit all the right chords. As part of the diverse music program of our church, I attended an excellent folk music festival here that was so much fun I knew that this was the right place to be. The diverse ways that members of BUMC serve in our community was truly inspiring and spoke to my soul, so I joined our congregation soon thereafter.

**You were recently commissioned as a Certified Lay Servant at BUMC. Tell us about that role and how you hope to live into that call through BUMC.**

*Harry:* As a committed Christian with a deep love for sharing Christ, I'm exploring the call to ministry, which is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is privilege to be a part of our community of faith, and it is also a responsibility to respond to God's call by holy living and living in connection. In being called to serve, I hope that my witness and service glorify God and inspire deeper commitment to sharing Christ. To answer the call and become equipped to serve, I'm pursuing parallel pathways: 1.) training in Lay Ministry; 2.) studying at Wesley Seminary; 3.) serving in our church. Becoming commissioned as a Lay Servant was an important step in the process of committing to ministry and living into God's call on my life. The next steps in certification are Certified Lay Speaker and Certified Lay Minister.

In my ministry I hope to serve by sharing Christ, making disciples, and living in connection through: worship, prayer, caring ministries, evangelism, growing our congregation, and responding to the needs of our community. I love creating sacred space and encouraging others to share their stories. I enjoy bringing the church to people wherever they are, and I am committed to being fully present for people in need, to caring for the whole person, and to walking prayerfully with them. I enjoy helping others to explore how they too, might share their gifts, their service, and their witness. I am passionate about motivating and empowering individuals, organizations, and communities to discern, act, and succeed at getting in agreement with God and staying focused on where God is leading them.

**You have created a new video ministry at BUMC. Tell us about your goals for this ministry and how this became a passion for you.**

*Harry:* In my ministry I explore new ways for people to encounter Christ, in church and in non-traditional settings. In today's busy world, where people are surrounded by mixed messages, the good news of Jesus Christ offers clarity and hope. In an "always on, hyperconnected" culture, real-world authentic relationships nurtured by love and sustained by the Holy Spirit are foundational. As a result, I'm working with church leaders to explore new ways to meet people where they are and invite them to share in the many experiences that our community of faith offers. For example, our online videos show scenes from the life of our church and provide an invitation to learn more about BUMC and get connected. Need a spiritual uplift? Turn off the television and tune into BUMC.

**Speaking of videos, share with us about your new documentary film project at Wesley Seminary.**

*Harry:* Are we not called to be witnesses to God at work in the world today? We need to strengthen the pipeline of leaders committed to living God's call, lifting people up and working together for peace and justice. Wesley Seminary excels as a voice in the public square and equipping people for the work of ministry. As a result, we are collaborating on film projects to show how people are responding to God's call, how Wesley Seminary is equipping people to serve, and how the whole church is active in ministry. This ongoing project can be viewed on the Wesley Seminary YouTube channel. There is also a larger project being filmed that we hope will inspire people to add their voices in sharing Christ with a broken world.

**What would you like others to know about our BUMC community.**

*Harry:* By living in connection as a vibrant and engaged congregation, when we learn and serve together in community, Jesus shows us daily who we can be. I believe that by hearing, answering, and participating in a divine calling together, we are serving as Christ's body at work in the world today. There is so much we can do by working together for positive change. We are a community where everyone is welcome. Bethesda United Methodist Church is a safe and nurturing place to discover your spiritual gifts and to explore how God is calling you.

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