

DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE

COUNCIL OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

**APPROVED BY BISHOP MCGRATH
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DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

PREAMBLE

The Apostle Paul, when writing to his newly-founded Christian communities, acknowledged and thanked certain men and women with whom he collaborated closely in the ministry of the Gospel. Among them he named Prisca and Aquila, “my co-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I am grateful but also all the churches of the Gentiles.” (Romans 16:3-4)

In the post-conciliar period, a distinctly new and different group of lay ministers has emerged in the Church in the United States. This group consists of lay women and men performing roles that entail varying degrees of pastoral leadership and administration in parishes, church agencies and organizations, and at diocesan and national levels.

- . They are doing so in a public, recognized, and authorized manner.
- . Furthermore, when these lay ministers speak of their responsibilities, they emphasize ministering in ways that are distinguished from, yet complementary to, the roles of ordained ministers.
- . Many of them also express a deep sense of vocation that is part of their personal identity and that motivates what they are doing.
- . Many have sought academic credentials and diocesan certification in order to prepare for their ministry.¹

The Diocese of San Jose is blessed to have many dedicated, competent men and women who have been entrusted with roles that entail ministerial leadership and coordination within parishes, hospitals, schools, church organizations, and diocesan offices. This particular expression of lay activity in our Church is called “lay ecclesial ministry”.

LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY is a way of serving the mission of Christ that

- flows from baptism and the gifts of the Spirit,
- involves a commitment and responsibility for ecclesial leadership, and
- requires appropriate formation and authorization to collaborate with the ordained in their work of pastoring the People of God.

Baptism and Gifts of the Spirit

- Lay ecclesial ministry is a particular way of responding, through prayerful discernment, to the baptismal call to further the mission of Christ.
- It flows from the charisms that are given to the baptized by the Holy Spirit and needed by the church.
- It has its sacramental basis in baptism and confirmation, and therefore, does not require the sacramental gifts that are given in Holy Orders.

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Commitment

- Lay ecclesial ministry often involves a significant and long-term commitment on the part of the minister, though this is not necessarily a life-long commitment to ministry.
- It is often, though not necessarily, marked by employment (full-or part time) on a parish staff, in diocesan offices, or within church related organizations.

Responsibility for Ecclesial Leadership

- Lay ecclesial ministry is a public activity directed toward building up the body of Christ for its mission in the world.
- It is recognized and affirmed by the Church community.
- It involves a leadership responsibility for some area of ministry, which usually means a relationship of coordination and direction of others in the community.

Appropriate formation

- Lay ecclesial ministry requires a ministerial competence that comes from formation and preparation through pastoral experience; generalized or specialized training at parish, diocesan or national level; a formal degree; or certification.

Authorization to collaboration with the Ordained

- Since lay ecclesial ministry involves substantial collaboration with the ordained in their pastoral ministry, it requires authorization by the bishop or his delegate.
- This authorization can take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, a public ritual.

Lay ecclesial ministry is not a specific title, but a general name for a variety of ministerial roles.

BACKGROUND

"First, the word 'lay' underscores the fact that persons in this group remain first, foremost, and always members of the laity. Their work is a specific and legitimate expression of the general vocation of all lay persons. When we use the term 'lay ecclesial minister,' we do not refer to all those who minister in response to their baptism within the church community or the world; the word "ecclesial" denotes not only that the ministry of these lay persons has a place within the communion of the Church but also that it is to be submitted to the judgment and supervision of the hierarchy. It is not simply an activity undertaken on personal initiative. Finally, the entire term 'lay ecclesial minister' is identifying a broad category. It is not a specific job title. Lay ecclesial minister is a generic term. We use it to establish a framework to indicate what is common to many roles and responsibilities undertaken by lay persons, for example, director of religious education, pastoral associate, youth minister, campus chaplain, hospital chaplain, and director of RCIA."²

Identity as a lay ecclesial minister is both a question of personal awareness and intentionality and a matter of recognition by official church authority. The two dimensions must converge. "Lay ecclesial minister" has come to mean the following:

- A fully initiated lay member of the Christian faithful (including vowed religious) who is responding to the empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit received in baptism and confirmation, which enable one to share in some form of ministry.
- One who responds to a call or invitation to participate in ministry and who has prepared through a process of prayerful discernment.
- One who has received the necessary formation, education, and training to function competently within the given area of ministry.
- One who intentionally brings personal competencies and gifts to serve the Church's mission through a specific ministry of ecclesial leadership and who does so with community recognition and support.
- One to whom a formal and public role in ministry has been entrusted or upon whom an office has been conferred by competent ecclesiastical authority.
- One who has been commissioned in a ministry through the authority of the bishop or his representative, perhaps using a public ritual.
- One who commits to performing the duties of a ministry in a trustworthy manner.
- A paid staff person (full or part-time) or a volunteer who has responsibility and the necessary authority for institutional leadership in a particular area of ministry.³

“Finally, when describing lay ecclesial ministry, it is necessary to offer a clarification regarding religious life. A person living the consecrated, vowed life has a certain public identity and canonical status within the Church that is distinct from the lay faithful and the secular character which is properly theirs. Religious profession of vows is not primarily a charge to particular ministry, but a decision to enter into a community and to share with others a particular way of life and distinctive mission, under a specific rule and with public commitment to the evangelical counsels. When the person whose vocation to religious life includes a further call to collaborate with the ordained by filling public roles of leadership, then she or he accepts a role that can be considered lay ecclesial ministry.”⁴

SUMMARY OF SEVERAL FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS THAT ILLUMINATE LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY⁵

- God is fundamentally relational – a loving communion of Persons, the love of Trinitarian communion revealed in mission.
- Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, a reign of love, truth, justice, and peace.
- Through baptism we put on Christ and become his body. Through all three sacraments of initiation we are called to something more: to join Christ’s mission of salvation.
- The Church is the communion of those called by Christ to be his disciples.
- All believers through Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are formed into “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.”

Charismas are those graces of the Spirit that have, directly or indirectly, a benefit for the community. Tested and guided by the Church’s pastors, with the assistance of spiritual directors, formation directors, mentors and others, these charismas are ordered “to build up the Church, to the well-being of humanity, and to the needs of the world.” Thus, while there is a diversity of ministry in the Church, there is a unity of mission grounded in the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶

THE PRIEST AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS⁷

The priest, as co-worker with the bishop, assists him in the work of teaching, sanctifying, and guiding the community of disciples. The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire people of God.

While they differ essentially, the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful are ordered to one another and thus intimately related. Lay Ecclesial Ministers, especially those serving in parishes, look to their priests, for leadership in developing that kind of collaboration that is life-giving, mutual, respectful, grounded in basic equality of persons as well as the necessary differentiation of roles, flowing from gifts, and directed toward accomplishing Christ’s mission.

THE DEACON AND THE LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS⁸

By his participation in the sacrament of orders, the deacon is constituted by the bishop as an ordained minister.

While at times deacons may carry out some of the same tasks as lay ecclesial ministers, care must be taken to avoid a merely “functional” understanding of the deacons’ sacramental identity even when functions may be exercised that are the same as those exercised by lay persons or by priests, there is nonetheless a distinct sacramental basis of the deacon’s ministry that flows from the sacrament of Orders.

“The primary distinction is between the ministry of the lay faithful and the ministry of the ordained. Both are rooted in sacramental initiation, but the pastoral ministry of the ordained is empowered in a unique way by the Sacrament of Orders. Through it, the ministry of the apostles is extended, as successors of the apostles, bishops, with priests and deacons s helpers, ‘shepherd their dioceses teachers of doctrine, ministers of sacred worship and holders of office in government.’ The function of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the faithful constitutes the essence of pastoral ministry; they “form an indivisible unity and cannot be understood if separated one from the other.”

This recognition of the unique role of the ordained is not a distinction based of merit or rank; but rather, it is a distinction based on service to the mission of the church.

THE LAY FAITHFUL AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS⁹

Lay Ecclesial Ministers are members of the lay faithful, sharing in the common priesthood of the faithful.

The further call of some persons to lay ecclesial ministry adds a special grace by which the Holy Spirit “makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal of building up the Church.” Lay ecclesial ministry flows from an explicit faith commitment and is animated by love of God and neighbor. It also entails an explicit relationship of mutual accountability to collaborate with the Church hierarchy.

THE BISHOP AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

It is the bishop’s role to order these new ministerial relationships within the diocese, so that he can affirm and guide the use of the gifts that lay ecclesial ministers bring to the local church. His ministry of oversight (*episcopo*) gives to the bishop the primary responsibility for ordering all ministries within the diocese, including lay ecclesial ministries. And through the bishop, the work of the lay ecclesial minister is related to the whole church. This “ordering” of lay ecclesial ministry can involve a variety of agents assisting the bishop. It can take a variety of concrete forms in the life and structure of our local church, which range from providing opportunities for spiritual formation and professional development to creating commissioning and re-commissioning services.

THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

MISSION

The mission of the Council of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (CLEM) is to assist the Bishop in promoting lay ecclesial ministry in collaboration with the ordained. The CLEM is committed to help implement the teachings of Vatican II concerning the laity, lay leadership formation as specified in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and lay ecclesial ministry outlined by the USCCB sub-committee on Lay Ministry.

VALUES

Based on the vision as expressed in the diocesan pastoral plan, "*Renewing the Church*" the council (CLEM) will value:

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Catholic Church
- Collaboration with the ordained
- The richness of our diocesan diversity and the dignity of each person
- The on-going conversion of persons
- A faith that works for justice
- Collaboration in ministry
- An inclusive Church
- A Church which calls forth the gifts of every member
- Diversity in our leadership
- Open communication among all who serve for the Church
- A commitment to involve youth and young adults in a significant way

GOALS

1. To serve as a forum for discussion of real concerns related to lay ecclesial ministries and to recommend appropriate action to departments and agencies of the Diocese and to the Bishop.
2. To develop a system of ongoing communication and support with lay ecclesial ministers within our Diocese that fosters their spiritual formation and professional development.
3. To develop, in collaboration with other diocesan departments, services and materials that support lay ecclesial ministers.
4. To communicate with and mutually resource national bodies focused on developing lay ministry such as the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM) and the USCCB Sub-Committee on Lay Ministry.

TASKS

1. To promote professional standards/ certification for professional lay ecclesial ministers based on the "*National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*" published by National Association of Lay Ministers (NALM), or other recognized certification standards accepted by the USCCB.
2. To collaborate with the clergy, parishes, diocesan offices of communication, the Institute for Leadership in Minister to provide a plan for education and catechesis about the position of Minister of Parish Life.
3. To collaborate with organizations involved in ongoing formation for lay ecclesial ministers including diocesan departments, the Institute for Leadership in Ministry and Santa Clara University.
4. To develop commissioning and re-commissioning rites for lay ecclesial ministers.
5. To develop mentoring processes and help identify mentors for new lay ecclesial ministers.
6. To recognize ministers for years of service, creative and collaborative ministry.
7. To work closely with the Diocesan departments and agencies in developing the strategies and actions listed in "Renewing the Church" in the following areas:
 - a. Assist in the development of a 'needs assessment' and 'recruitment package' to provide the necessary training to assist parishes to recruit paid and volunteer lay ecclesial leaders.
 - b. Assist in the development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing plan to advertise and attract Catholics to lay leadership in the church. Special effort in this area will be made to attract people from underrepresented groups.
8. To advise the Bishop on issues related to Lay Ecclesial Ministry.

THE TERM "LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTER" **

LAY

Persons in this group are members of the laity, including men and women religious.

ECCLESIAL

All baptized Catholics are called to evangelize; a lay ecclesial minister understands a special call to ministry.

MINISTER

The call to ministry comes from the community; all ministers are ultimately accountable to the Bishop for the performance of the ministry entrusted to them.

- A fully initiated lay member of the Christian faithful who is responding to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit received in baptism and confirmation.
- One who responds to a call or invitation to participate in ministry and who has been prepared for this through prayerful discernment.
- One who has received the necessary formation to function competently within the given area of ministry.
- One who brings personal competencies to serve the Church's mission through a specific ministry of ecclesial leadership and who does so with the support of a parish community.
- One who is committed to performing the duties of a particular ministry.
- A paid staff person (full- or part-time) or a volunteer who has responsibility and the necessary authority for institutional leadership in a particular area of ministry.
- One to whom a formal role in ministry has been entrusted by competent ecclesiastical authority.
- One who is recognized through a commissioning by the Bishop and then presented to the parish community in a public ceremony.

RELATIONSHIP TO DEPARTMENTS AND ADVISORY/CONSULTATIVE BODIES IN THE DIOCESE

The CLEM has the responsibility to promote lay ministry and provide a forum to discuss ongoing formation of lay ecclesial ministers.

In order to fulfill this mission the CLEM will:

- Collaborate on lay vocation and ministry related issues with the Vicar for Clergy, the Directors of Vocation, The Council of Priests, the Director of Deacon Formation, the Vicars for the various ethnic ministries in the diocese, and the Bishop's Delegate to Religious.

- Work closely with the Diocesan Leadership Team, the Offices of Pastoral Services, Personnel, Finance, and Communications regarding communication, recruitment, assessment and training of lay ministers.
- Work closely with the Office of Pastoral Services, the Institute for Leadership in Ministry, and the deaneries to foster ongoing training and certification of lay ecclesial ministers.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

Membership of CLEM consists of no fewer than ten (10) lay ecclesial ministers, is drawn from the deaneries of the diocese, and reflects both ministerial and ethnic diversity.

Selection of New Members

Nomination of new members will be done by deanery. Each deanery nominates three candidates for membership; the Bishop selects one member from each deanery and appoints four additional at large members.

If a Deanery is unable to nominate candidates then the Council will recommend appropriate candidates to the Bishop for his appointment.

Orientation to the council will be the responsibility of the Executive Committee.

Leadership

Three members will be selected through a discernment process to serve for one two years as chair, vice-chair, and secretary. This group comprises the Executive Committee. Officers' terms are renewable once.

Term

Each selected member serves a three-year term, renewable once. Terms begin at the January meeting. Council members will declare their intent to renew their membership at the June meeting for review by the Executive Committee. The terms are staggered so that the council maintains continuity. Attendance at council meetings is important. If a council member misses three consecutive meetings or half the meetings in a calendar year, the Executive Committee will review the status of that member on the council. If someone is unable to complete a term for any reason, a replacement will be recommended to the Bishop.

Nomination Process

- The Executive Committee will prepare the criteria, nomination process with each Dean to arrive at three deanery nominees.
- The Dean will conduct the nomination process.
- Nominations of candidates to the Council will be taken at the deanery meeting in the Fall. Candidates can be self nominated.

- Nominees will be required to make a brief written statement about their lay ministry experience and what they could contribute as a member of CLEM.
- Each Dean will submit the three nominees' names along with their written statements by scheduled a date.
- Selected members will be informed of their appointment by the Bishop.

Meetings

The Council will meet eleven times a year. The first meeting of the calendar year the Council will hold a full day retreat.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Decisions will be made by consensus; in the event consensus cannot be reached the chair will call for a majority vote. A quorum is one over half of the membership of the Council.

A committee of *Pastoral Associates* from throughout the Diocese of San Jose helped develop this proposal over a two-year period. This was an effort to implement the strategies articulated in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan "**RENEWING THE CHURCH**" for developing lay ministry and to assist in finding ways to affirm, support and celebrate lay ecclesial ministry in our Diocese.

In April/May 2005, a *Steering Committee* representing all deaneries and the ethnic diversity of the diocese met to review the proposal and make the final recommendations.

This document under goes periodic review and revision by the CLEM.

References:

Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions: A Report of the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference 1999 (page 7-8).

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Washington D.C.: National Association of Lay Ministers, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, April 2003

Lay Ecclesial Ministers Council, Diocese of Oakland, 1999

** The July & October 2004 *Drafts of the Document on Lay Ecclesial Ministry* were used as a source for this preamble.

Footnotes: 1-3 excerpts from *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: the State of the Questions*
USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, Committee on the Laity 1999

Footnotes: 4-9 excerpts from DRAFT Document on *Lay Ecclesial Ministry*
USCCB Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, Committee on the Laity 2005

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