Defining Lay Ministry
LAY MINISTRY
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LAY MINISTRY

BISHOP'S DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE:

The increased participation of the members of the Church through lay ministry in parishes, given the uniqueness of each parish

—what particular paid and volunteer ministries need to be encouraged?

—who will this be and what training will they have?

—in terms of full-time lay ministers, what will be the ongoing role for that ministry in the parish and diocese?

—in terms of full-time lay ministry, how should this develop in parishes and missions that do not have a resident pastor?

Since the Second Vatican Council there has been an increased focus on developing and supporting lay ministry in the Church. Lay ministry is the utilization of the full contingent of God’s gifts to the Church community. As such, it is important for the Diocese of Charlotte to foster lay ministries in every aspect of the Church’s mission in North Carolina.

The following areas need to be addressed:

1. Which particular paid and volunteer ministries need to be encouraged? Which ones stand out for special attention by the parish and diocese?

2. Who will fulfill these ministries, are there specific qualifications and a procedure for election? What training will be provided for these ministers, and at what level?

3. In the situation of full-time or salaried lay ministers, what will be their ongoing role for that ministry in the parish and diocese? How will these positions be created, sustained, and changed? What guidelines should cover these positions in each parish?

4. In the situation of parish/missions that do not have a pastor, or resident pastor, how will full-time lay ministry develop? —especially in cases of parish administrators. What criteria should be used for establishing parish administrators (in terms of timing, training, and sustenance)?
LAY MINISTRY
STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The issue to consider is the increased participation of the Laity in the Mission on the Church. How should the Church respond to the mandate of the Gospel to serve and how should the Church foster and develop this ministry?

Lay Ministry is the call to service that is rooted in Baptism. It is the right, duty and responsibility of each Christian to minister one to another. It is the responsibility of the Church to provide education, support and direction for the Laity so that the full contingent of God's gifts may be used in building the Kingdom. The activity of the Laity is so necessary that without it the Apostolate of the Church would not achieve its full effectiveness.

The Vatican II Decree, THE DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH, clearly states, "Let the spiritual Shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the Laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative." (¶37, par. 3)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the past twenty years, Lay Ministry has begun to emerge, struggling because of its newness to us yet gradually finding acceptance. Many Diocesan offices and agencies are staffed by competent members of the Laity. In some Parishes, Lay Ministry has flourished while in others it has progressed slowly. This sporadic growth seems to be due to:

a) Incomplete education and understanding of the role of Lay Ministry

on the part of the Laity and Ordained.

b) Acceptance or non-acceptance due to Pastoral leadership in the Parish.

c) Resistance to change on the part of the Laity and Ordained.

d) Inadequate and/or absence of Diocesan guidelines.

e) Unclear vision of mission for Lay Ministry on the Parish level.

f) Inadequate Diocesan formation of Seminarians in light of the needs of Lay Ministry in relationship to their future ministry.

At this point in the history of the Diocese of Charlotte, we are experiencing a great influx of Catholics in various parts of the Diocese as a result of the shift of population to the South. Together with this influx of Catholics, the Diocese is experiencing a lack of priestly vocations and the continuing loss of Ordained due to illness, age, death or leaving. This appears to be a growing trend thereby emphasizing the need for greater collaboration of the Ordained and Laity in serving the Church.

Our survey shows that there is an overwhelming acceptance of Catholics in the Diocese to move in the direction of a strong, well-defined, supported and directed Lay Ministry Office. Generally speaking, Lay Ministry would be welcomed and accepted in every area except the Sacramental Ministry reserved to the Ordained. There is a need to regulate and unify the components of a Diocesan Lay Ministry program to insure its continued growth and successful functioning.
LAY MINISTRY COMMISSION

I ESTABLISH A DIOCESAN LEVEL OFFICE OF LAY MINISTRY WITH AN ADVISORY BOARD.

ACTION PLAN
A. The Bishop will appoint a Lay Ministry Director.
B. The initial advisory board of the Office of Lay Ministry should be comprised of people selected from around the diocese. The board will act in an advisory capacity to the director of the Office of Lay Ministry. The director would report to the bishop.

II THIS OFFICE OF LAY MINISTRY WOULD DO AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF LAY MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE.

ACTION PLAN
A. The director will work through and with the Planning and Development Office in conducting a survey to determine data such as:
   — What type of Lay Ministry is functioning in parishes?
   — What are some of the job descriptions?
   — How are performances being evaluated?
   — What training is being offered?
   — Are people involved in any certification programs?
   — What are some of the existing programs?
   — Are people being recognized for their service?
   — What remuneration if any is being offered?

III ESTABLISH GUIDELINES THAT PROVIDE FOR EDUCATION OF BOTH CLERGY AND LAITY TOWARDS ACCEPTING THE SCOPE AND POSSIBILITIES INHERENT IN LAY MINISTRY IN ORDER TO FOSTER THEIR ONGOING UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

IV ESTABLISH TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE SPECIFIC MINISTRIES AS NOTED IN THE GUIDELINES ON THE DIOCESAN, VICARIATE AND PARISH LEVELS.

ACTION PLAN
A. The Office of Lay Ministry in cooperation with other diocesan offices will work to develop training sessions for specific ministries. These presentations are to be published in printed form that can be used as a guide to offer training on the vicariate and parish level.
B. The Office of Lay Ministry would serve as a resource center to provide information on other training opportunities.
C. The Office of Lay Ministry would facilitate a Lay Ministry Corps of young people to provide an opportunity to actively participate in a training program and serve in the diocese as a volunteer for a 1–2 year commitment. (re: Lay Ministry Corps resolution of Hickory Vicariate)

V DEVELOP DIOCESAN PERSONNEL POLICIES THAT DEFINE THE
QUALIFICATIONS, JOB DESCRIPTIONS, TRAINING REQUIREMENTS, SUPERVISION AND BENEFITS FOR FULL/PART-TIME VOLUNTEER LAY MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH, BOTH ON THE DIOCESAN AND PARISH LEVELS.

ACTION PLAN
A. The director of the Office of Lay Ministry will assess and review current diocesan personnel policies that would impact the area of Lay Ministry.

B. In response to the diocesan assessment, the office would act as consultant to assist individual parishes regarding the qualifications, job descriptions, training supervision and benefits for those involved in Lay Ministry.